

## Traffic and Travel in Marple

**Marple Civic Society Open Meeting, 11<sup>th</sup> June 2024**

**Talk by Peter Black, Planning and Transport Consultant**

Peter Black's talk followed the monthly committee meeting of the Civic Society in the now regular open session for discussion to which Civic Society members and members of the public are invited. The subject proved very popular with over sixty people packed into the upper room of the Navigation. The Chairman Geoff Green emphasised in his introduction that there are no specific proposals for the improvement for traffic and travel in Marple at present, other than the walking and cycling improvements in connection with the new Community Hub in Memorial Park. Proposals may however emerge in future from Stockport Council and the purpose of the meeting and talk was to invite as wide a range of views as possible so as to be prepared for consultations which may arise in the future.

Peter introduced himself as having been brought up in Cambridge and as a resident of Marple for twelve years. He is a qualified consultant town planner with specialist experience in transport and travel in Greater Manchester, in particular in relation to the planning of the Metrolink tram system. His talk reflected his personal views, based on the evidence he has gathered through his professional life.

Peter started by asking the audience whether they thought the traffic in Marple was bad. They said:

- Traffic light sequencing was poor
- Crossing the road feels dangerous
- When traffic moves slowly there is less danger to pedestrians
- Nearly all the audience agreed that they drive in and through Marple

Peter concluded that 'we are the traffic' and this was generally accepted. He set out a series of ideas.

Idea 1: that the movement of goods, people and ideas is the lifeblood of the community – without movement - "traffic" there is no life.

Myth: that people who drive cars spend more money than people who ride bikes. Statistically it has been shown that there is little difference because car drivers carry more goods per trip whilst riders carry less but shop more often. The audience responded by saying that fewer goods can be carried by bike than by car.

Idea 2: do people consciously or unconsciously have a 'travel budget' – that is the amount of time they are prepared to spend travelling each day / week / year. If for example you do more internet

shopping, that releases time from shopping trips to travel for other purposes. Pete held up a graph showing a big spike in internet shopping during covid epidemic when people were confined to home, but the trend of increase in this has returned to its pre-pandemic trajectory.

Idea 3: it is important to realise that we do have a choice of travel mode and that we can do something about the traffic problem. Also cycles pose less danger to other road users than cars. Peter referred to the example of the Netherlands where cycling, walking, cars and buses travel safely along the same road in segregated channels. It was pointed out that here we don't have the space alongside our roads or the flat topography that makes it possible in the Netherlands.

Peter said that we have made our choice for decades that we prefer travel by car and concluded with the plea that this could be changed if we were willing to do so; and to put pressure on politicians to bring about change.

Geoff Green opened the meeting to discussion and asked for a balanced group response.

The notes below record most of the remarks made by members of the audience.

1. Delivery vans can be a danger to pedestrians and cause damage to verges and trees. GG pointed out that there are click and collect locations including the Co-op on Church Lane and the Post Office.
2. Whatever traffic proposals are put forward can we have solely pedestrian places ? There should be no special provision for cycle ways on Market Street or in Memorial Park.
3. Becky Senior said that the aim of the proposals put forward by the Council at the same time as the Hub consultation ("the one-way system" proposals) was to find out what proposals found most favour with the public. No funding is available to implement them.
4. Has any survey been carried out to find out how many bicycle users there are Marple ?
5. Safer cycle routes would encourage use of bicycles.
6. It is also important to provide secure cycle storage outside shops and other premises in the town centre. Might larger retailers help fund this? Could MCS lobby for this?
7. School traffic is particularly dangerous for children. Parents cannot use bikes to take children to school.
8. The answer to increased car traffic is to improve public transport. Peter Black said trams were particularly effective as they could run at 12 minute frequency rather than 20 minutes with buses.
9. A former transport manager for Greater Manchester said that progress was being made in GM to extend the bus and tram systems and that ticketing will be integrated in future.
10. It was pointed out that the frequency of bus services falls off during the evening, discouraging the use of public transport during this time.
11. Many people don't want to hear the message that we can't go on increasing the use of car transport – and that we need to face the changes that are needed to make moving about more sustainable.
12. Committee member Greg Pike referred to the Greater Manchester Transport and Travel Strategy, saying it aimed for 50% of all journeys in GM to be made by sustainable means by 2040. The document is available at <https://tfgm.com/2040-transport-strategy>.