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**REPORT TO: ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND INFRASTRUCTURE SERVICES COMMITTEE ON 7 DECEMBER 2021**

**SUBJECT: DRAFT ACTIVE TRAVEL STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN**

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

**1. REASON FOR REPORT**

1.1 This report asks the Committee to consider and approve the draft Active Travel Strategy and Action Plan (2022-2027) for public consultation and for consultation responses to be reported back to a future meeting of this Committee, along with the final Strategy and Action Plan.

1.2 This report is submitted to Committee in terms of Section III (F) (19) of the Council's Scheme of Administration relating to relating to traffic management functions.

**2. RECOMMENDATION**

**2.1 It is recommended that the Committee:**

- i) considers and approves the draft Active Travel Strategy and Action Plan as set out in Appendix 1 for a 12 week public consultation period; and**
- ii) agrees that consultation responses are reported back to a future meeting of the Committee along with the final Active Travel Strategy and Action Plan for approval.**

**3. BACKGROUND**

3.1 A 5 year Active Travel Strategy was first developed in 2016 – 2021 with the aim of increasing walking and cycling across Moray. As the end of the 5 year period was approaching, a new draft strategy has been created in order to meet Scottish Government recommendations, as well as to continue to improve on the work of making active travel the natural choice for short, everyday journeys across Moray.

3.2 Active travel is becoming increasingly more important in society today and has a major role in encouraging physical activity, when compared with other forms of exercise, it is one of the easiest ways to incorporate physical activity

into our everyday lives. By helping to improve people's physical and mental health, this can help to reduce the impact on our health services, which over the last 2 years has seen more pressure than ever before. With the importance of our need both locally and internationally to combat climate change and reduce our carbon emissions, active travel can help to make the shift from private car use to walking and cycling for short every day journeys.

- 3.3 Active travel plays a significant role in achieving net zero, and with the Scottish Government having set a legally-binding target to cut greenhouse gas emissions to net zero by 2045, increasing levels of active travel is an important contribution, especially when noting that 37% of Scotland's greenhouse gas emissions arise from transport.
- 3.4 The Council's Climate Change Strategy, which sets out the actions to deliver net zero emissions by 2030 for council related activity incorporates four key actions around active travel:
- Active travel for the journey to school
  - Targeted travel behaviour change programmes
  - Workplace Travel Plan for the Council as employer
  - Embedding Active Travel infrastructure provision through Development Planning
- 3.5 There have been notable increases in cycling and walking since the start of the Coronavirus pandemic, with almost all fixed cycle and pedestrian counters in Moray measuring increases in journey numbers. This was particularly evident on the Speyside Way between Craigellachie and Carron where journey numbers more than doubled, and along the River Lossie cycle route where there was up to 100% growth in some sections. These positive trends have continued into 2021, and provide a solid base to build on in order to deliver the health and environmental outcomes of an Active Travel Strategy.
- 3.6 The Scottish Government announced in 2021 an increase in the proportion of Transport Scotland's budget spent on active travel initiatives, so that by 2024-25 at least £320 million or 10 per cent of the total transport budget will be allocated to active travel, an increase of 7%. This additional funding will have a positive impact on the Council's ability to support the objectives and deliver the actions of the Active Travel Strategy, through additional funding streams for different projects and initiatives.

#### **4. DRAFT ACTIVE TRAVEL STRATEGY**

- 4.1 The draft Active Travel Strategy has been prepared in the strategic context set out above. The full draft is attached as **APPENDIX 1** and sets out the national and local policy context in more detail.
- 4.2 The draft strategy and Action Plan have been developed in consultation with key stakeholders, community councils and groups and individuals with an interest in active travel. The development work was led by the Sustainable Travel Officer, and an internal working group. The detail was informed by stakeholders who participated in a workshop in September 2021.

- 4.3 Discussions took place around various priorities for active travel for both rural villages and larger towns in Moray. The key priorities raised by those attending the workshop helped shape and develop the objectives and Action Plan. This stakeholder engagement ensured that the proposed aims and objectives of the document reflected the genuine needs and desires of existing current and potential active travel users.
- 4.4 The Vision of the strategy is 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.
- 4.5 The aims of the strategy are to increase cycling and walking journeys to work, to education and to increase the available infrastructure for active travel. These aims are quantified in six specific objectives focused around the provision of infrastructure and facilities, meaningful travel planning, skills training and education.
- 4.6 The strategy then sets out a clear Action Plan with quantifiable outputs geared towards achieving the objectives.

## **5. PUBLIC CONSULTATION**

- 5.1 It is recommended that a 12-week public consultation period starts on 10 January 2022. It is generally perceived that participation in public consultation is diminished over the Christmas period, and so it is proposed that the consultation period starts after Christmas, rather than an extended period over Christmas to allow for meaningful promotion of and engagement with the consultation.
- 5.2 The public consultation will be advertised in local newspapers, on the Council's website and via social media. Letters/Emails will be issued to key stakeholders such as community councils, transport partners, community groups and organisations who promote active travel. At least two virtual consultation events will take place in lieu of face to face exhibitions
- 5.3 The consultation is intended to generate discussion, gauge the public's views on the draft objectives and actions, and elicit views on where there are sections of the active travel network which could be provided/improved to connect within and between communities.
- 5.4 Comments and responses received during the consultation period will be taken into consideration in finalising the strategy, which will then be reported back to a future meeting of this Committee for approval. This will be after the local government elections in May 2022. Once approved the strategy and Action Plan will inform and direct future planning for infrastructure projects and behaviour change programmes.

## 6. **SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS**

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

The draft Active Travel Strategy and Action Plan support Moray's 2026 priorities for healthier citizens as well as for older people to sustain active lives in their community. The draft Strategy also supports economic development targets by providing greater choice for travel within and between communities and the Council's Climate Change Strategy by assisting with the transition to a non-fossil fuel transport system.

### **(b) Policy and Legal**

The draft Active Travel Strategy and Action Plan links to national and regional policy objectives, as set out in the strategy document, and Action 31 in the Moray Local Development Plan 2020 Delivery Programme and Action Plan – Encourage Active Travel. There are no legal implications arising from this report.

### **(c) Financial implications**

It is intended to fund the draft Strategy through existing funding streams, or by attracting external grant funding.

### **(d) Risk Implications**

Without an up to date Active Travel Strategy, there is a risk of a fragmented approach to the provision of Active Travel infrastructure and behaviour change programmes, which may not fully capitalise on existing and future funding opportunities.

### **(e) Staffing Implications**

There are no staffing implications arising from this report as the delivery of the draft Active Travel Strategy and Action Plan will be part of existing staff duties.

### **(f) Property**

There are no property implications arising from this report.

### **(g) Equalities/Socio Economic Impact**

This strategy is subject to consultation with service users, which will feed into an assessment of impacts in relation to the Public Sector Equality Duty, The Fairer Scotland Duty, Human Rights and the Rights of the Child. The assessment will be carried out in consultation with the Council's internal equality forum.

### **(h) Consultations**

The Depute Chief Executive (Economy, Environment and Finance), Legal Services Manager, Equal Opportunities Officer, Principal Accountant (P Connor), Committee Services Officer (L Rowan), and Principal Climate Change Strategy Officer have all been consulted and their comments taken into account in this report.

## **7. CONCLUSIONS**

- 7.1 The draft Active Travel Strategy and Action Plan sets out how the Council will take forward its vision for active travel in Moray.**
- 7.2 Having a strategy with a clear vision, and relevant objectives and actions has the potential to have a real positive effect and enhance the health and environment for all people across Moray.**

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Background Papers: The Moray Council Active Travel Strategy 2016-2021

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