

## **5c Active Travel Action Plan: Cycling Development Officer**

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### **o Purpose of Report**

The purpose of this report is to inform members of progress in regard to developing an Active Travel Action Plan (AcTrAP), provides evidence of the national picture relating to current cycling funding and recommends that Board give consideration to establishing an agreement with Sustrans to enable the appointment of a Cycling Development Officer, who could help to develop the AcTrAP and work with local authorities in preparing bids for cycle route development.

### **o Background**

At its meeting on 28 August 2013, the Nestrans Board agreed that there was a need to develop an Active Travel Action Plan in support of the Regional Transport Strategy. Work has now kicked off in terms of considering objectives, liaising with partner local authorities and establishing base data in terms of existing facilities, resources and areas of need.

The Cycling Action Plan for Scotland, published in 2010, stated a vision that “by 2020, 10% of all journeys taken in Scotland will be by bike”. In support of this commitment, the Scottish Government established Cycling Scotland to promote cycling throughout the country.

### **o National Funding**

In response to a question from Lewis Macdonald MSP, on 8 October 2013 the Transport Minister informed the Scottish Parliament that since 2007, over £100million has been invested in cycling and sustainable transport initiatives across Scotland. Of this, about half is direct funding to local authorities in the form of Cycling, Walking Safer Streets (CWSS) funding which is included within Grant-Aided Expenditure to local authorities under the agreed CoSLA funding formula. Of the remainder, there are a number of funding streams, most of which are centrally-controlled and take the form of bids or allocations based on assessed need. The following summary of expenditure on sustainable transport, particularly cycling, across Scotland is extrapolated from the published response to Lewis Macdonald’s Parliamentary Question: S4W-17350. The full detail is available from the Parliament’s website in pages 12-22 of:

[http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/S4\\_ChamberDesk/WA20131008.pdf](http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/S4_ChamberDesk/WA20131008.pdf)

Sustrans is the sustainable transport charity and has received £51.4million, of which an estimated £19.2million has been spent over the past six years supporting local cycling development schemes. In the years, 2007-2013 Sustrans have supported some 79 projects in the Nestrans area, to a total of £906,000.

Cycling Scotland has secured around £12.2million over six years and it is estimated that around £350,000 of that has been spent on projects in the north east.

Ten Trunk roads schemes to provide cycling facilities have been funded by Transport Scotland, seven of which are in the Hitrans area, the others in Sestran, SPT and the south west. A total of £9.3million has been allocated to trunk road schemes, none of which are in the north east.

Sustrans is also responsible for developing the National Cycle Network (NCN) and development costs totalling £26million have accrued across Scotland since 2007, £20million of which has been funded by Transport Scotland the remainder contributions from other partners, mainly local authorities. Of this, just two NCN routes are in the north east (NCN route 1 from John O’Groats to the Border and NCN route 195 Deeside), an estimate for which is around £920,000 of Transport Scotland investment.

A Smarter Choices, Smarter Places fund was established in 2008/09 and has focused on seven areas which benefitted by £11.41million of Central Government spending towards a total package spend of £15million. The seven demonstration areas were Kirkwall in the Hitrans area, Larbert/Stenhousemuir in Sustrans, Dumfries in Swestrans, Dundee in Tactran and Lenzie, Glasgow and Barrhead in SPT.

Cycling Expenditure 2007-2013 (£million)			
	Nestrans area	Scotland	Nestrans as % of Scotland
CWSS	4.303	49.887	8.63%
Sustrans	0.857	40.579	2.11%
Cycling Scotland	0.350	10.162	3.43%
trunk roads	0	9.307	0.00%
NCN	0.920	20.250	4.54%
smarter choices	0	11.150	0.00%
other	0	1.286	0.00%
Total	6.428	142.621	4.51%
Total (exc. CWSS)	2.125	92.734	2.29%

It should be noted that Nestrans has invested some £5million towards cycling schemes over the past six years, over and above the figures in the table.

Excepting Cycling, Walking Safer Streets funding which is included within Grant-Aided Expenditure to local authorities under the agreed CoSLA funding formula, it appears that the north east is averaging between 2 and 4% of discretionary funding, despite having 9% of the population and around a tenth of all cycling trips.

Derick Murray and Rab Dickson met with John Lauder, Director of Sustrans Scotland to discuss the reasons for this proportion of funding and agreed to investigate the level of bids, quality of bids and anything that can be done to encourage an increased level of funding to this area. It was agreed to investigate the number of bids that had been received from the north east and to further consider the reasoning behind any schemes not funded. It was further agreed that Nestrans and Sustrans should investigate the possibility of jointly appointing a Cycling Development Officer to help take forward bids, act as a liaison between authorities in the north east and the national bodies and to help design and promote cycling routes across the region.

## o **Embedded Officer**

The possibility of appointing an “embedded officer” would provide the opportunity to develop cycling projects in conjunction with the two local authorities, support Nestrans in establishing the Active Travel Action Plan and liaise with Sustrans, Cycling Scotland and other organisations towards ensuring that the north east is contributing towards the national vision and that the area is getting its fair share of funding.

Sustrans has recently entered into similar arrangements with Hitrans and Strathclyde Partnership for Transport (SPT) as well as Edinburgh City Council and it is understood that a similar officer is proposed for the Tactran area.

It is suggested that Nestrans should recruit a Cycling Development Officer with primary responsibility for supporting the management of strategic planning, day-to-day operation and co-ordination of active travel projects. The post-holder will be expected to progress the plan for a cohesive active travel network across the Nestrans area, by developing a detailed multi-year work plan for capital projects, overall project delivery and oversight, time and budget planning and reporting. A key role will be liaison with Sustrans and a job description has been agreed in principle with that organisation. Sustrans have offered to guarantee capital funding, subject to match-funding, for schemes if the post is agreed.

It is expected that the post-holder will be able to, where applicable, support member Local Authorities in such areas as; the promotion and marketing of walking and cycling within Aberdeen City and Shire including the development and delivery of active travel projects, submission of applications for external funding, monitoring of cycle usage and prioritisation of infrastructure projects. They will also be expected to work closely with the Sustrans team based in Edinburgh to coordinate work on the delivery of the National Cycle Network routes in the north east and to lobby for capital funding from national organisations, European projects or the Scottish Government.

The post-holder will be based at the Nestrans office in King Street, Aberdeen but will be expected to travel throughout the region and will also be required to attend regular meetings outwith the region, including Transport Scotland, Scottish Government and Sustrans offices.

The post-holder will report to the Nestrans Director on a day to day basis but will also be expected to liaise with Sustrans Infrastructure Partnerships Manager for those elements of the post which relate directly to Sustrans Scotland including the management of the National Cycle Routes (NCN).

### Funding

In line with the arrangements that Sustrans have secured with Hitrans, Tactran and other authorities, it is suggested that Nestrans should agree to hosting and funding a position for two years at a total revenue cost of around £50,000 per year. Subject to a matching capital contribution, Sustrans would then make available capital funding of £100,000 per year for strategic routes in the north east, particularly for cross-boundary routes to enable day-to-day commuting and functional cycling.

Bids for further funding would be a key output of the Cycling Development Officer and Nestrans and partner local authorities will seek to identify funding streams to ensure that the Active Travel Action Plan can be implemented, that the north east secures a fair share of national funding streams and that progress is made towards achieving the national vision of 10% of journeys by bicycle.

A Draft Job Description and Person Specification are attached as Appendix A to this report. Subject to Board approval, officers will liaise with Aberdeenshire Council's Personnel Department and Legal Services to establish appropriate salary scales and to advertise and appoint, with the intention of having an officer in post around the start of next financial year.

## o **Recommendation**

It is recommended that the Board:

1. note the contents of this report,
2. agree the principle of appointing a Cycling Development Officer, subject to further discussions with Sustrans and with Legal and Personnel officers, and
3. agree to consider the financial implications outlined above in deliberations of the budget in 2014/15 and 2015/16.

RD 5 December 2013