



**ACTIVE TRAVEL**

Report by Chief Officer, Assets and Infrastructure

**PURPOSE**

- 1.1 The purpose of the Report is to update Members on the development of a Delivery Plan for the Stornoway Active Travel Strategy, and progress on delivery of the Active Travel Strategy for the Outer Hebrides over the past twelve months.

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

- 2.1 Scottish Government funding for active travel is set to increase nationally to £220m in 2024/25, with a requirement for funding bids to be linked to an Active Travel Strategy and Masterplan delivery. Previous work on the Active Travel Strategy, an important element of the Outer Hebrides Local Transport Strategy 2020-2030, puts the Comhairle in a strong position to access this funding.
- 2.2 The development of the Active Travel Strategy, Delivery Plan and associated locality-based Masterplans has been supported by HITRANS. Vikki Trelfer, HITRANS Active Travel Officer, has been working closely with the Active Travel Working Group at the Comhairle and will be present at the meeting.
- 2.3 The Outer Hebrides Active Travel Strategy 2021-2025 was approved by the Comhairle in December 2021, with an associated Delivery Plan. During 2022, HITRANS funded the development of a series of locality-based Masterplans for active travel in the main settlements across the Outer Hebrides; Stornoway, Tarbert, Lochmaddy, Balivanich, Lochboisdale and Castlebay. HITRANS was able to provide additional funding for improved and extended footways to access the Lochmaddy Pier development from the village, with works completed in the autumn of 2023.
- 2.4 In 2023 HITRANS again provided funding for consultants ARUP to assist the Active Travel Working Group in developing a Delivery Plan for the recommendations outlined in the Stornoway Active Travel Masterplan, to enable a funding bid to begin delivery in 2024/25 to be prepared.
- 2.5 The Comhairle was also successful in a bid to the Active Travel Transformation Fund in 2023/24, and some of the Masterplan recommendations are being taken forward in Stornoway and Lochboisdale this financial year.

**RECOMMENDATION**

- 3.1 **It is recommended that the Comhairle note the progress to date and the development of approved active travel strategies and masterplans to delivery plans.**

Contact Officer: Calum Mackenzie, Head of Property and Infrastructure ext. 211405

Appendices: 1. Outer Hebrides Active Travel Delivery Plan  
2. Stornoway Active Travel Delivery Plan

Background Papers: Report to Transportation and Infrastructure Committee – December 2021 and November 2022

## IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The following implications are applicable in terms of the Report.

Resource Implications	Implications/None
Financial	Proposals are being developed and delivered through specific allocated funding and grant applications.
Legal	Traffic Regulation Orders will be progressed as appropriate to each initiative.
Staffing	Existing technical staff alongside HITRANS staff are progressing initiatives through a collaborative approach with other public sector partners.
Assets and Property	Improvements to existing transportation assets are possible, however the revenue costs of new assets will require consideration.
Strategic Implications	Implications/None
Risk	None
Equalities	Each initiative will be assessed against equality legislation however are more likely to have a positive impact due to improved accessibility.
Corporate Strategy	The population of the Outer Hebrides, across all age ranges, have improved opportunities for sport, leisure and recreational activities, and have improved their quality of life, wellbeing and health
Environmental Impact	Potential benefits from the reduction in fossil fuel journeys.
Consultation	Each initiative will be assessed in terms of appropriate levels of consultation.

## BACKGROUND

- 5.1 Active travel is an important element of the Outer Hebrides Local Transport Strategy 2020-2030, and census data indicates that 23% of households in the Outer Hebrides do not have a car available at home. Funding for active travel is set to increase to £220m in 2024/25, with a requirement for funding bids to be linked to Active Travel Strategy and Masterplan delivery. Previous work on creating and delivering the Active Travel Strategy has put the Comhairle in a strong position to access this funding.
- 5.2 As for other forms of transport, having a strategy ensures that the many benefits of increasing physical activity levels by making local journeys on foot or by bike are framed, planned, funded, delivered, and measured in a structured way. While motorised transport remains essential for the main part of many journeys, there are opportunities to encourage more trips to be made by active travel, particularly within communities and in the larger settlements where many people live, work and study.
- 5.3 Active travel is one of the most sustainable ways to build physical activity into our lives. Walking and cycling as part of our everyday routine can contribute to the recommended levels of physical activity to promote physical and mental health and wellbeing. Greater investment in, and promotion of, active travel is an effective way to meet climate change targets and contributes to reducing pollution and meeting the target of 20% reduction in car kilometers by 2030.
- 5.4 HITRANS has supported the Comhairle in developing an Active Travel Strategy, and to develop locality-based Active Travel Masterplans to encourage walking and cycling within our larger settlements. A strong, cross-departmental Active Travel Working Group has been established within the Comhairle and includes key partners such as NHS Western Isles.
- 5.5 A Delivery Plan for the Stornoway Active Travel Masterplan recommendations has been developed and is included at the Appendix to the Report.

## **ACTIVE TRAVEL STRATEGY DELIVERY TO DATE**

- 6.1 Mapping of schools, community hubs, services and trip generators is complete, also core paths, local paths and roads.
- 6.2 Bikeability training in primary schools supported, to ensure young people have essential cycling skills.
- 6.3 Active Travel Masterplans commissioned for the main settlements across the Outer Hebrides, providing recommendations for active travel improvements. These have been incorporated into the Delivery Plan with a specific Delivery Plan developed for Stornoway.
- 6.4 Improved and extended footway access between Lochmaddy and the pier; additional cycle parking facilities at the pier.
- 6.5 Working with Storax Uibhist to design and deliver recommendations from the Lochboisdale Active Travel Masterplan, which aligns with the Lochboisdale Strategic Visioning Plan.
- 6.6 Successful Active Travel Transformation Fund bid for £385,000 in 2023/24 to fund final phase of Habost path; a short section of footpath on North Street in Stornoway, which ties in with one of the Masterplan recommendations; and improved crossing points and footpath at Willowglen in Stornoway to improve pedestrian and cycle access to UHI.
- 6.7 Behaviour Change programme launched with BetterPoints and GoHi, which rewards participants for journeys made actively and sustainably with points that can be converted into vouchers to spend at local and national retailers.
- 6.8 There is the opportunity to bid for additional Active Travel Transformation Fund money in 2024/25 to develop designs and delivery plans for the other Masterplan settlements across the Outer Hebrides, and to begin looking at improving routes to schools and routes linking communities with each other and other trip generators.

## **STORNOWAY ACTIVE TRAVEL DELIVERY PLAN**

- 7.1 As the largest settlement in the Outer Hebrides, Stornoway presents the greatest opportunity for modal shift from private car use to walking, wheeling and cycling for shorter everyday journeys. With most services and schools within a mile of residential areas, it presents an excellent model for living well locally in the Outer Hebrides and meeting the target for a 20% reduction in car kilometres by 2030.
- 7.2 HITRANS commissioned ARUP in 2023 to assist the Active Travel Working Group in formulating a Delivery Plan for active travel improvements in Stornoway. This would provide a guide for phasing improvements across the town and a strong basis for a funding bid to begin delivery in 2024.
- 7.3 The Delivery Plan has been developed to support the Stornoway Active Travel Masterplan published in 2022. For each action proposed in the Masterplan, the Delivery Plan outlines opportunities and constraints, potential funding sources, likely outputs required to meet funding criteria, alignment with regional and local policies and potential next steps. It is intended as a tool to map out the proposed delivery programme for the actions in the Masterplan, to support the transition to low carbon transport in Stornoway.
- 7.4 Recommendations covered in the Delivery Plan to create a continuous, coherent active travel network within Stornoway include:
  - high quality active travel infrastructure on the A875, A866 and Perceval Road South, to provide an active travel network and improve walking, wheeling and cycling conditions between key origins and destinations;

- an Active Neighbourhood to the north-east of the town centre to create a more attractive local environment for residents;
- crossing points and junction improvements at key locations to improve active travel connections;
- a regional mobility hub at Stornoway Port, bringing together multiple partners to ensure connectivity between transport modes and create a more inviting environment for pedestrians and people riding bikes; and
- a behavioural change campaign to make Stornoway residents aware of the opportunities and benefits of active travel, while supporting ongoing behavioural change initiatives already being delivered by local organisations.

7.5 HITRANS has offered funding this financial year to commission a piece of follow-on work for consultants ARUP to further investigate feasibility and design of a one-way system around Stornoway town centre. This would free up space for walking, wheeling and cycling on the A857 around Cromwell Street and Bayhead, creating additional space for the expected influx of cruise ship passengers expected to visit from the Deep Water Port. It would also facilitate improved active travel infrastructure on Matheson Road, a key route to The Nicolson Institute and key employment centres. It is then expected that Officers will submit a bid to Transport Scotland's Active Travel Transformation Fund to deliver this, and associated recommendations from the Masterplan, in a phased approach during 2024/25 and 2025/26.

7.6 A meeting has been arranged with Stornoway Members to provide further detailed briefing on proposals.

## **CONCLUSION**

8.1 The Comhairle is well placed to take advantage of increased funding for active travel proposals. Comhairle officers, with the assistance of HiTRANS, have identified proposals which can be developed to a delivery and funding application stage, following further consultation as appropriate.