

Cycle Routes



Chapter No:

3

58 - The Highland Cycle Campaign [Written Submissions]

BACKGROUND

1. The objector is seeking a Trans-Highland Cycle Route which would run between Dingwall and Ullapool.
2. Structure plan policy TC1 and Proposal TC3 refer to a “Modal Shift” and to an “Integrated Local Transport Strategy” respectively in the following terms:

“Policy TC1: Modal Shift

The council will support measures to achieve a shift from private car and road haulage to alternative forms of transport where appropriate. Proposals which assist with the switching of freight from roads to rail or water will generally be supported.”

and, as relevant to this objection,

“Proposal TC3: Integrated Local Transport Strategy

The council will prepare an Integrated Local Transport Strategy, with particular emphasis on the Inner Moray Firth area, and will seek a partnership approach with other parties to pursue this. It will include:

- ☐ ...
- ☐ development of cycling and walking networks;
- ☐ pedestrianisation and traffic calming measures; and
- ☐ significant developments to be accessible by means other than car.

The council will pursue these options where appropriate and will seek to enter into agreements and partnerships to facilitate implementation, particularly in association with large development proposals. Developers will be expected to fund infrastructure and services which their agreed Transport Assessment demonstrates are required to achieve a modal split acceptable to the council.”

3. A further reference to structure plan policy, Policy TC10, was made by the objector, together with one of its supporting paragraphs. These state,

“2.6.10 The council is working to develop cycle routes for certain strategic and local trips, and is also working to improve cycle storage facilities at offices, schools and hospitals. In accordance with the General Strategic

Policies, the council will look for major development proposals to incorporate the needs of cyclists with respect, for example, to safe accessibility and secure parking and storage facilities.”

“Policy TC10: Cycling

The council will support and develop cycling in Highland through the preparation and implementation of an agreed Highland Cycling Strategy and Local Transport Strategy, as well as conformity with the General Strategic Policies.”

SUMMARY OF THE OBJECTION

4. The objector sought a statement in the Wester Ross Local Plan of an intention to create a strategic Trans-Highland Cycle Route, which would run between Dingwall and Ullapool. This would not only fulfil the purposes of economic value through tourism but would also enable and encourage sustainable movement for various populations along the route, thereby assisting in achieving structure plan Policy TC1 in particular, as well as Proposal TC3. It was suggested that the omission could be remedied by inserting the intended route on maps and in section 4.1: Infrastructure, and this would further the aim of structure plan Policy TC10 and its justifying paragraph 2.16.10.

SUMMARY OF THE COUNCIL’S RESPONSE

5. The council insisted that Local plan Section 4: The Main Issues and Section 5: Working Towards the Vision highlighted the council’s commitment to supporting tourism and its infrastructure, and the plan’s theme of improving access to goods, services and markets aimed to encourage development close to existing services, thereby reducing the need to travel by car. Nevertheless, it accepted that specific reference could be made to the Trans-Highland Cycle Route, and, while it was considered to be unnecessary and inappropriate to make specific reference to it on all of the Settlement Development Area Proposals Maps, the council considered that paragraph 5.3 of the plan could be adjusted as follows to refer to the route (additional text shown underlined):

“5.3 Here are some ways in which the vision will be reflected.

- ...
- We **improve infrastructure** by making sure that as many people as possible have access to broadband, improving public transport to provide more frequent links to, for example, Dingwall and Inverness, increasing the supply of waste facilities such as the recycling centre in Lochcarron, and supporting the creation of the Trans-Highland Cycle Route from Dingwall to Ullapool.”

SUMMARY OF THE FURTHER SUBMISSIONS

6. This did not satisfy the **objector**, who, while welcoming the amendment generally, queried the appropriateness of the word, “supporting”, as used in the proposed addition to paragraph 5.3, on the basis that it inferred passive moral support, rather than active encouragement. The council had assisted in the creation of a Highland Cycle Strategy and it was considered that cycling and walking issues should be uppermost in transport planning for new developments. Substitution of “encouraging”, “initiating”, “stimulating”, or “facilitating” for “supporting” should therefore be considered.

7. However, the **council** confirmed that currently, there was no commitment on its part to a Trans-Highland Cycle Route and accordingly, it would be inappropriate for the plan to be any more pro-active in supporting such a route. It suggested that its Local Transport Strategy, through which the council would consider the implementation of new cycle routes, was therefore the more appropriate mechanism for taking forward such projects. In any case, “support” meant giving assistance, encouragement or approval and was sufficiently positive for the purpose.

CONCLUSIONS

8. Until there is a commitment to the creation of a Trans-Highland Cycle Route, I consider that it would be inappropriate to indicate any line for it on the Proposals Maps. In any case, it does not appear from the submissions that such a line has been recognised officially yet, although I am sure that the objector has a route in mind. However, the route envisaged may not be the most suitable or practical and, until it has been approved by those who will be required to implement it, in my opinion it is unreasonable of the objector to expect it to be confirmed on the Proposals Maps. Once the necessary commitment has been made by the council to undertake such a project, and when a route for the cycleway has been agreed between all parties involved, then (and only then) not only would it be appropriate to consider the identification of the proposed route on the relevant Proposals Maps, but it would be important to do so in my opinion.

9. Despite this, both sides clearly agree such a project to be a worthy objective, and in these terms I consider it appropriate to include reference to it in the plan. This the council has already agreed to do in terms of paragraph 5 above, and this appears sufficient to me. I do not agree with the objector that support of the proposal is an inadequate term – compared, for example, with “maintaining an interest in it” or “following/monitoring it”, I consider “supporting” such a proposal to be as active as can be expected in the circumstances, and I am quite satisfied that such a word should be used in this context.

RECOMMENDATION

10. Accordingly, I ‘support’ the council’s proposed modification to paragraph 5.3 of the plan shown in paragraph 4 above, but recommend that no other alteration be effected in relation to this objection.