

Consultation

The Consultation for the draft Active Travel Strategy (ATS) was led by the Sustainable Travel Officer, guided by feedback and support through an internal working group, and a key stakeholders group consisting of individuals, community groups and organisations with an interest in Active Travel. The consultation took place to ensure the proposed aims and objectives reflect the genuine needs and desires of existing current and potential Active Travel (AT) users.

Following on from the draft Strategy being approved at Economic, Development and Infrastructure committee on 7th December 2021, a 12 week consultation period took place between Monday 10th January 2022 and Sunday 3rd April 2022. Full details of the draft ATS and the consultation questionnaire were uploaded onto the Moray Council Sustainable Travel webpage. All consultation events were held virtually through Microsoft Teams, due to Scottish Government Covid 19 guidelines at the time.

Publicity

The draft strategy was publicised through local newspapers, the Moray Council website and social media, as well as posters erected across walking and cycling routes, transport interchanges and shared with community councils and committees. A printed version was also made available at various locations, including Elgin library.

The consultation process took two forms:

- i. Two online consultations sessions/ workshops were held with a range of stakeholders, and
- ii. An online survey facilitated through Survey Monkey.

As well as the online survey, there were two online stakeholder consultations held alongside two online public consultations on the 8th and 28th March 2022. There was a total of 9 in attendance for the stakeholder sessions, and 7 attended the public sessions. These meetings were made up of representatives of community councils, community groups, businesses, charities, local authority and active travel interest groups. Those invited were;

- Moray Local Outdoor Access Forum
- North East Sensory Services
- TSI Moray
- Community Wellbeing Development Team, Moray Council
- Moray Deaf Club
- HITRANS
- Accessible Moray
- ParentAble
- Laich O Moray Active Travel Routes
- All primary and secondary schools
- Outfit Moray
- Living Streets
- Cycling UK
- Buckie LOIP
- Active Schools, Moray Council
- Climate Change, Moray Council

- Moray Carshare
- NHS Grampian
- Moray Transport Forum
- Forres Green Spaces
- The Rothes Way

The details of the public sessions were shared through the Council website as well as the Councils social media and all community councils were invited to attend via email. The public sessions were also shared by;

- Moray Chamber of Commerce
- UHI Moray
- Elgin BID
- Education, Moray Council

These sessions allowed the public the opportunity to discuss and ask any questions about the draft ATS.

Engagement Sessions and Workshops

Discussions took place around the differing priorities for different communities within Moray. Some of those who attended were representing smaller rural villages, so highlighted the need for long distance routes connecting settlements, whilst others brought up the need to link up existing parts of the network within our larger towns. The key themes that were raised through the workshop sessions were:

- Community engagement throughout projects
- Long term maintenance of un-adopted paths
- Dedicated space for cycling and walking (reallocated from existing road space where appropriate)
- Cycle parking and facilities at destinations
- Road closures around school zones
- Marketing promotion and signing of routes
- Speed limits and traffic calming

Online Survey Questionnaire

The survey included questions on the proposed vision, aims and objectives and action plan, as well as additional socio – demographic questions and equality impact. The key questions were:

- Q1. Do you agree with the proposed vision? If not, what alternative do you propose?
- Q2. Where do you think there are current gaps in walking and cycling infrastructure provision?
- Q3. What would encourage you to make more trips by foot or by cycle?
- Q4. Do you agree with the overall aims and objectives of the ATS?
- Q5. Do you consider that the proposed actions and tasks will deliver the objectives?

- Q6. Are there any impacts of the Strategy which would either be a benefit or disbenefit to any particular group (e.g. older people, people with a disability, minority ethnic groups)?
- Q7. Is there anything else you think the Active Travel Strategy and Action Plan should include to ensure that Active Travel is inclusive for all, and inequalities addressed?

There were 84 respondents to the online survey questionnaire. There was a spread of ages, with the 55-64 age group forming the largest response rate. There was an equal representation of both males and females at 45% each, 9% prefer not to say and 1% other. All responses came from within Moray, with a good mix of locations, although most who responded were from Elgin, Forres or Speyside. Nearly 97% had access to a car and could drive, and 16% considered their day to day activities to be impacted by a health problem or disability.

Summary/ Key Findings from Survey

Question 1. Do you agree with the proposed vision? If not, what alternative do you propose?

The majority (80%) of the public and stakeholders were in agreement with the vision of the strategy. However, some respondent's highlighted areas that they felt were missing from the vision, such as the link between the benefits of active travel and reaching net zero as part of climate change mitigations. A few respondents also felt that the need to improve active travel safety on existing routes, and the need to include local travel for shopping, were also completely missed from the vision and strategy. Some respondents commented that they were unsure whether active travel does 'support economic development', and that it should focus more on how it improves physical wellbeing and climate change. Below are some of the proposed alternative vision statements:

'To create a culture and environment where active travel is embedded within communities as the automatic and obvious choice for short everyday journeys to school, work and leisure'.

"To create a culture and environment where active travel is the number one choice for short everyday journeys to school, work and leisure by: providing excellent active travel connections and accessibility through a safe, integrated, accessible network that supports economic development and the needs of local communities, and promoting a change in travel behaviour away from the use of motorised transport".

Following on from the consultation however, the Vision Statement was then revised and collectively developed with consultees from;

'To create a culture and environment where active travel is the number one choice for short everyday journeys to school, work and leisure, by providing excellent active travel connections and accessibility through a safe, integrated, accessible network that supports economic development and the needs of local communities' To

'To create a culture and environment where active travel is embedded within our communities as the automatic and obvious choice for everyday journeys to school, work and leisure by: providing a safe, integrated and accessible network for all.'

Question 2. Where do you think there are current gaps in walking and cycling infrastructure provision?

Feedback was received for all eight wards in Moray with respondents providing information on where they felt there was missing gaps in the current walking and cycling infrastructure. There was more feedback received for Elgin City North and South, Forres, Speyside and Lossiemouth and surrounding areas, than the other remaining 3 ward areas. More feedback was received in some areas over others due to having current active travel community groups such as Forres Green Spaces, Laich O' Moray Active Travel Routes and The Rothes Way group. Targeted community engagement through Local Outcome Improvement Plan meetings, for those areas not as engaged, could be a way of addressing lack of input from missing wards. There was no particular theme for Elgin that stood out as respondents highlighted various issues such as; no cycle lanes on nearly all Elgin roads, access to the town centre from any direction other than North is very difficult, especially south from the A941 into Elgin. In addition, a lack of safe cycling routes through older parts of the town from Bishopmill across town to New Elgin, with paths and footways being frequently blocked by parked cars and bins, making walking challenging around Bishopmill, particularly for parents/carers with prams/pushchairs or people with limitations on their mobility.

In Forres a number of the respondents highlighted a need to have a fully joined up cycle route between Rafford and Forres. In Speyside, linking Rothes to Elgin along the A941 was deemed to be a priority, as well Rothes to Craigellachie, which then joins in with the Speyside Way (where the recently upgraded path already links with some of the smaller settlements in Speyside). In Lossie the current ongoing community project for a cycle route from Lossiemouth to Hopeman was mentioned by nearly all respondents for that ward.

Additional comments on the general infrastructure provision across Moray highlighted issues such as:

- The current cycling network is very fragmented and needs better joined up as there is a lot of 'bitty' parts and not enough joined up direct, safe routes. Especially when connecting smaller settlements into the larger towns such as Elgin and Forres.
- The need for safer and better full links across major A roads A96, A98, A95 etc.

Some further comments and actions from respondents for this question was to:

- Include aspirational and existing route maps into the strategy.
- Name the settlements that will have AT masterplans done.
- Include a priority list of areas where there would be better returns on infrastructure provision.

Question 3. What would encourage you to make more trips by foot or by cycle?

The majority of respondents highlighted designated cycle routes and safety as the main priority for what would encourage them to make more trips by walking and cycling. Cycle parking provision, maintenance and transport integration (especially in rural areas) was also highlighted a number of times by respondents as a means to encourage more trips by active travel. A number of the respondents also noted that distance, weather, and safety was an important factor to consider for Active Travel in Moray. Below are some of the key observations made by the stakeholders and public on each of the different themes:

Maintenance

- Gritting of existing paths in winter, as most cyclists choose to use the road if not done.
- The Garmouth Spey viaduct path was an area of concern for maintenance due to severe tree root damage on the path.

Safety

- Lowering the speed limit to 20mph in towns and villages.
- Better lighting on existing and new routes.
- Segregated cycle paths from other users.
- Better cycle lanes at junctions.

Cycle Parking

- More cycle parking provision at shops
- Better provision of cycle parking in existing flatted dwelling
- More secure cycle parking in areas of low index of multiple deprivation, and throughout the larger towns.
- Cycle parking at all bus stops.

Designated Routes/ Cycle Paths

- All comments for cycle paths were similar highlighting common issues, and frequently mentioned more safe and dedicated cycle/walk routes away from busy main roads. Although in town areas cycle paths alongside a main road was deemed ok, due to lower speed of traffic.

Education/ Training

- Educating cyclists to use existing lanes, as it would be pointless creating new infrastructure if cyclists do not use them.
- Better enforcement of existing cycle lanes i.e. preventing drivers parking on and blocking them.
- More signage and advertisement of route locations to school

Transport Integration

- Ability to take bikes on buses.
- All buses to have bike holders/carriers, only some currently do.

Additional comments and actions from respondents to encourage more trips by foot or cycle was to provide toilets and benches along the longer distance routes.

Question 4. Do you agree with the overall aims and objectives of the ATS?

The majority (80%) of the public and stakeholders were in agreement with the overall aims and objectives of the strategy. The most common query was in relation to objective One, 'Increase the AT network with an extra 5% infrastructure over the next 5 years.' A number of respondents felt that a 5% target was not ambitious enough over a 5-year period, and recommended this be increased. It was also suggested that it needs to be made clear what baseline of AT infrastructure we are currently working from, 5% of what? And what 5% of increased infrastructure will actually provide.

Some respondents, primarily from the stakeholders working group, felt that objective Two should be omitted from the objectives as the NCN1 is more of a challenge/ leisure route and not one that commuters would use as it is largely on side roads which have 60 mph speed limits and, in some cases, the perception was that some of these side roads had higher vehicle usage than expected of a low trafficked road. More focus should be on routes which would support the 20minute neighbourhood vision promoted through planning policy.

It was decided upon meeting with the internal Stakeholder group, that objective two would remain as part of the objectives. The aim of Objective two is to increase the use of the route, not add or improve infrastructure. The NCN1 runs east to west through Moray and goes through many locations and provides good data with a large number of counters on it. Many people do use shorter sections as commuting routes, and more recently Sustrans completed an audit of the NCN1 and removed sections of the route which they deemed unsuitable to improve the use of it.

Objectives 3, 4, 5 and 6 were largely supported by all, but further information on delivery and measurement of this would be useful, such as how will we incentivise businesses to develop Travel Plans.

Additional comments and actions from respondents on the strategy's aims and objectives were;

- To rewrite the objectives with the current baseline figures included to see the difference in what we are aiming for
- The three overarching aims to be expanded to four and include everyday life shopping etc. and the benefits to Health, wellbeing and the economy
- Additionally further clarity and definition of objective three 'appropriate cycle parking' should be given.

Question 5. Do you consider that the proposed actions and tasks will deliver the objectives?

Just over half (53%) of respondents felt that the proposed actions and tasks would deliver the objectives of the strategy. Some respondents highlighted that they felt the Council were under resourced and underfunded to deliver the project, and only substantial funding would allow the strategy to move forward successfully. Although there are funding streams available, some do not believe there is not nearly enough money to undertake all the projects to provide new infrastructure that the communities may identify.

It was suggested that Moray Council needs to spend 2% of their budget on Active Travel, similar to what Edinburgh City Council have done with 10% of their overall budget. It was highlighted by some respondents that the actions and tasks will only deliver the objectives 'only if it is adequately funded'. The Action Plan itself has been described as a bit vague, with more detailed SMART targets needed, as well as a greater delivery plan with a detailed budget and timetable.

Additional comments and actions from respondents on the strategy's actions and tasks included:

- Adding in tasks around maintenance of existing paths
- Including the identification and integration of the core path network
- Providing support to existing community led ATR projects
- Assessment of landowner support which can then be included in the prioritisation criteria
- Further engagement with Education and social care to ensure schools produce Travel plans and deliver cycle training

- Adding in further measures associated with reducing quantity and speed of traffic such as 20mph speed limits.

Question 6. Are there any impacts of the Strategy which would either be a benefit or disbenefit to any particular group (e.g. older people, people with a disability, minority ethnic groups)?

The majority of respondents felt that there would be no impacts of the strategy that would be a disbenefit to any particular group such as older people or those with a disability. Most respondents thought that AT could only be of benefit to everyone. The upgraded Speyside Way path was used as an example of the diverse range of individuals and groups now using it since the works to improve the surface to make it all weather were completed. Other respondents said that having more active travel routes can only benefit communities especially those on lower incomes, women, children etc. However, the need to equally focus on buses within the strategy for those who cannot walk or cycle due to impairment was also highlighted.

It was also proposed that any new active infrastructure should be prioritised around areas of disadvantage, using SIMD data. Increased electric bike hire facilities and creation of a charging network, would make cycling more accessible for both older people and people with restricted mobility.

Question 7. Is there anything else you think the Active Travel Strategy and Action Plan should include to ensure that Active Travel is inclusive for all, and inequalities addressed?

The majority of respondents felt that there was no additional areas that could be included within the Strategy and Action Plan, which would ensure it was inclusive for all and inequalities addressed.

However, some suggested actions that had previously been answered within the survey were reiterated again, such as:

- Bikes on buses, as Active Travel needs to be link up and be supported by public transport.
- Larger cycle racks for trailers and buggies to be parked.
- Reasonably priced bike hire and disability equipment hire
- Seats and toilets strategically placed on routes
- Cycling for disabled people i.e. tandem hire and cycle buddy schemes
- Better maintenance of existing paths for all ability users to use
- Secure cycle storage at ground level for those without a garden (flats etc.)

Additional information providing the detailed comments and responses received from the online survey are contained in Annex 1.