

## **Item: 6**

**Development and Infrastructure Committee: 7 February 2023.**

**Footpaths, Core Path and Cycleway Improvements.**

**Report by Corporate Director for Neighbourhood Services and Infrastructure.**

### **1. Purpose of Report**

To consider proposals for utilising one-off funding allocated towards improvements to footpaths, core paths and cycleways.

### **2. Recommendations**

The Committee is invited to note:

#### **2.1.**

That, on 21 December 2021, when considering the allocation of one-off funding towards a series of projects considered to provide excellent recovery prospects from the COVID-19 pandemic, the Policy and Resources Committee recommended the allocation of funding to a series of recovery projects, which included a one-off allocation of £500,000 towards footpath, core path and cycleway improvements.

#### **2.2.**

That, with an embedded Sustrans Officer in the Council, it is anticipated that the one-off allocation could be utilised to lever in significant additional sums of funding to further invest in the core path and cycle path networks in Orkney.

#### **2.3.**

That, in July 2018, when considering the Sustainable Transport Project Development Plan, the Council approved a project list as the basis of a three-year programme for potential applications to the Community Links Programme, operated by Sustrans.

#### **2.4.**

That, in May 2019, the Council approved an updated project list as part of the Sustainable Transport Project Development Plan, which would continue to be used as the basis for the remainder of the three-year programme for potential applications to the Community Links Programme.

#### **2.5.**

That officers have considered options for utilising the one-off allocation, referred to at paragraph 2.1 above, and have developed a draft project list, attached as Appendix

1 to this report, which includes infrastructure projects detailed in the Sustainable Transport Project Development Plan but not yet completed.

**It is recommended:**

## **2.6.**

That, subject to availability of resources, the following allocations be made from the COVID-19 recovery allocation referred to at paragraph 2.1 above:

- £5,000 to enable completion of School Travel Plans.
- £100,000 to provide a match funding source for constituted community groups to enable development of active travel and access related projects.
- £50,000 to provide for future maintenance obligations, and to assist with repair and renewal of active travel and access routes.

## **2.7.**

That powers be delegated to the Corporate Director for Neighbourhood Services and Infrastructure to authorise spend from the allocations detailed at paragraph 2.6 above.

## **2.8.**

That, subject to availability of resources, the Corporate Director for Neighbourhood Services and Infrastructure should arrange for feasibility studies to be undertaken in respect of the following projects, to determine the associated costs and whether they are eligible for funding and achievable for delivery, to be funded from the COVID-19 recovery allocation referred to at paragraph 2.1 above:

- Core Paths – Grading and Review.
- Core Path K14 - Wideford Farm, Kirkwall (Inganess to Scapa).
- Faravel Active Travel Route and Open Spaces, Stromness.
- Ferry Road, Stromness – Active Travel and Public Realm Improvements.
- Crantit Trail Active Travel Route, Kirkwall.
- Kirkwall West Green Wedge – active travel links between the Peedie Sea, Glaitness School, the Pickaquoy Centre and housing developments.
- Weyland Footpath project, Kirkwall.

## **2.9.**

That, subject to the outcome of the feasibility studies referred to at paragraph 2.8 above, the Corporate Director for Neighbourhood Services and Infrastructure should submit reports, to the Development and Infrastructure Committee, regarding the details and costs of the proposed project, together with any external funding sources which are available to contribute towards project costs.

## **3. Background**

### **3.1.**

At its special meeting held on 21 December 2021, when considering the allocation of one-off funding towards a series of projects considered to provide excellent recovery prospects from the COVID-19 pandemic, the Policy and Resources Committee recommended the allocation of funding to a series of recovery projects, which included a one-off allocation of £500,000 towards footpath, core path and cycleway improvements. An Elected Members' Seminar was held on 27 October 2022 to discuss active travel and access, the onward issues and projects to be progressed over the next three to five years.

### **3.2.**

The report to the Policy and Resources Committee included the following information in respect of the proposed allocation:

“The value and health benefits that have been derived from footpaths and the core path and cycle path network in the county have never been more apparent than through the enforced COVID lockdown when use of the networks was greatly increased.

With an embedded Sustrans Officer in the Council, it is anticipated that this allocation will be utilised to lever in significant additional sums of funding (with a target of a minimum of 50%) to invest further in the core path and cycle path networks, with reporting through the Development and Infrastructure Committee and the Policy and Resources Committee for any projects that require to be developed as capital project appraisals”.

### **3.3.**

It should be noted, however, that, as part of the budget setting process for 2023/24, all General Fund reserves and previous commitments for funding, including the availability of the one-off allocation of £500,000 towards footpath, core path and cycle networks in Orkney, are being reviewed.

### **3.4.**

The Sustrans Embedded Officer came into post on 18 August 2021 for a 3-year period. The joint aim of this post between Sustrans and the Council is to work together to develop and deliver a strategic approach to active travel infrastructure development, enabling efficient use of investment in increasing walking, wheeling and cycling.

### **3.5.**

Evidence suggests that travelling actively is better for physical and mental health, reduces carbon emissions, creates a stronger economy and helps to reduce inequalities. Additionally with the present cost of living crisis, having the option to move around without the need for a car or a bus fare provides a zero-cost or low-cost option.

### **3.6.**

The term active travel is used to describe travel and transport by physically active, human-powered modes as opposed to motorised ones, largely for functional reasons.

### **3.7.**

Core paths and access to the countryside are recreational paths that are generally in rural locations. There are no set standards in terms of widths, surfaces and users require to be appropriately dressed and have a certain level of mobility to use them. Users are classed as pedestrians, cyclists and equestrians.

### **3.8.**

It should be noted that Sustrans is a national charity that works to promote active travel (walking, wheeling and cycling), and that the majority of its funding streams have an active travel focus.

## **4. Sustainable Transport Project Development Plan**

### **4.1.**

In July 2018, when considering the Sustainable Transport Project Development Plan, the Council approved a project list as the basis of a three-year programme for potential applications to the Community Links Programme, operated by Sustrans.

### **4.2.**

An updated project list was presented to the Development and Infrastructure Committee in April 2019, which would continue to be used as the basis for the remainder of the three-year programme for potential applications to the Community Links Programme.

### **4.3.**

In the period since the initial project list was approved in July 2018, notable progress has been made with the Arcadia and Papdale Community Parks, Kirkwall, the Kirkwall Townscape Heritage Initiative Places and Spaces programme and the World Heritage Site Active Travel Plan. Work has also been progressing on the design of the Weyland coastal footpath project in Kirkwall.

## **5. Project List Development**

### **5.1.**

Council Officers, including the Embedded Sustrans Officer, together with representatives from HiTRANS, Voluntary Action Orkney and NHS Orkney, have been working together to consider the promotion of walking, cycling and wheeling. This group is referred to as the Sustainable Travel Group.

## **5.2.**

A draft project list, attached as Appendix 1 to this report, has been developed and includes infrastructure projects detailed in the Sustainable Transport Project Development Plan, but not yet completed. It also includes projects that have come forward through existing Local Place Plans for Kirkwall and Stromness, Orkney Matters, the Local Transport Strategy, the Islands Growth Deal and other consultation exercises. All Community Councils and interest groups were also requested to submit project ideas.

## **5.3.**

In the development of the project list, careful consideration has been given to the resource implications of completing project work, the processes and procedures that must be completed by the Council and project feasibility including land ownership. It should be noted that officer resource to develop and deliver projects is limited within the Council with officers having other competing work streams.

## **5.4.**

A notable challenge in the development of projects is the ongoing maintenance arrangements and costs, and the difficulty in taking on more maintenance responsibility when Council budgets are under pressure.

## **5.5.**

The funding sources for active travel and outdoor access projects are varied and include the following:

- Administered by Sustrans:
  - Places for Everyone.
  - National Cycle Network Accessibility Fund
- Transport Scotland Fund (Hitrans).
- Paths for All:
  - Community Paths Grants Scheme.
  - Community Active Travel Grants Scheme.
  - Smarter Choices, Smarter Places.
- Cycling Friendly Programme (Cycling Scotland).
- E-bike Grant Fund (Energy Saving Trust).

## **5.6.**

It is also considered that, through Sustrans and Transport Scotland funding streams, the Council could establish additional posts to support the existing Sustrans Embedded Officer post in active travel implementation and infrastructure. It is considered that these posts could be fully funded through external funding for a 3-year period.

## **5.7.**

In addition, for all projects officers will investigate working jointly with partners such as Community Councils, Development Trusts, Community Planning Partners and commercial concerns to increase resource and funding streams.

## **6. The Project List**

### **6.1.**

It should be noted that a number of the projects included in the draft project list, attached as Appendix 1 to this report, require feasibility work to be completed initially and are also reliant on external funding streams; therefore, delivery of infrastructure may not be possible in all cases.

### **6.2.**

The following is a summary of the proposals outlined in the draft project list:

- Financial assistance for School Travel Plans – to support the Council's existing in-house resource to finalise a number of School Travel Plans.
- To be a match funding source for constituted community groups, such as Community Councils, for active travel and access related projects.
- To grade and review the Core Path Network.
- Core Path K14 - Widford Farm, Kirkwall (Inganess to Scapa).
- Faravel Active Travel Route and Open Spaces, Stromness.
- Ferry Road, Stromness – Active Travel and Public Realm Improvements.
- Crantit Trail Active Travel Route, Kirkwall.
- Kirkwall West Green Wedge - active travel links between the Peedie Sea, Glaitness School, the Pickaquoy Centre and housing developments.
- Weyland Footpath project, Kirkwall.
- Future maintenance obligations.

### **6.3.**

Bearing in mind the review referred to at section 3.3 above, at this stage it is proposed that funding is ring-fenced for the following items:

- Completion of School Travel Plans.
- Match funding source for constituted community groups to undertake access related projects.
- Fund to provide for future maintenance obligations.

### **6.4.**

For all the other projects further work in terms of feasibility studies are required to determine the details and costs of the proposed project and any external funding

sources which are available to contribute to project costs. These projects will be the subject of future reports to committee.

## **7. Links to Council Plan**

### **7.1.**

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

### **7.2.**

The proposals in this report relate directly to Priority 1.6 - improve cycle and walking paths across Orkney, explore improvements arising from Your Kirkwall engagement of the Council Delivery Plan.

## **8. 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 Connectivity.

## **9. Financial Implications**

### **9.1.**

At its special meeting held on 21 December 2021, when considering the allocation of one-off funding towards a series of projects considered to provide excellent recovery prospects from the COVID-19 pandemic, the Policy and Resources Committee recommended the allocation of funding to a series of recovery projects, which included a one-off allocation of £500,000 towards footpath, core path and cycleway improvements.

### **9.2.**

It should be noted, however, that the General Fund reserves and previous funding commitments are being reviewed as part of the budget setting process for financial year 2023/24 and the availability of this funding source is no longer guaranteed.

### **9.3.**

Appendix 1 to this report contains a list of projects, as shown at section 6.2 above, including the funding sources that may be available to carry out the work.

### **9.4.**

Currently there are resource challenges within the Council that includes the maintenance of newly created active travel or access infrastructure and this would require consideration for any projects that do progress.

## **10. Legal Aspects**

There are no legal implications arising directly from the recommendations of this report.

## **11. Contact Officers**

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## **12. Appendix**

Appendix 1: Draft Project List.



## Appendix 1 – Draft Project List

Project.	Type.	Description	Notes.
Financial assistance for School Travel Plans.	Active and Access.	<p>A number of active travel projects that have come through Community Councils and Orkney Matters are linked to schools. Having an approved and up to date School Travel Plan considers these matters and potential solutions.</p> <p>These Travel Plans will assist applications for external funding for often small-scale infrastructure. The onward and one-off cost associated with completing School Travel Plans is estimated to be under £5,000.</p>	At present, funding through existing staff budgets associated with Climate Change is being used to commence this work.
Match funding source for constituted community groups.	Active and Access.	<p>Officers aim to work with and empower communities through Democratic Services (Community Council Liaison Office) to assist with projects and provide a match funding opportunity when other funding options are limited. It is proposed to set aside £100,000 from this fund to provide a match funding source for constituted community groups to enable development of active travel and access related projects.</p>	A number of projects noted by Community Councils through a short consultation exercise were related to School Travel Plans.

Project.	Type.	Description	Notes.
Core Path - Grading and Review.	Access.	This project will grade the network to a national standard and provide more information to users on the difficulty of paths. The aim is to provide more digital information on the Core Path network. Whilst this grading work is completed, it is proposed to complete a full review of the network. Maintenance reviews of the network are completed on a 3-year basis but information on where the network has major renewal issues is limited. Reviewing the network and the Core Path Plan is required by statute and it is understood there are elements of the network with issues associated with coastal erosion and flooding. An up-to-date review will provide future projects for external funding options. Costs associated with this work are not known.	Visits will need to be completed in the spring /summer months and it is estimated that this will take 2 years.
Core Path K14 - Wideford Farm, Kirkwall (Inganess to Scapa) - Phases 1, 2 and 3.	Access.	This is a well-used path in Kirkwall where user groups and the Community Council would like to see improvements. This project aims to consider three phases of improvements that would look to add to the positive maintenance work that is currently underway and improve road safety issues where this network crosses two A class roads. Costs and full details of landownership are not known at this point in time.	Need to establish landownership, specifications costs.
Faravel Active Travel Route and Open Spaces, Stromness.	Active.	Faravel Active Travel Route and Open Spaces is an action from What's Next for Stromness? The Embedded Sustrans Officer has made an application to Sustrans Places for Everyone Fund to undertake a feasibility study. This work would consider costs, the gradient of the location, flood management associated with the burn and landownership. This potential active travel route would link the Back Road to the South End, near to the Stromness Museum.	Potential for Sustrans Funding to complete a Feasibility Study. Have to consider ownership, gradient, flood management of the burn and improvements to the open spaces at Faravel. Work with the Community Council and the Development Trust.

<b>Project.</b>	<b>Type.</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Notes.</b>
Ferry Road, Stromness – Active Travel and Public Realm Improvements.	Active.	Ferry Road, Stromness – Active Travel and Public Realm Improvements is another action from What's Next for Stromness? It is considered to be a location where more could be done to promote active travel and where there could be public realm improvements. Feasibility work is required to consider landownership, flooding, the requirements of users and potential costs. As a large-scale project, the feasibility and design are potentially eligible for Sustrans funding.	Need to consider landownership, users and their needs, flood management, active travel movement and public realm improvements. Work with the Community Council and the Development Trust. Investigate the role of Sustrans as a funder for this large-scale project.
Crantit Trail Active Travel Route, Kirkwall.	Active.	Crantit Trail is a Core Path that links Kirkwall to Scapa. With new development proposed off Foreland Road and houses and employment at Scapa, it could potentially serve as an active travel route. The project also provides an opportunity to create a safe off-road route to Scapa Distillery. With the potential for Sustrans funding for a feasibility study, further consideration could be given to landownership, costs, gradient, flooding and drainage.	Potential for Sustrans Funding to complete a Feasibility Study. Have to consider ownership, flood management and drainage and the potential route of the Scapa Distillery element. Work with the Community Council and commercial interests here.

<b>Project.</b>	<b>Type.</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Notes.</b>
Kirkwall West Green Wedge - active travel links between the Peedie Sea, Glaitness School, the Pickaquoy Centre and housing developments.	Active.	The Kirkwall West Green Wedge combines a number of actions from Your Kirkwall and will look to develop better active travel links between the Peedie Sea, Glaitness School, the Pickaquoy Centre and housing in this location. Your Kirkwall wants to establish the Peedie Sea as an urban park and there are concerns in the location on how children can safely walk, cycle or wheel to school. Running through part of this location is the Muddisdale Core Path that, with the completion of new housing, is an active travel route in need of improvement to encourage more use. As a large-scale project, the feasibility and design are potentially eligible for Sustrans Funding.	Need to consider landownership, users and their needs, flood management, active travel movement and public realm improvements. Work with the Community Council. Investigate the role of Sustrans as a funder for this large-scale project.
Weyland Footpath project, Kirkwall.	Active.	The Weyland Footpath project, Kirkwall has been designed and forms part of a coastal path network for Kirkwall. This active travel route has gained funding from HiTRANS in terms of design and development and going forward match funding may be required.	
Future maintenance obligations.	Active and Access.	To ensure infrastructure can be completed, it is proposed to set aside £50,000 from this fund for future maintenance obligations, and to assist with repair and renewal of active travel and access routes.	