

Agenda Item	14
Report No	SR/10/26

# The Highland Council

**Committee:** Isle of Skye and Raasay Committee

**Date:** 16 February 2026

**Report Title:** Active Travel Update

**Report By:** Active Travel Team Leader

## 1 Purpose/Executive Summary

- 1.1 To provide Members with an update on 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 update on works undertaken / upcoming;
- ii. **Note** the budget which has been allocated to support Active Travel projects on Skye and Raasay; and
- iii. **Agree** to support efforts to secure additional funding for delivery of Active Travel projects on Skye and 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 2026/27 has been agreed and £100,000 allocated towards capital works on 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 several 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 – Update**

- 5.1 The purpose of this report is to provide Members with an update on projects undertaken to date, Active Travel Infrastructure Fund (ATIF) bids submitted for 2026/27, and other Active Travel works being taken forward through the role in 2026/27.

### **5.2 Projects Undertaken to Date**

#### **5.3 Opening Up the Moll Road**

Following considerable discussion and engagement with funders, the original designers of the project, project sponsors and Transport Planning/Roads colleagues, a workable and deliverable solution was secured to take forward this project, which will open just over 10km of single-track road off the A87 for Active Travel.

The project is being funded primarily by Walking Scotland, through the Iain Findlay Paths Fund (IFPF), and has a total budget of £240,000. It has been agreed that The Highland Council will provide a budget contribution of £40,000 from the Active Travel capital allocation towards this project and a £40,000 in-kind contribution from Roads, with the remainder coming from IFPF via Sconser Community Council, who are acting as the community applicant for the funding.

The works themselves are being undertaken by the Roads Operations Manager for the area and are scheduled to be completed by end February 2026. A large part of the civils element of the project (bridging a large culvert failure gap) have already been undertaken and good progress made on the remainder despite a particularly challenging winter period.

*Before – failure of culvert and subsequent landslip*



*After – gap bridged and road regraded*



## **Old Sleat Road**

Good progress has also been made towards a project to open a significant portion of the Old Sleat Road, adjacent to the A851, for Active Travel purposes. This again involved considerable discussion with funders and the original project designers and was complicated by the return of significantly over-budget tenders for the original proposal, which would have seen nearly 7km of old road opened up as a continuous active travel route.

A workable solution was found which secures a strong benefit for Active Travel and Road Safety at the Drumfearn Road end of the route, with a floating path connecting the end of the Drumfearn Road to the bus stop on the A851 and start of the Old Sleat Road. This will enable walking/wheeling/cycling access from Drumfearn to the bus stop and Old Sleat Road, and access by public transport to one end of the route.

Additional interventions will include scrub cutting and clearance, enhanced signage to better indicate the availability of the route for Active Travel (and to clearly highlight where rejoining the carriageway is temporarily required), and to improve access to the route from the Skulamus end.

The works will again be undertaken by the Roads Operations Manager and will have a total budget of £240,000. The Highland Council has agreed a capital contribution of £10,000 as match funding, with a further £10,000 earmarked to support additional costs and fees not coverable by Scottish Government funding.

## **Portree Mobility Hubs**

A sum of £15,000 within the Council's UK Shared Prosperity Fund allocation was identified as available for delivery of projects relating to Mobility Hubs within the current financial year. A proposal was put forward that this should be used to progress Action 10 on Portree Mobility Hubs within the Portree Active Travel Masterplan, and the funding secured to deliver that workstream.

The completion of the Portree Link Road will provide access for housing developments at Home Farm and Kiltaraglen (PT02, PT03 and PT04 in WestPlan). These are strategic developments which will see significant expansion of North Portree and generate additional travel requirements within the town.

Within the Active Travel Masterplan, it will act as an enabling factor in the development of a series of interlinked actions within this, including:-

- Junction Improvements from Wentworth Street to Portree Harbour – prioritising the junction for walking/wheeling/cycling.
- Somerled Square Public Realm Enhancements – significant improvements including cycle parking/storage, priority crossings for pedestrians, cycle connections to the square and reallocation of parking to mobility hub locations.
- Wentworth Street Pedestrianisation – pedestrianisation of both Wentworth Street and Bayfield Road, including restrictions to vehicle access and reallocation of parking to mobility hub locations.
- Portree Harbour Public Realm Enhancements – restriction of vehicle access and widening of footway for walking/wheeling/cycling, reduction in HGV traffic, and reallocation of parking to mobility hub locations.

ARUP have been commissioned to produce a short report which identifies, assesses and ranks potential sites for a Portree Mobility Hub or Hubs in line with a range of criteria including:-

- Proximity to Portree and access roads to the town centre.
- Potential for use for access to other key visitor attractions e.g. Dunvegan Castle, Fairy Pools, The Storr.
- Land availability and ownership i.e. existing Council or community-owned land
- Land suitability for intended use i.e. level of groundworks/civils required to make fit for purpose.
- Accessibility to existing roads network both for private vehicles and for larger vehicles such as coach/bus/minibus.
- Accessibility to existing or future Active Travel routes to/from Portree.
- Existing infrastructural connections e.g. power for EV charging/display boards, telecoms for display boards/CCTV etc.

The main body of the report is expected to be a detailed explanation of sites considered, how well they meet the identified criteria, and a score assessing their suitability for future development as a mobility hub.

The report will also present clear recommendations for which site(s) should proceed to a future stage of the process and lay out expected future actions in this process i.e. full feasibility study, business case development.

Delivery on this project will be completed by 31 March 2026.

## 5.5 **Active Travel Infrastructure Fund (ATIF) Applications for 2026/27**

### 5.6 **A87 Viewfield Rd/Dunvegan Rd High Quality Active Travel Route**

This project is contained within the Portree Active Travel Masterplan as Action 1 and has been selected to put forward for ATIF funding as it is scored as a high priority within the Masterplan and is not currently deliverable within Council capital allocations and therefore requires additional funding from Scottish Government to take forward. Its submission was discussed and agreed with Members at their December 2025 Area Business Meeting.

The Project has been submitted to Transport Scotland for ATIF Tier 2 (Design) funding, with initial funding required to take forward RIBA Stages 0-2 (concept design, engagement, business case development, etc.) with a view to moving the project forward in subsequent financial years through RIBA Stages 2-4 (2027/28) and Construction (2028/29).

It will develop a shared use walking, wheeling and cycling path adjacent to the A87, running for 2.4km from the Isle of Skye Candle Company/Las Cinema to Sluggans Wood.

The path will provide a dedicated active travel facility for pupils travelling from residential areas of Portree-to-Portree High School and onward to Bun-sgoil Ghàidhlig Phort Rìgh. The route will also encourage walking, wheeling and cycling to trip attractors such as the Las Cinema and Isle of Skye Candle Company Visitor Centre.

There is an existing path at this location, however it is narrow and not suitable for wheeled access. Its design does not reflect the significant volume of traffic along both the A87 and the existing footpath, particularly through the height of the tourist season.

It is proposed that the improved path will offer accessible options, improve connectivity between key trip generators, and will connect with existing and proposed active and sustainable transport options within Portree.

The project will clearly tie in to expressed desire for additional Active Travel options along this route as identified in the Portree Active Travel Masterplan and Portree High School Travel Plan.

Cost estimates produced by ARUP as part of the Portree Active Travel Masterplan give an indicative cost of between £1.1m and £2.2m to carry out this project. The bid submitted to ATIF has requested £61,500 to carry out the initial design phase.

### **A855 Bridge Road High Quality Active Travel Route**

This project is contained within the Portree Active Travel Masterplan as Action 2 and has been selected to put forward for ATIF funding as it is scored as a high priority within the Masterplan, and is not currently deliverable within Council capital allocations and therefore requires additional funding from Scottish Government to take forward. Its submission was discussed with Members at their December 2025 Area Business Meeting, and following internal discussion within the Active Travel team was selected to put forward as an ATIF application

The Project has been submitted to Transport Scotland for ATIF Tier 2 (Design) funding, with initial funding required to take forward RIBA Stages 0-2 (concept design, engagement, business case development, etc.) with a view to moving the project forward in subsequent financial years through RIBA Stages 2-4 (2027/28) and Construction (2028/29).

It will develop a shared cycle track at footway level along the A855 between the A87 and Somerled Square. This track would run for approximately 400m and would provide a safe active travel connection for those travelling actively along from the A87 onto the A855 and into the town centre.

It is proposed that the improved path will offer accessible options, improve connectivity to the town centre and to Portree High School, and will connect with existing and proposed active and sustainable transport options within Portree. It would link with and enable several proposed actions within the Portree Active Travel Masterplan, including the development of an active travel route along the A87, the siting of Mobility Hubs within/around Portree to reduce traffic volumes, and the redevelopment of Somerled Square to make it more accessible and friendly for active and sustainable transport.

Active travel infrastructure at this location is currently limited to a 2m wide footway and uncontrolled crossing at the A855/A87 junction.

The project will clearly tie in to expressed desire for additional Active Travel options along this route as identified in the Portree Active Travel Masterplan and Portree High School Travel Plan.

Cost estimates produced by ARUP as part of the Portree Active Travel Masterplan give an indicative cost of between £180,000 and £360,000 to carry out this project. The bid submitted to ATIF has requested £19,500 to carry out the initial design phase.

### **Edinbane Link Path**

This project was previously submitted for ATIF Tier 2 (Construction) Funding by HITRANS for financial year 2025/26, but no response was received from Transport Scotland. It has now been resubmitted with The Highland Council as lead applicant, as the Council's Roads Operations Manager submitted the winning bid to construct the path, and this would keep the project management and construction in-house to the Council.

The project is to create a 1.65km accessible active travel route linking Edinbane village centre with residential areas and visitor accommodation strung out along the A850 to the north of the settlement. The path will also link Edinbane Campsite with visitor facilities in the main settlement.

The route will be created by linking and improving stretches of existing sub-standard roadside footpath, utilising sections of existing old single-track road (disused former carriageway) and constructing short sections of new roadside shared use path. This will create a continuous 2m wide shared use route with safety signage and side road crossing, as well as a new uncontrolled pedestrian crossing on the A850.

The proposed path will connect residents and visitors staying in the outlying townships north of Edinbane with community facilities located within the village centre (Primary School, hotels, pub, community hall) without having to drive along the busy A850; currently the only route to access local services. Traffic speeds and volumes on this road disincentivise active travel within the settlement, and with 50/60 mph speed limit raises safety concerns for walkers and wheelers, especially in the dark or at dusk since there is no continuous footway.

The path will terminate at Edinbane Campsite, a busy focal point for visitors staying overnight in the area, so the path will enable guests to access local facilities in the village centre (pub, hotel, shop) without having to use their vehicles as well as connecting the scattered crofting settlements and dwellings along the road. Improved accessibility and safety will encourage residents along the A850 to choose active travel for short local journeys, including pupils at the primary school.

This path is part of a wider initiative to create a network of active travel and leisure paths around Edinbane and its satellite townships, which sprang from a community consultation exercise in 2019 and will eventually connect to the wider Skye Cycle Network. Edinbane Community Company is taking this forward as part of their long-term regeneration plan using windfarm community benefit monies. The Highland Council will be working closely with Edinbane Community Company throughout the delivery of this project, should the funding bid be successful.

The total cost of this project will be £1,275,000, and a bid has been submitted to Transport Scotland for 100% of the project cost. Match funding had been available to the project on its initial submission in 2025/26, through the Iain Findlay Path Fund, but this funding stream is no longer available and no additional match funding streams have been identified.

## 5.7 **Additional Active Travel Projects**

- 5.8 Three additional Active Travel Projects have been identified, which the Council may either take forward or play a supporting role in, subject to budget and resource availability.

### **Skye Cycle Way Phase 1**

The Skye Cycle Way project was initiated by the local community, working with Broadford and Strath Community Company. It has been supported through Places for Everyone funding from Sustrans. The project has progressed to Stage 3: Developed Design.

HITRANS submitted a bid to Transport Scotland's Active Travel Infrastructure Fund (ATIF) in February 2025 to progress the project through Stage 4: Technical Design in 2025-26. HITRANS has received a partial award to complete preliminary survey work and landowner engagement in 2025-26 and expect to receive funding in 2026-27 to complete Stage 4: Technical Design with a view to construction of Phase 1 in 2027-28, subject to funding.

This will ideally allow construction of Phase 1 to commence in 2027/28.

The Council has played an active role in this project as a partner in the Skye Cycle Way Working Group, liaising closely with HITRANS, Transport Scotland and Broadford & Strath Community Company. It is anticipated that the Council will continue to be involved in this project and to provide support as needed to other partners in order to progress it.

### **Broadford Hospital Path**

The Council has been working in partnership with colleagues within NHS Highland and the Broadford & Strath Community Company (BSCC) to progress this project.

The path is a local community initiative, co-ordinated by BSCC.

The route was first suggested by members of the community when the new hospital was being designed. The proposal was supported by BSCC but was not realised as part of the hospital build.

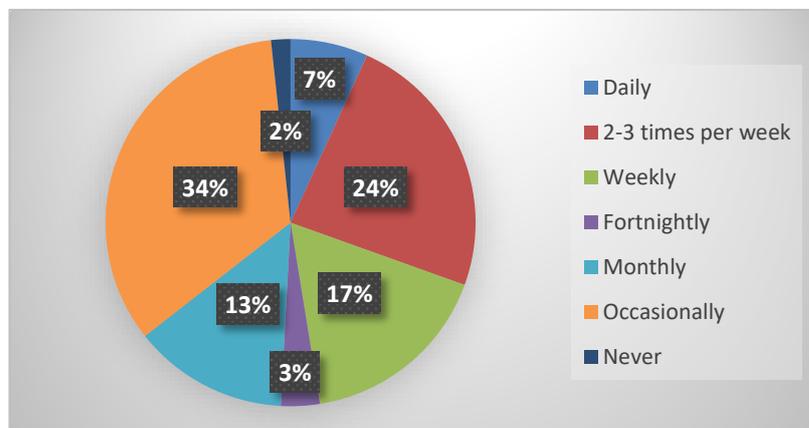
A community paths survey carried out by BSCC in 2024 demonstrated strong support for the path. The Broadford & Strath Local Place Plan also highlights it as a community aspiration. The Local Development Plan notes the need for an active travel connection between the hospital/health centre and village centre.

Funding from the Community Led Local Development Fund, via the Highlands & Islands Climate Hub, has enabled BSCC to undertake consultation and design work, and further engagement work was carried out last year at Broadford Hospital.

Feedback from this exercise was almost unanimously positive, with 58 of 59 respondents indicating that they would be supportive of the path, with one respondent not answering the question

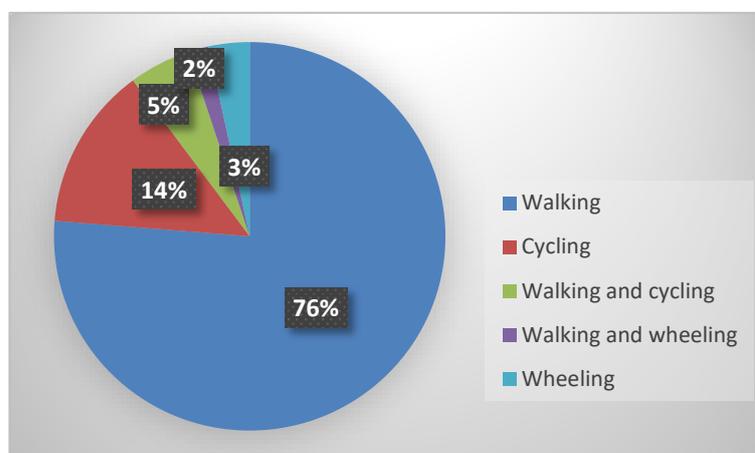
Responses were received from a broad cross-section of users of Broadford Hospital and Health Centre, including staff, patients, regular visitors, and local residents. Clear indications were received that the path would be well used if constructed:

*Responses to question: If we created a path between Broadford Hospital / Health Centre to the Pier Path / shoreline, approximately how often do you think you would use it?*



The majority of respondents indicated that they would use it primarily for walking:

*Responses to question: If I used the path, I would anticipate my main mode of transport on it to be...*



Final designs have been produced for the path and a contractor has been secured to dig two trial pits on the proposed site as an additional safeguard to confirm the findings of topographic survey works already carried out. A planning application has been produced and will imminently be submitted.

Council officers will continue to work to support BSCC with advice and resource where appropriate and, subject to planning approval, intend to prepare a submission for Active Travel Infrastructure Tier 2 (Construction) funding, to be taken forward in financial year 2027/28.

## **Raasay School – Community Centre Path**

This project was previously under development through the Carbon Neutral Islands project and initial discussions held with Walking Scotland regarding support for the Iain Findlay Path Fund, however it was not taken forward in the pipeline of projects at that time.

The initial proposal was for the creation of a path linking Raasay Primary School with Raasay Community Hall. This would allow for Active Travel options between two key trip generators/community facilities and enable safer routes for pick-up/drop-off at school times.

The Council's Project Officer has subsequently met with a development officer at Raasay Community Development Trust with the intention of revisiting this project and taking it forward subject to appropriate funding streams being identified. From this initial meeting and site visit, there is now a potential additional section of route required, with the Raasay Community Stores intending to move location to the former Free Presbyterian Church further along the same road.

Should appropriate funding streams be identified within 2026/27, the Council would like to take this project forward through an early-stage feasibility study and concept design, with a view to applying for Active Travel Infrastructure Fund support in subsequent years dependent on a positive outcome from this exercise.

Designation: Assistant Chief Executive – Place

Date: 2 February 2026

Author: David Swanson – Active Travel Project Officer

Background Papers: None

Appendices: None