

# The Highland Council

Agenda Item	9
Report No	SR/11/25

**Committee:** Isle of Skye and Raasay

**Date:** 30 June 2025

**Report Title:** Active Travel Post Overview

**Report By:** Assistant Chief Executive - Place

## 1 Purpose/Executive Summary

- 1.1 To provide Members with an overview of the aims of the 2-year fixed term Active Travel post, funded through income available to the Committee.

## 2 Recommendations

- 2.1 Members are asked to:-

- i. **Note** the overview and aims of the post;
- ii. **Note** the budget which has been allocated to support Active Travel projects on Isle of Skye and Raasay;
- iii. **Agree** the proposed Programme of Work for 2025/26; and
- iv. **Agree** to support efforts to secure additional funding for delivery of Active Travel projects on Skye & Raasay

## 3 Implications

- 3.1 **Resource** – This post is funded for a two-year fixed-term period and will have salary and associated expenditure implications on that basis.

The Active Travel budget for 2025/26 has been agreed and £100,000 allocated towards capital works on Isle of Skye. It is intended that this resource will be used strategically to unlock additional investment, e.g. through match funding from Scottish Government.

It is hoped that if opportunities for additional funding (e.g. through developer contributions) are identified, that some percentage of these can be allocated towards Active Travel projects.

Although the post is initially for a two-year fixed term period, the ambition is for this to be extended should the Project Officer prove successful in delivering on the identified aims.

- 3.2 **Legal** – No legal implications have been identified.
- 3.3 **Risk** – As of the date of this report, confirmation is awaited from Scottish Government on a number of potential funding streams, presenting a potential risk to the delivery of larger projects. Additionally, given the likely multi-year nature of certain construction projects, the continued delivery of funding on an annual-only basis presents a risk to project completion.
- 3.4 **Health and Safety (risks arising from changes to plant, equipment, process, or people)** – No health and safety implications have been identified.
- 3.5 **Gaelic** – Active Travel projects taken forward through this post may require additional signage or information boards to be installed in the region. These will follow all relevant regional and national policies relating to Gaelic.

## **4 Impacts**

- 4.1 In Highland, all policies, strategies or service changes are subject to an integrated screening for impact for Equalities, Poverty and Human Rights, Children's Rights and Wellbeing, Climate Change, Islands and Mainland Rural Communities, and Data Protection. Where identified as required, a full impact assessment will be undertaken.
- 4.2 Considering impacts is a core part of the decision-making process and needs to inform the decision-making process. When taking any decision, Members must give due regard to the findings of any assessment.
- 4.3 This is an update report and therefore an impact assessment is not required.

## **5 Skye Active Travel Post – Overview and Aims**

- 5.1 The purpose of the post is to develop Active and Sustainable Transport projects on Isle of Skye and Raasay by taking forward initiatives as identified in the Integrated Transport Action Plan for Skye; Active Travel Master Plan for Portree and Options Appraisal for Active travel on Skye.
- 5.2 In addition, the Project Officer will provide a coordinating role for infrastructure projects defined and developed through the Skye and Raasay Futures Initiative (SARF).
- 5.3 In order to take these projects forward, the Project Officer will work closely with a range of public sector partners (e.g. HITRANS, Transport Scotland) and local community organisations (e.g. Community Companies/Trusts) to advance infrastructure projects identify new or potential active travel development opportunities and improve access to public transport and sustainable travel options.

## 5.4 Portree Active Travel Masterplan

## 5.5 The Portree Active Travel Masterplan notes 15 key actions to be progressed in support of the transition to low-carbon transport, rebalancing of transport provision with a greater focus on active travel, and promotion of more sustainable travel choices and healthy lifestyles.

These vary substantially in ambition, scale, and cost, and have previously been prioritised by ARUP as follows:-

Priority	Name	Estimated Cost
1	A87 High Quality Active Travel Route	£1.1m - £2.2m
2	Bridge Road High Quality Active Travel Route	£180k - £360k
3	Mixed Traffic Street on Home Farm Road	£90k - £120k
4	Off-road High Quality Active Travel Route Parallel to A855	£350k - £460k
5	Woodpark Road between the A87 and Rathad Na H-Airigh	£60k - £120k
6	Controlled Active Travel Crossings at A87/ Woodpark Road roundabout	£10k - £100k
7	Junction Improvements from Wentworth Street to Portree Harbour	£50k - £100k
8	Somerled Square Public Realm Enhancements	£350k - £750k
9	Wentworth Street Pedestrianisation	£250k - £500k
10	Portree Harbour Public Realm Enhancements	£250k - £500k
11	Portree Mobility Hubs	£360k - £460k
12	Hedgefield Road Signage and Wayfinding Improvements	£2k - £5k
13	Existing Footpath (Woodpark Road to Fladda Crescent) Minor Improvements	£50k - £100k
14	Blaven Road/Home Farm Road Junction Minor Improvements	£12k - £24k
15	Portree Primary School Link Minor Improvements	£60k - £120k

Of the 15 actions identified, these can be further subdivided based on estimated cost against budget allocated as follows:-

- Estimated cost fully coverable by allocated budget (upper bound £100k or less) – five actions (6, 7, 12, 13 and 14);
- Estimated cost potentially coverable by allocated budget (lower bound £100k or less) – three actions (3, 5 and 15); and
- Estimated cost not coverable by allocated budget (lower bound exceeds £100k) – seven actions (1, 2, 4, 8, 9, 10 and 11)

On this basis, then, we can recategorize the actions along two axes – priority and deliverability:-

Priority	Name	Estimated Cost	Deliverability
6	Controlled Active Travel Crossings at A87/Woodpark Road roundabout	£10k - £100k	Deliverable
7	Junction Improvements from Wentworth Street to Portree Harbour	£50k - £100k	Deliverable
12	Hedgefield Road Signage and Wayfinding Improvements	£2k - £5k	Deliverable
13	Existing Footpath (Woodpark Road to Fladda Crescent) Minor Improvements	£50k - £100k	Deliverable
14	Blaven Road/Home Farm Road Junction Minor Improvements	£12k - £24k	Deliverable
3	Mixed Traffic Street on Home Farm Road	£90k - £120k	Potential
5	Woodpark Road between the A87 and Rathad Na H-Airigh	£60k - £120k	Potential
15	Portree Primary School Link Minor Improvements	£60k - £120k	Potential
1	A87 High Quality Active Travel Route	£1.1m - £2.2m	Not Deliverable
2	Bridge Road High Quality Active Travel Route	£180k - £360k	Not Deliverable
4	Off-road High Quality Active Travel Route Parallel to A855	£350k - £460k	Not Deliverable
8	Somerled Square Public Realm Enhancements	£350k - £750k	Not Deliverable
9	Wentworth Street Pedestrianisation	£250k - £500k	Not Deliverable
10	Portree Harbour Public Realm Enhancements	£250k - £500k	Not Deliverable
11	Portree Mobility Hubs	£360k - £460k	Not Deliverable

It should be noted with regards to the above that these cost estimates were provided as of April 2022 and are likely to have increased in the intervening years. This may impact the assessment of deliverability.

A substantial number of the actions will involve works on the trunk road network, which is the responsibility of Transport Scotland. Officers engage regularly with Transport Scotland/BEAR Scotland on Active Travel works across Highland and will ensure that these projects are highlighted and that any opportunity to secure Scottish Government funding to support delivery of these is capitalised on.

Should any additional funding become available e.g. through Transport Scotland or through allocation of Council income generated towards Active Travel projects, the above assessments will be reviewed and, where possible, projects reprioritised accordingly.

## 5.6 Integrated Transport Action Plan for Skye

## 5.7 The Integrated Transport Action Plan for Skye identifies three key actions relating to Active Travel:-

### 1. Integrating bikes and buses

The report proposes that methods to integrate bikes and buses be considered and that this could be delivered in a number of different ways listed below:-

- retrofitting buses to incorporate bike storage;
- any future new buses / service contracts to specify bike storage;
- bike socks integrated into luggage storage or bicycle racks on buses;
- provision of secure cycle parking at bus stops and stations; and
- the integration with a folding bicycle hire scheme

The report notes that a combination of the above methods is likely to be the best way to fully integrate bikes and buses on Skye and Raasay.

### 2. Public Cycle Hire Scheme

The report proposes that a public cycle hire scheme be introduced on Isle of Skye and Raasay, to provide opportunities for locals and visitors who do not have access to a bicycle to cycle on both islands.

It notes that success of this initiative would be contingent on the introduction of safe cycle infrastructure to Skye, and thus that support should be provided to the Skye Cycle Network and Skye Cycleway projects. It proposes that a cycle hire scheme could be trialled within one location on Skye to determine its success before rolling out on a wider scale.

### 3. Ongoing Support for the Skye Cycle Network

The report highlights a need to support the Isle of Skye Cycle Network, Skye Cycleway and Edinbane Community Links projects, as all three will provide safe to use active travel/non-motorised routes across the region.

The Plan does not provide any prioritisation for these three actions, nor does it provide any indicative costs against any of the proposed activities within them. However, officers will endeavour to bear these three areas in mind and to seek opportunities to enable them, either through direct interventions (e.g. provision of cycle hire/parking), or indirectly through support of other Active Travel interventions in the region.

## 5.8 Skye and Raasay Futures Initiative

### 5.9 The Skye and Raasay Future report of August 2021 identifies three key projects of direct relevance to Active Travel:-

#### **Skye Cycle Way: Bridge to Broadford section**

This path will provide a traffic-free route for walkers and wheelers away from the busy main road and will connect communities; encourage greener, active travel; provide leisure opportunities for local residents and visitors.

The route will re-use much of the old road running alongside the busy A87 and then pass through Breakish to link with future island- wide safe routes.

#### **Portree Link Road**

The Link Road, which will connect the A87 Dunvegan Road with the A855 Staffin Road, has formed an integral part of the long term and strategic expansion of Portree at Home Farm for over 20 years and the majority of the road link has been constructed in line with development. A project now exists to deliver the final stretch completing the link. This link offers alternative travel routes and also sustainable travel options which will better distribute traffic in the area, avoiding the need to travel through the town centre.

In turn, these changes offer a range of major regeneration opportunities for Portree town centre. The link will also provide active travel routes and options together with alternative routes for public transport – allowing people to make more sustainable travel options.

#### **Uig Harbour Redevelopment**

The investment by Transport Scotland in the Skye Triangle ferry service will see upgrades to Lochmaddy, Tarbert and Uig as well as the provision of a new dual fuel ferry vessel. The harbour at Uig is owned and operated by Highland Council and the ferry infrastructure works proposed at Uig will deliver major changes to both Uig Harbour and potentially the adjoining village centre.

The investment will also deliver an integrated transport network with a dedicated bus stop adjoining the terminal building, active travel connections (supported by a recent Active Travel Masterplan for Uig commissioned by HITRANS) within the expanded marshalling and car parking area. The visitor/passenger experience will be further enhanced with new outdoor waiting and public realm area.

We note that the agenda for this Committee includes an update presentation on the recent SARF Board meeting and the new structure and process for SARF. Following this, officers will seek to engage with the SARF Board to understand the new structure/process, any change in priorities, and opportunities to progress Active Travel priorities identified through SARF.

## 5.10 Work Done to Date

As of the date of this report, the Project Officer has been in post for just over six weeks. This time has largely been spent undertaking familiarisation with prior reports and masterplans, assessing and prioritising potential works in line with budgets, and meeting with key stakeholders and community groups to understand the work that is already planned/underway and how the Council can best support this.

The Project Officer has also undertaken a series of site/familiarisation visits covering potential projects including various key locations around Portree where masterplan works are identified, Old Sleat Road, Edinbane, Raasay Primary School/Community Centre/Shore Path, Skye Cycle Way Kyleakin-Broadford, and Broadford Hospital/Shore Path.

On Tuesday 20 May, a Skye Active Travel Forum meeting has been set up by Skye Connect. This will bring together all of the key groups and organisations involved in delivery of Active Travel projects on Skye, with the aim of giving the Project Officer a strategic overview of all works proposed/planned/underway, and to allow for a wider-ranging discussion on overarching Active / Sustainable Travel priorities going forward. It is hoped that this Forum will continue to operate as an informal group to allow these discussions to continue.

Following the above, the Project Officer will also be meeting separately with Paths for All and the groups involved in three projects currently in the pipeline for the Ian Findlay Path Fund.

## 5.11 Programme of Work Over 2025/26

### 5.12 **Portree Active Travel Masterplan**

It is proposed that works within the Portree Active Travel Masterplan should be taken forward in line with the priority/deliverability assessment presented under section 5.5 of this update i.e. that budgets should be allocated primarily where projects are both (a) of high priority and (b) estimated to be deliverable.

It will not be possible to present an exact list of projects until up-to-date costings for each have been secured, but it is anticipated that smaller proposed actions such as Woodpark Road/A87 Roundabout crossings, Hedgefield Road Signage and Wayfinding, and Blaven Road/Home Farm Road Junction Minor Improvements could be feasibly delivered within existing budgets for the year.

It may also be possible to partially progress certain other actions where, for example, feasibility/concept design work is required in advance of delivery (e.g. Mixed Traffic Street on Home Farm Road), or where the proposed action consists of a number of minor improvements (e.g. Portree Primary School Link Minor Improvements).

As noted above, several of the more major actions will require works along the trunk road network. In these cases officers will continue to progress discussions with colleagues in Transport Scotland and HITRANS with a view to identifying any opportunities to progress these works.

## **Skye Cycle Way & Skye Cycle Network**

Both of these projects are currently being taken forward by local communities with support from HITRANS. We understand that bids have been put forward to the Transport Scotland Active Travel Infrastructure Fund for the following:-

- Skye Cycle Way, key initial section connecting Kyleakin with Broadford – detailed design works; and
- Skye Cycle Network, Edinbane section of connecting village with campsite – construction works.

The Council works closely with HITRANS on a range of Active Travel projects and will monitor opportunities to support these pieces of work where possible.

Additionally, subject to the status of the Ian Findlay Path Fund in 2025/26, there may be an opportunity for the Council to support works on the Old Sleat Road parallel to the A851, potentially providing another key piece of cycle route to be fully joined into the network at a later date.

## **Integrated Transport Action Plan for Skye**

As noted above, the Plan does not provide any prioritisation for the three actions relating to Active Travel, nor does it provide any indicative costs against any of the proposed activities within them. As such it is not possible to commit with any certainty to delivery of these actions within a given financial year.

However, there are a number of enabling actions that the Project Officer will carry out over the course of the year, for example:-

- engaging with colleagues in Public Transport with regards to retrofitting of buses/specification of bike storage in future contracts;
- identifying opportunities for cycle storage/parking at key public transport interchanges. Colleagues within the Active Travel department are currently reviewing all Active Travel Masterplans with a view to bidding for funding to deliver these;
- identifying and addressing opportunities for/challenges to expansion of existing regional bicycle hire schemes (e.g. Hi-Bike) to Isle of Skye Raasay; and
- engaging with colleagues leading on delivery of Mobility Hubs elsewhere in Highland to understand challenges / identify best practices for any future works on Isle of Skye and Raasay.

Designation: Assistant Chief Executive - Place

Date: 15 May 2025

Author: David Swanson, Project Officer - Active Travel

Background Papers: None

Appendices: None