**The Exeter Cycling Campaign is asking all supporters to contact their prospective county Councillors in the run up to the May’17 elections.**

**This briefing explains why this is important, how to do it and what we are seeking to achieve.**

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## Background

Devon County Elections take place on May 4th 2017.

The ward boundaries have changed slightly for this election. (Some details [here](https://new.devon.gov.uk/democracy/elections-and-voting/elections-2017/) and [here](https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1ZQD16riPPtvmHJA2pZTbjG90TnKqcZl-RCd9U2Mm5og/edit#gid=0)). There are 60 council seats up for election, 9 of which are Exeter seats.

Devon County Council is the Highways Authority for Devon and Exeter roads. Devon County Council also presents proposals to (and has a representative sitting on) the Heart of the South West Local Enterprise Partnership, which funds capital projects across the South West. This is why it’s important to get cycling onto the agenda at these elections.

Why are we approaching prospective Councillors?

Election time presents a good opportunity to emphasise what we, as local voters, feel is important for our county and city.

By contacting prospective Councillors at election time we are demonstrating to them what issues we believe will influence our voting.

What do we hope to achieve?

By working together as supporters of the Exeter Cycling Campaign we aim to put the provision of safe cycling infrastructure onto the radar for prospective Councillors. We are seeking to ensure the election includes discussion about how cycling can build a better city / county and address the pressing issues of the day. We aim to establish a dialogue with prospective Councillors which we can maintain after the elections.

What are the key messages and asks to our Councillors?

The Campaign’s key messages as we speak with prospective Councillors are:

* **Commit to**

**planning, investing and building**

**a comprehensive network of cycle paths in and around Exeter.**

Other messages for prospective Councillors are:

* We need to be building a better city / county, with cycling at its heart, which will benefit all citizens. This is not about ‘favours for cyclists’.
* There are urgent issues that need addressing: pollution, congestion, unhealthy lifestyles and degradation of the public realm. Cycling provides answers to these.
* We expect our Councillors to be bold and lead us.
* The way to get a significant shift of people away from private cars and onto bicycles is to make it safe to do so. This means building safe cycling infrastructure: segregated on big/fast roads, traffic-reduced and filtered on residential streets. Merely ‘encouraging’ people to cycle won’t achieve this shift in behaviour.
* Prospective Councillors should note the success of the [Exeter Cycling Charter](http://exetercyclingcharter.org.uk/) which has attracted the support of over [180 Exeter businesses](http://exetercyclingcharter.org.uk/organisational-signatories/), amongst them are the city’s largest employers. Our businesses are calling for Exeter to be a city where**:**
  + children can cycle to school or college safely
  + people can travel to work safely, directly and easily on a convenient and connected cycle network
  + our roads and public spaces prioritise people and make cycling the safe, natural choice for a large proportion of everyday journeys
* Prospective Councillors should note the growing body of citizens calling for them to make Exeter a city where cycling is the normal travel choice for everyday journeys.

This commitment to begin to plan for a dense cycle network fits into the nationwide *Cycling UK* campaign to ‘Plan, Build & Invest’, which is the follow-up of their #space4cycling campaign. More details [here](https://youtu.be/mxLxHDMzf8Y) and [here](http://www.cyclinguk.org/campaign/space-for-cycling). There is a very good *Cycling UK* [‘Guide for Decision Makers](http://www.cyclinguk.org/sites/default/files/space_for_cycling_guide_for_decision_makers.pdf)’ which shows what good cycling infrastructure looks like.

How do I approach prospective Councillors?

It isn’t an onerous thing to contact your prospective Councillors. All you need to do is:

1. Find out who your prospective Councillors. [**here**](https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1ZQD16riPPtvmHJA2pZTbjG90TnKqcZl-RCd9U2Mm5og/edit#gid=0) or [here](http://candidates.democracyclub.org.uk) might help.
2. Write them an email or letter. Suggested templates can be found on our web site under the ‘Projects/Elections 2017’ tab of [here](https://drive.google.com/open?id=1Z76SQofjcyRhGmSQ7FhXdIwKzuuHyxyEZEGsrdVjaFY) and [here](https://drive.google.com/open?id=1VINa9l1UphQSO1AhPwFeZq2eDlr7sCc-o440vfi5sdk) or [here](https://drive.google.com/open?id=1nKgBTKHRYlvjAoiFcVTUf3rbDlawAY4hIyN4HI7gULk). It’s is always better to personalise these letters with your own words and experiences if possible.
3. Offer to speak with them face to face if possible. This is a much more effective way of interacting with them. Other members of the Campaign would be happy to join you in doing this if this would be helpful. Drop a note to [info@exetercyclingcampaign.org.uk](mailto:infor@exetercyclingcampaign.org.uk) if you’d like some assistance with this.
4. Come along to one of the hustings events and consider asking a question. These hustings haven’t yet been announced. If you are prepared to ask a question at a hustings event then let us know ([info@exetercyclingcampaign.org.uk](mailto:info@exetercyclingcampaign.org.uk)) and we can suggest possible questions to ask.
5. **Drop a note to the** [**Facebook group**](https://www.facebook.com/groups/ExeterCyclingCampaign/) **and/or email** [**info@exetercycligncampaign.org.uk**](mailto:info@exetercycligncampaign.org.uk) **to let everyone else know who has been contacted and what sort of reaction you’ve had. This bit is important.**

Frequently Asked Questions

### I don’t live in Exeter, can I still write?

### Yes! Decisions are made for Devon as a whole, we’d like to show Councillors

### that provision in Exeter matters to people from the wider area. If you travel in or to Exeter, by any method, please write to your candidates, and tell them why the issue matters to you.

### My candidate says that Devon County Council has no money for this sort of project and the decisions are made by the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP).

### Devon puts forward proposals to the LEP, so it still has control over what kind of ideas are considered.

### Even if the funding is not available yet, it’s important to develop long-term plans so that the council can bid for funds when they become available.

### Exeter/Devon are too hilly for cycling.

### Exeter’s hills hasn’t prevented a big increase in cycling over the last few years and electric bikes are making it easier for everyone to cycle up hills.

### All cyclists run red lights, why don’t we make helmets compulsory, our roads are too narrow, cycling isn’t safe etc.

Check out the excellent Cycling Fallacies website for responses to the many cycling fallacies that people often trot out: <http://cyclingfallacies.com/en/>

### I’m not sure what I would say to a prospective Councillor

Another member of the Exeter Cycling Campaign would be happy to join you if you met a prospective Councillor in person.

There’s a further briefing sheet [here](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1vQggbsssFjfFMnnr9lEubtUY5rY3JIWqevcE6seSu-M/edit) with key messages and phrases you can use when speaking with a prospective Councillor.

### What are the parties saying?

The [Labour Party Manifesto](http://clp.exeter-labour.org.uk/labours_vision_for_devon) for the Devon County Elections states:

Cycling and Walking

Our aim is to reduce congestion and pollution by developing and improving walking and cycling routes. The Tory-led Council has produced much rhetoric about sustainable transport, but in practice too little is being done to facilitate alternatives to the use of private motor vehicles. Congestion has reached a new high, air pollution is already at a worrying level, and our roads are becoming less safe. More needs to be done to make public transport an attractive option, and to promote walking and cycling with consideration being given to the introduction of cycle-only lanes for key routes as sharing with pedestrians or motor vehicles is often unsafe for those involved. We will:

* Halt the degradation of the existing cycle network by adopting modern design guidance and prioritise cycle commuter routes that are direct, safe and with good surfaces
* Improve cyclist and pedestrian safety through school programmes and promoting best practice for motorists and cyclists
* Regularly audit the delivery of the already agreed strategies prioritising pedestrians, cyclists and public transport, and assess all new proposals against these strategies
* Categorise streets with people in mind (not just motor vehicles) so that any new development is planned accordingly
* Commit to bold leadership for delivering a vision of a better County, with cyclists and pedestrians at its heart
* Create nominated Councillor and Officer ‘leads’ to champion walking and cycling

**Conservative Party Manifesto**

Details not yet published

**Green Party Manifesto**

Details not yet published

**Liberal Democrat Party Manifesto**

Details not yet published

**UKIP Manifesto**

Details not yet published