



**REPORT TO: ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND INFRASTRUCTURE
SERVICES COMMITTEE ON 8 FEBRUARY 2022**

SUBJECT: SCHOOL STREETS – PILOT PROJECT EVALUATION

**BY: DEPUTE CHIEF EXECUTIVE (ECONOMY, ENVIRONMENT AND
FINANCE)**

1. REASON FOR REPORT

- 1.1 This report is to inform the Committee of the outcomes to date of the School Streets Pilot Projects at New Elgin and Seafield Primary Schools in Elgin. The report provides an evaluation of the School Streets pilot project, encompassing vehicle volumes, pedestrian volumes, parent/guardian and resident perceptions and stakeholder representations received, including from Police Scotland
- 1.2 This report is submitted to Committee in terms of Section III (F) (17 and 20) of the Council's Scheme of Administration relating to traffic management functions, including the preparation and implementation of traffic management schemes, and the making of Orders for the regulation and management of traffic.

2. RECOMMENDATION

2.1 Committee is asked to:-

- (i) note the outcomes of the evaluation of the two School Streets Pilot Projects at New Elgin and Seafield Primary Schools;**
- (ii) agree to commence the statutory process to make permanent the Experimental Traffic Regulation Orders for the two pilot projects;**
- (iii) delegate authority to the Head of Environmental and Commercial Services in consultation with local ward members to consider and determine objections received as part of this statutory process;**
- (iv) approve the inclusion of School Streets schemes as an option for reducing the number of vehicles outside schools and encouraging Active Travel; and**

- (v) **approve the criteria in para 4.20 for assessing future applications from schools for a School Streets scheme on the roads around their school.**

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 A School Street scheme is when the roads around a school are temporarily closed to vehicles on each school day, during set times when pupils are being dropped off or picked up. Residents who live on the closed roads are permitted to continue to use their vehicles during the closures. Access for emergency services, including doctors, and utility companies is generally permitted.
- 3.2 On 5 November 2019, this Committee agreed to a trial of School Streets schemes at two locations in Moray, funded from the Cycling Walking & Safer Routes grant, delegating the authority to select the sites to the Head of Environmental and Commercial Services (para 8 of the minute refers). Schools were invited to apply and using the selection criteria set out in that report, out of the six schools which applied, two schools were selected, New Elgin and Seafield Primary Schools in Elgin.
- 3.3 The aim of the School Streets pilot projects is to reduce the amount of traffic on the streets outside/around the school entrances at the beginning and the end of the school day, and create more attractive conditions for pupils to walk or cycle to and from school. On the understanding that some parents/carers would continue to drop off/pick up pupils by private car, another objective was for this to occur across a more dispersed area, rather than directly outside the school entrances.
- 3.4 Initially officers were working towards the implementation of the School Streets pilot projects for April 2020. However, implementation was delayed due to the Covid-19 pandemic that saw the temporary closure of school buildings and changes to day-to-day operation at schools once pupils returned.
- 3.5 However, by February 2021 it was apparent that primary schools were going to re-open and move towards 'near normal' operations. Officers therefore worked towards the implementation of the two School Streets schemes in time for the return of pupils to the school buildings.
- 3.6 An Experimental Traffic Regulation Order (ETRO) was advertised and progressed for each school, to enable the legal restriction of motor vehicles on the relevant streets. Drivers are made aware of the restrictions at each location through the installation of large signs at all entry points to the school streets zone, which 'flash' during the operating periods. Police Scotland have the powers to enforce the School Streets restrictions.
- 3.7 As part of the ETRO, exemptions for specific vehicle types were included, for example emergency vehicles, doctors, utilities companies. Residents with vehicles registered at an address within the School Streets closure are also exempt from any restrictions as long as they apply for a permit through the Council. Forty-three permits have been issued to residents within the New

Elgin zone whilst thirty-three permits have been issued to residents within the Seafield pilot project area.

- 3.8 The ETRO for each school runs for a period of 18 months, which begins on the date that the ETRO was first advertised (5 March 2021). Therefore, the ETRO lapses on 5 September 2022, after which the School Streets schemes would no longer be backed by a statutory order and would be unenforceable, with the signs having to be removed and bringing the two existing schemes to an end.
- 3.9 The aim of the evaluation is to determine the success or otherwise achieved through the pilot projects, and to inform a decision on whether or not to progress a permanent Traffic Regulation Order (TRO) at each location. The TRO process usually takes about six months. Reporting to this committee leaves a period of six months available to pursue a permanent TRO should Committee agree. Delegating power to the Head of Service in consultation with local ward members to consider and determine any objections, would significantly increase the likelihood of being able to complete the statutory process to make the two schemes permanent prior to the expiry of the ETROs.

4. EVALUATION

- 4.1 In order to evaluate the two School Street schemes, a number of surveys were undertaken, encompassing:
- Traffic Counts at each school site, 'before' and 'after' the implementation of the School Streets schemes, the results of which are contained within **Appendix 1**.
 - Perceptions: determined via questionnaires sent to residents around the two schools and to parents/carers of pupils at both schools once the School Streets schemes had been operational for nearly two school terms (copy of questionnaire including in **Appendix 2**).
 - School Travel Data: comparison of the Living Streets' interactive Travel Tracker data where pupils record their travel mode on an ad-hoc basis for the months of September 2019 (before) and September 2021 (after). The results of these surveys are contained in **Appendix 3**.
- 4.2 The traffic counts undertaken showed that there had generally been a decrease in traffic at the survey locations, with the exception of during the afternoon 'school pick up' period at New Elgin primary school. Reductions in traffic levels ranged between 27% and 43%. Whereas the increase in traffic levels observed at New Elgin was 15%. The survey location for New Elgin was just outside the School Streets closure. Therefore, this increase may in part be a result of parents/guardians parking as close as possible to the scheme.
- 4.3 As residents who live within the School Streets scheme are permitted to pass through during the closures, it was never anticipated that all traffic would be removed during the school drop off and pick up periods, only that there would be a reduction in through traffic and in the levels of parents/guardians parking outside/near the school entrances. Residents are issued with a permit, which is displayed on their windscreen. Updating the design of the permit to make it

more prominent could address some of the perceived non-compliance with the closures.

- 4.4 Average traffic speeds on Bezack Street at New Elgin Primary School have decreased by 13% and 12% during the hours, which include school 'drop off' and school 'pick up' times respectively. Whereas on Deanshaugh Terrace near Seafield Primary School the average vehicle speeds have slightly increased by 1% and 2% respectively.
- 4.5 Towards the end of last year, questionnaires were sent out to the parents/guardians of pupils at both schools via school newsletters to gather views on the two pilot schemes. Residents within the School Streets areas and on surrounding streets were also informed of the survey via correspondence to their home. 153 responses to the survey were received, 68 responses were associated with New Elgin Primary School, 83 responses related to Seafield Primary School and 2 responses did not provide either a school name or resident postcode.
- 4.6 Of the responses associated with New Elgin Primary School, 24 responses were from parents/guardians, 24 from residents living within the School Streets closure and 20 from residents living on the peripheries of the School Streets closure, including Milnefield Avenue and Anderson Drive.
- 4.7 The majority of responses associated with Seafield Primary School were from parents/guardians, 62, whereas only 16 responses were from residents living within the School Streets closure and 5 responses from residents living on the periphery of the pilot scheme.
- 4.8 The proportions of responses associated with both schools reflect the anecdotal feedback received by officers that there has been a high level of parent/guardian support at Seafield Primary School and more resident concerns about compliance and displaced parking at New Elgin Primary School.
- 4.9 The questionnaires enabled respondents to submit comments. The main themes to emerge through this feedback were:
 - Road restrictions are not obeyed unless the police are present (19 New Elgin; 31 Seafield);
 - The problem has moved elsewhere (6 New Elgin);
 - School Streets perceived as beneficial (2 New Elgin; 1 Seafield);
 - The signage is not clear (1 Seafield);
 - Traffic speeds have increased/are too high (2 Seafield);
 - School Streets is causing conflict between parents/carers (1 Seafield).
- 4.10 The two main issues were concerns relating to the restrictions not being obeyed unless they were enforced by the Police and, at New Elgin Primary School, parking at school drop off and pick up times moving onto adjacent streets. The following section explores the two key issues, through means of the data collected and feedback from Police Scotland.
- 4.11 Motorist compliance – Residents at both pilot projects have been in touch to highlight that there is non-compliance; the vast majority of this

correspondence has been with regard to New Elgin Primary School pilot project. Officers have visited both schools on a number of occasions, both before and after the implementation, and note that whilst there were still vehicles passing through the Seafield Primary School, the presence of teachers within the School Streets area during the closures influenced parent/guardian compliance.

- 4.12 At New Elgin Primary School, there have been reports of non-compliance in terms of parents/guardians ignoring the closures and continuing to park outside the school. There has been no additional presence of teachers during the closure to influence behaviours and the Head Teacher of the school has indicated that further support from the Police would assist in reducing the incidences of parent/guardian non-compliance.
- 4.13 Based on correspondence received throughout the pilot monitoring period, occasional requests for Police presence were made at both locations. Police Scotland issued 28 fines along with numerous warnings to motorists (not officially recorded) during October and November 2021. Whilst the Police are aware of the non-compliance at both schools, insufficient resources are cited as to why they cannot regularly be present in the vicinity of the schools. In relation to New Elgin Primary School pilot project, Police Scotland have suggested the use of Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) cameras to monitor compliance and support issue of fines to traffic entering the School Streets scheme during the closures.
- 4.14 Displaced parking - There has been some displacement of vehicle parking to the periphery of the pilot project area at New Elgin Primary School, as highlighted in the questionnaire responses. Officer observations noted that the majority of displaced vehicles are parking on Bezack Street to the south of the school (12 to 15 vehicles) with Milnefield Avenue and Well Brae Court also being used by (4 to 6 vehicles at both locations).
- 4.15 At Seafield Primary School, there is an existing car park to the south east of the school, which is being used by parents/guardians. Displaced parking is over a wider area around the school and at lower levels than at New Elgin. However, there is also an understanding that since the introduction of the pilot project, more pupils are walking/cycling to school so the overall level on on-street parking associated with the schools would be lower than before the implementation of the School Streets schemes. Observations of activity around the school and the comparison of the Travel Tracker survey data before and after the scheme, implementation, contained in **Appendix 3**, confirms that the proportion of travel by walking, cycling and scooting at both schools has increased.
- 4.16 A list of the locations where displacement parking is taking place around New Elgin Primary School is contained in **Appendix 4**. The routes from the areas of displacement parking are acceptable. However, the displaced parking on Bezack Street observed near the boundary of the New Elgin pilot project has been raised as a concern as vehicles are manoeuvring into and out of parking spaces on a route that is well utilised by pupils who are walking/cycling. No specific incidents have been reported.

- 4.17 However, a request has been made for speed reduction measures on this section of road. The results of a speed survey undertaken in November 2021 show that average vehicles speeds have reduced since the implementation of the pilot project, as set out in paragraph 4.4. It is therefore not proposed to pursue any speed reduction measures at this location.
- 4.18 Experience gained through the two pilot projects has identified the following key determining factors:
- School Streets which act as a through road are more challenging and resource intensive to enact and enforce;
 - There needs to be strong ongoing commitment from the school and the school community to encourage active travel and considerate parking behaviours; and
 - There needs to be appropriate locations for 'Park and Stride' to minimise any impact of indiscriminate parking on the streets surrounding a School Streets scheme.
- 4.19 It is recommended that School Streets are included as one of the measures, which could be used to reduce the number of vehicle movements on the public roads surrounding school entrances and encourage pupils to walk, cycle or scoot to school.
- 4.20 As a result of the pilot and associated feedback, it is recommended that the following criteria are used going forward to determine whether a school can be considered for School Streets. The selection criteria was previously approved by Committee in November 2019, and is confirmed as being appropriate through the pilot projects. The criteria are:
- The proven positive support from school staff, parents and school councils, with schools willing to commit to ensure that they will pro-actively promote the scheme to parents, regularly ascertain pupil travel data, and facilitate the gathering of views from the school community;
 - The current number of travel planning, walking, cycling and curriculum initiatives being undertaken which would support the scheme;
 - The practicalities of delivering the scheme, including the availability of diversion routes around the closure, the ability of surrounding streets to accommodate displaced traffic movements including appropriate areas for parking;
 - The school entrance not being on a bus route;
 - The availability of suitable 'Park and Stride' locations (i.e. alternative locations where parents can park away from the school and walk, e.g. non-residential parking areas), with surrounding streets being able to safely enable 'Park and Stride' movements via footways and crossing points;
 - High levels of car use to/from the school;
 - High levels of congestion at the school entrances;
 - The proposed School Streets have little by way of alternative trip attractors (i.e. care homes, doctors surgeries) that would necessitate increased vehicle exemption permits; and
 - The School Streets have sufficient space and visibility options for the positioning of signage (at entries and potentially internal repeater signage).

5. MEASURES OF SUCCESS

- 5.1 Success, as identified in the previous report to this Committee referred to in the Background Papers, is measured by assessing:
- Reduction in vehicle movements within the School Streets zone;
 - Increase in levels of Active Travel at the school;
 - Perceptions of safety around the school; and
 - Any reported road safety incidents.
- 5.2 The pilot evaluation has identified for Seafield Primary School that there has been:
- A reduction in traffic passing the school during school drop off and pick up times.
 - Increase in walking and cycling to the school as evidenced by pedestrian surveys and Travel Tracker data.
 - Improved perceptions of safety around school.
 - An acceptable level of displaced parking due to the presence of a nearby off street parking areas at the edge of the School Streets area.
 - No reported accidents.
- 5.3 Whereas the pilot evaluation has identified for New Elgin Primary School that there has been:
- A reduction in traffic during school drop off times at the periphery of the School Streets area but an increase in traffic during school pick up times.
 - Increase in walking and cycling to the school as evidenced by pedestrian surveys and Travel Tracker data.
 - No reported accidents.

However, concerns have been raised about indiscriminate parking on the streets surrounding the School Streets area

- 5.4 Transportation are currently working with schools and Police Scotland in Buckie to promote considerate parking behaviours during school drop off and pick up times, thorough 'Park Smart' initiatives which aim to educate parents/guardians on safe parking. Undertaking a 'Park Smart' initiative at New Elgin Primary School could be considered should issues with indiscriminate parking on the streets surrounding the scheme continue.

6. NEXT STEPS

- 6.1 Both schools and Police Scotland have confirmed that they are committed to proceeding with schemes and to making them permanent. Should the schemes become permanent non-compliance issues will continue to be monitored and if they continue, options for enforcement of the order using ANPR will be investigated. The design of the residents permit will be reviewed to make the permit more prominent to assist Police Scotland with their enforcement of the schemes.
- 6.2 Should item 2.1 ii) be approved by this committee, then officers would take the draft permanent Traffic Regulation Orders out to Statutory Consultation and

then Public Consultation, with a view to resolving any objections received and then advertising the “Has Made” orders prior to the end of August 2022.

7. SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS

(a) Corporate Plan and 10 Year Plan (Local Outcomes Improvement Plan (LOIP))

School Streets contribute to the Corporate and LOIP priorities relating to healthy and connected communities and a growing diverse and sustainable economy.

(b) Policy and Legal

Enforcement of School Streets closures in Moray is undertaken by Police Scotland.

(c) Financial implications

There is a minimal cost associated with the advertisement of the Traffic Regulation Orders to make the Experimental Traffic Regulation Order permanent and re-design and re-issue residents exemption permits.

Should ANPR be pursued at a later date there would be cost implications associated with the implementation and on-going operation of the equipment. The capital costs of the equipment could be met using the Cycling Walking and Safer Routes annual grant. However, there would be a need for revenue budget to be allocated for the operational costs and maintenance of the equipment.

(d) Risk Implications

The advertisement of the Experimental Traffic Regulation Order (ETRO) on 5 March 2021 initiated a formal statutory process. An ETRO provides a flexible opportunity to a Local Authority to pilot new transport concepts for a set period, but the legal process governing ETROs does not allow the Traffic Order to continue beyond its expiry date. The maximum period for which the ETRO can be in force is 18 months. The ETROs for the two pilot schemes would therefore lapse on 5 September 2022.

There is therefore a risk relating to the need to formalise the existing ETROs into permanent Traffic Regulation Orders in the timescale available before the ETROs lapse. This could be mitigated if Committee delegates power to the Head of Service to consider and determine objections received as part of this statutory process, with only unresolved objections being brought back to this Committee. If Committee agrees to this, then the two schemes can continue seamlessly, without the School Streets restrictions having to cease until a permanent order comes into operation. Any lull in school streets restrictions would jeopardise the successes seen in terms of changes in perceptions and travel behaviours.

Other risks associated with the School Streets schemes are a lack of enforcement, non-compliance by motorists (including parents/guardians of pupils attending the schools) and a lack of long-term commitment from the school community. These risks continue to arise but are mitigated on

an on-going basis through ad-hoc on-street Police presence and through the Sustainable Travel Officer working with the schools.

(e) Staffing Implications

Staff time and resources will be required to make the Experimental Traffic Regulation Order permanent. Further staff time and resources would be required should further School Streets schemes be pursued in the future. This will be delivered by the existing team and balanced with other planned priorities.

(f) Property

There are no property implications arising from this report.

(g) Equalities/Socio Economic Impact

The School Streets pilot projects have brought enhancements to life, health, education and learning through reducing the number of vehicles with the School Streets zones for periods of 30 minutes at the start and end of the school day.

The opportunities for pupils to walk and cycle to school has the potential to reduce childhood obesity and provide pupils with opportunities to gain practical road safety skills and knowledge.

Blue badge holders are exempt from the order so can travel into and out of the zones during the closure period. Exemption permits are also available for all School Streets residents with a motor vehicle registered at their address.

(h) Climate Change and Biodiversity Impacts

School Streets schemes assist in addressing the Climate Emergency by reducing the amount of traffic around school entrances at school drop off and pick up times and support active travel by providing a safer environment around the school.

There are no biodiversity impacts associated with the School Streets schemes.

(i) Consultations

The Depute Chief Executive (Economy, Environment and Finance), Legal Services Manager, Principal Accountant (P Connor), Equalities Officer, and Committee Services Officer (L Rowan) have been consulted and their comments incorporated into this report.

8. CONCLUSIONS

8.1 School Streets schemes have the potential to enhance the health and environment for young people and to address road safety perceptions. However, the success of these schemes is reliant on the commitment of the school to the scheme and the ability of Police Scotland to undertake regular enforcement activities.

8.2 Overall, the School Street pilot projects have delivered reductions in vehicle activity around the school entrances. Although both schools

have experienced non-compliance by parents/guardians who have continued to enter the zone to drop off/pick up pupils.

- 8.3 Compliance at Seafield Primary School during the closure periods has been more consistent with parents/guardians parking out with the School Streets area, as there are readily accessible off-street parking areas, whereas at New Elgin Primary School, on-street parking is the only option and concerns regarding indiscriminate parking have been raised.**

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Background Papers: School Streets Committee Report 5 November 2019

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