

Item: 7

Development and Infrastructure Committee: 5 June 2018.

Sustainable Transport Project Development Plan.

Report by Executive Director of Development and Infrastructure.

1. Purpose of Report

To consider a process to progress projects for grant funding from the Community Links Programme and to outline a proposed list of potential projects.

2. Recommendations

The Committee is invited to note:

2.1.

That the Scottish Government's Active Travel budget, currently £80,000,000 per year, managed by Transport Scotland, includes the Community Links Programme operated by Sustrans, along with the Smarter Choices, Smarter Places Programme operated by Paths for All, which deliver projects that make towns, villages and rural settlements friendlier and safer places for people to walk and cycle.

2.2.

The proposed three year project plan, attached at Appendix 1 to this report, outlining potential applications to the Community Links Programme, and that further projects may be identified, with the possibility that not all projects will be delivered.

2.3.

That officer time will be committed to carrying out the necessary feasibility study on the projects, detailed in Appendix 1 to this report, to determine which are eligible for funding and achievable for delivery during the current financial year.

2.4.

That the Smarter Choices Smarter Places programme can be used to cover 50% of costs associated with a staffing resources required to co-ordinate and progress projects.

It is recommended:

2.5.

That the project list, attached as Appendix 1 to this report, be approved as the basis of a three year programme for potential applications to the Community Links Programme.

2.6.

That powers be delegated to the Executive Director of Development and Infrastructure, in consultation with the Chair and Vice Chair of the Development and Infrastructure Committee and the Head of Finance, to develop and deliver a list of eligible and deliverable projects, based on the programme referred to at paragraph 2.5 above.

3. Background

3.1.

The Community Links Programme is a grant scheme, funded by Transport Scotland and operated by Sustans, that provides funding for the creation of infrastructure that makes it easier for people to walk and cycle for everyday journeys.

3.2.

The Smarter Choices, Smarter Places Programme is a grant scheme, operated by Paths for All, to support behaviour change initiatives to increase active and sustainable travel.

3.3.

In December 2015, the Council agreed that, in principle, the ring fenced capital grant allocation for Cycling, Walking and Safer Streets be allocated, where appropriate, to provide match funding for Community Links projects which delivered a safer routes to schools benefit. The Council also approved a protocol for Council involvement in community projects associated with the Community Links Programme, for the period December 2015 to December 2019.

3.4.

The Scottish Government's Active Travel budget, which funds the Community Links Programme and the Smarter Choices, Smarter Places Programme has recently been doubled, from £40,000,000 to £80,000,000 per annum until 2021. This represents enhanced opportunities for potentially cost-neutral projects to the Council.

4. Proposed Framework Procedure

4.1.

In order to maximise benefit potential under these new funding streams for Orkney, it is proposed to establish a Sustainable Transport officer group with representation from Transportation, Planning, Roads, Access, Engineering, Capital Programme, Road Safety, Education and Tourism. The officer group will work with Community Planning partners and the Empowering Communities project team to ensure a 'joined up' approach and build on the award-winning approach of collaborative interdisciplinary working applied to Stromness regeneration.

4.2.

It is proposed that this is achieved by the following actions:

- Establishing and maintaining “shovel ready” Projects and Funding lists.
- Establishing a procedure whereby the Sustainable Transport Development Officer can make applications for funding and progress projects in a timeous manner in line with the process detailed in this report (with an annual review of projects with Elected Members)
- Working with communities across Orkney through a Connected Rural Communities project as noted in Appendix 1. Similar ‘Place Standard’ based exercises to Your Kirkwall could be carried out in other areas to identify improvements people want to see made, and to examine the feasibility of community ownership/maintenance.
- Publicising opportunities for Constituted Community Groups and other eligible parties locally.

4.3.

It should be noted that maintenance costs will rise as the size of the footpath and cycle network increases – the proposal is to seek to offset this risk through community empowerment (engaging through Empowering Communities Project team). Projects will only move beyond the design stage to construction when an affordable maintenance programme has been established, either through existing service budget provision (where possible) or through a community care agreement being put in place.

4.4.

It will be necessary to establish additional staff resource to support this work. This can be achieved on a 50% grant funded basis through the Smarter Choices, Smarter Places programme, with 50% of the Council’s contribution being met by matching against other officer time. This represents a cost of 25% to the Council in real terms.

4.5.

Subject to securing the funding for this post, it is proposed to establish the post under the existing change of establishment process.

5. Community Links Programme Criteria

5.1.

Projects that meet the following aims will be eligible for funding from the Community Links Programme:

- Everyday journeys: Create infrastructure that enables people to walk, cycle or use another active travel mode as their preferred mode of travel for everyday journeys.

- Involving communities: Meet the needs of communities, providing people with the opportunity to shape their local environment and link the places they live with the places they want to go.
- Raising the Standards: Raise the standards by using innovative and imaginative approaches for community and business engagement, design and construction of walking and/or cycling projects.
- Placemaking: Encourage placemaking that promotes greater use of public space and higher levels of active travel.
- Enabling environments: Create an enabling environment for active travel that facilitates the delivery of other projects.

5.2.

Grant funding is available for both design work and construction, with separate funding streams for Design and Construction stages.

5.3.

Match funding is not required for any activity undertaken in the design stream, as the grant funding of 100% is available.

5.4.

Council match funding of 50% would be required to make an application to the Construction Stream, with the potential to build a funding package from a range of other external sources.

5.5.

In addition to the Council, a range of organisations and bodies can apply to the Community Links programme, including the following:

- Regional Transport Partnerships (Hitrans).
- Further and higher education institutions.
- Housing associations.
- Constituted community groups.
- Development trusts.
- NHS.
- Public bodies.

5.6.1.

Private sector organisations may be able to apply in conjunction with their local authority, for example where infrastructure is associated with private developments.

6. Smarter Choices Smarter Places Programme Criteria

6.1.

The desired overall outcomes of an ongoing Smarter Choices Smarter Places programme are:

- Changes in knowledge, attitudes and beliefs towards sustainable travel choices.
- Increased walking and cycling modal share for short local journeys.
- An increase in other sustainable travel choices for longer journeys, such as public transport and car share.
- Reduced car use for short local journeys.
- Reduced driver only journeys.
- Building an evidence base for interventions.

6.2.

Projects must deliver initiatives that will support the programme outcomes. Projects can include:

- Work with schools.
- Community engagement activities.
- Events.
- Branding and campaigns.
- Maps and signage.
- Employer engagement.
- Information provision.
- Public transport support.
- Planning and Feasibility studies.

6.3.

An example of an eligible project is the Papdale Primary School Travel Plan, which is currently underway and has been funded following community engagement on the issue of traffic congestion around the school as part of the Your Kirkwall project.

6.4.

Paths for All is in the process of developing a fund for third party groups, where no involvement from the local authority would be required.

7. Proposed Infrastructure Projects

Attached as Appendix 1 to this report is a list of potential walking and cycling infrastructure projects. This list is not exhaustive, and further opportunities may be identified. It should also be noted that not all projects will necessarily be delivered.

8. Human Resource Implications

Grant funding from the Smarter Choices Smarter Places programme can be used for costs associated with the post of Sustainable Transport Development Officer. The temporary post will be until May 2019, and will be evaluated on an annual basis subject to external grant funding thereafter.

9. Equalities Impact

An Equality Impact Assessment has been undertaken and is attached as Appendix 2 to this report.

10. Links to Council Plan

10.1.

The proposals in this report support and contribute to improved outcomes for communities as outlined in the Council Plan strategic priority of Connected Communities.

10.2.

It is anticipated that priority will be given to projects that are identified in the Council Plan, together with supporting delivery plans.

11. Links to Local Outcomes Improvement Plan

The proposals in this report support and contribute to improved outcomes for communities as outlined in the Local Outcomes Improvement Plan priority of Strong Communities.

12. Financial Implications

12.1.

The report sets out a basis upon which a programme of Community Links projects can be developed by utilising a number of funding streams to maximise the benefit to the wider community.

12.2.

The cost of employing a project officer estimated at ££14,000 - £24,000 for 2018/19 depending on job grading of post, will be eligible for 50% grant funding from SCSP. With a further 25% eligible for match funding in the form of in-kind officer time support from Development and Marine Planning, this represents a net cost of between £3,500 – £6,000 or 25% to the Council in real terms. This will be funded from within the existing Development Planning Service budget.

12.3.

All projects will be considered in the context of existing programmes of asset replacement, improvement works and maintenance to the roads network and

associated infrastructure that are funded through Service revenue budgets and the Council's capital programme.

12.4.

A key consideration will remain a needs based assessment of the condition of these assets as a means of prioritising competing projects within these programmes of work.

12.5.

Each supporting business case will demonstrate how the project is at least "cost neutral" to the Council in financial terms.

12.6.

In some cases, it may be appropriate to seek approval through the capital asset management planning process to add a proposed development to the Council's Capital Programme. In this event, the Capital Project Appraisal process will be followed with the associated governance determined by the Policy and Resources Committee.

12.7.

Clause 7.1.2 of the Financial Regulations, allows for 'the Head of Finance, after consultation with the Convener and Vice Convener and the Chief Executive, to approve any capital expenditure he/she considers is in the interest of the Council and which is fully funded'.

13. Legal Aspects

If grant assistance is to be provided to the Council by Sustrans Community Links Programme and Smarter Choices, Smarter Places, the Council will require to adhere to the grant funding conditions associated with such assistance.

14. Contact Officers

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15. Appendices

Appendix 1: Project list.

Appendix 2: Equality Impact Assessment.