

ECONOMY AND INFRASTRUCTURE COMMITTEE

BULLETIN ITEM

Subject: Highland-wide Active Travel Network Delivery Plan

Date: 10 November 2022

ECO: Infrastructure, Environment & Economy

1 Purpose/Executive Summary

- 1.1 Work is currently underway on a Highland-wide Active Travel Network Delivery Plan. This bulletin summarises the process, key milestones and major opportunities which this work will capture for the region.

2 Background: Active Travel Network

- 2.1 Scottish Government has committed 10% of the annual Transport budget to Active Travel by 2024/25, expected to be £320m per year, and it has set a national target to reduce car kilometres by 20% by 2030. The Highland Council has secured £10.6m for the Inverness City Active Travel Network; £1.6m for Cycling, Walking and Safer Routes for 2022/23 and £109m for transport through the City and Region Deal; as well as initial funding of £2.7m to unlock up to £50m for public transport, through the Bus Partnership Fund.
- 2.2 The Scottish Government published the National Transport Strategy in 2020; in doing so it places *people* at the top of the priority for travel, and private cars at the bottom (Fig. 1). Scottish Government also published the draft Strategic Transport Projects Review 2 in 2022, identifying a requirement for widespread local interventions to decarbonise transport, final reporting is expected at the end of 2022. A government review of how the committed major increase in national active travel funding should be distributed locally is also expected to report at end of 2022.

Prioritising Sustainable Transport

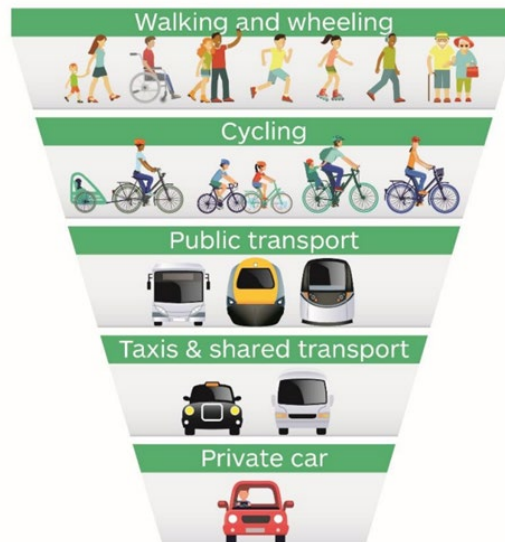


Figure 1: Sustainable Travel Hierarchy

- 2.3 Over three years ago THC declared a Climate and Ecological Emergency, identifying action to respond remains a priority. Transport contributes 37% of Scotland's greenhouse gas emissions¹ and prioritising ways to reduce this will deliver a strong response to the Emergency.
- 2.4 The Covid-19 pandemic transformed how people lived their lives. One of the few positive aspects was people's increased appreciation of local natural and built environments, and walking, wheeling and cycling for daily exercise. It is expected that more people will seek to continue these positive lifestyle changes, and policy should also harness this.
- 2.5 Along with the climate emergency and wellbeing factors, active and sustainable travel modes are generally cheaper than vehicle use and can support households and organisations to access the goods and services they need through increasingly challenging financial times.
- 2.6 The Local Transport Strategy provides the foundation for decisions about how we manage, maintain and improve the entire transport network. It was last published in 2010 and is now under review, as set out in a separate paper to this meeting.
- 2.7 As explained in 2.1 above, THC has been successful in securing funding for active travel infrastructure projects and network master planning. Detailed Active Travel Masterplans are now in place for a range of settlements across Highland. These projects support the development of a Highland-wide active travel network delivery plan.

¹ National Transport Strategy, Scottish Government (2020)

3 Prioritising infrastructure delivery

- 3.1 It is essential that THC has a clear, consistent and evidence-led methodology to prioritise the delivery of its active travel network. Factors that must be considered include the potential volume of users, anticipated modal shift, the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation, health benefits, local and global environmental benefits and cost. In partnership with HiTrans work is under way to develop and apply methodologies to this end. This will set the framework for applying for future funding, allocating staff time, and engaging with communities and other stakeholders. These prioritised lists of infrastructure will include short-term projects, to build momentum for change, as well as prioritising the routes already identified that should be delivered first to have maximum impact. It will also ensure that we are in a strong position to unlock the anticipated major funding opportunities explained in 2.1 as they become available. A further, more detailed report on this work will be presented to committee in the new year.
- 3.2 There are four key components of the Active Travel team’s work programme centred on delivery, summarised in the table below:-

Workstream	Summary	Timescale
Live and committed projects	A suite of projects is underway and well advance in the pipeline. Officer resource and external funding is committed, and these projects will progress to conclusion (examples include Wick High Street; Academy Street, Inverness; and Dalfaber Drive junction, Aviemore)	Ongoing
Community-led projects	Community aspiration for projects can emerge at any time and can often generate funding support externally. A range of such projects exist, and more are likely to emerge. The work programme of the Active Travel Team will therefore be flexible, within the resources available, to provide appropriate Officer support.	Ongoing
Active Travel Masterplan prioritisation	A suite of masterplans is in place for settlements across Highland. Work is underway to apply a multi-criteria prioritisation of the interventions identified within each of these settlements. This will form a major component of the Active Travel Team’s work programme, enabling THC to utilise and multiply capital funding with external grants, such as Scottish Government’s Places for Everyone fund.	Report to Economy & Infrastructure Spring 2023
Inner Moray Firth prioritisation	A major bid to the Places for Everyone fund is in preparation to secure multi-year funding for the delivery of between-settlement improvements throughout the Inner Moray Firth Area. This is identified as a key workstream because of its major potential both in terms of funding and transformational change across the most populated part of Highland.	Application to Sustrans Winter 2022

4 A clear route forward

- 4.1 Having a robust methodology and prioritised list of active travel projects will inform the Local Transport Strategy; Active Travel Strategy; the Council's overall work on climate adaption; our response to economic hardship, and our engagement with communities. It will set a clear route forward for making the most of funding opportunities for the delivery of high-quality infrastructure improvements to enable an essential modal shift within and between communities across the Highlands.

Designation: Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure, Environment & Economy

Date: 14 October 2022

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Background Papers: [National Transport Strategy](#);
[20% reduction in car KM route map](#);
STPR2 Highlands & Islands Case for [Change](#) & Draft [Recommendations](#)
[STAG Guidance](#)