
6c ‘Going Smarter’ : Monitoring and Evaluation of the Smarter Choices, Smarter Places Programme

o Purpose of Report

The purpose of this report is to inform members of the publication of research into the effectiveness of the Scottish Government’s Smarter Choices Smarter Places (SCSP) programme and to consider lessons for the north east.

o Background

The Smarter Choices Smarter Places (SCSP) programme was established by the Scottish Government and CoSLA in 2008. Its aim was to combine measures to encourage travel behaviour change with infrastructure and service improvement investment, fostering more sustainable travel habits. Achieving such behavioural change was intended to save people money, help to make them healthier, reduce transport emissions and develop more cohesive communities.

Although no bids for funding schemes in the north east were successful, seven pilot areas received funding and implemented programmes between 2009 and 2012. These were:-

- Dumfries & Galloway/SWestrans - [GoSMART Dumfries](#)
- Dundee - [Dundee Travel Active](#)
- East Dunbartonshire - [Healthy Habits](#) focussed on Kirkintilloch/Lenzie
- East Renfrewshire - [Go Barrhead](#)
- Falkirk - [Take the Right Route](#) focussing on Larbert/Stenhousemuir
- City of Glasgow - [East End Accessibility](#)
- Orkney - [Kick Start Kirkwall](#)

Monitoring and evaluation has been undertaken by a research team, which included University of Aberdeen. Monitoring and evaluation activities included dedicated surveys and focus groups as well as local data collection and user surveys. The final evaluation, as well as the interim reporting, can be found at Transport Scotland’s website: <http://www.transportscotland.gov.uk/roads/sustainable-transport/funding-for-projects/smarter-choices-smarter-places>

A total of £14.7million was allocated over the three-year period across all seven pilots, including local authority and external funding.

o Results

The results of the evaluation showed that public attitudes changed in the pilot areas over the course of the programme. Changing attitudes can be a prelude to, or a response to, behaviour change and the results showed:

- Improved perceptions of local neighbourhoods and communities;

- Generally more positive attitudes towards walking and cycling and the associated infrastructure;
- Improved perceptions of bus travel, with the exception of bus fares where perceptions declined markedly;
- Changes in attitudes towards car use were more complex. Although it was clear in most areas that people had an increasingly positive attitude towards car use, there were also indications in some areas that people increasingly recognised that reducing car use would be a good thing to do from a community or personal perspective.

Awareness of the branded campaigns in most of the pilot areas in the 2012 household survey was good, with more than 50% of respondents in Barrhead, Dumfries, Kirkwall and Larbert/Stenhousemuir having heard of the local SCSP brands. The majority of respondents in all areas also had an accurate picture of what their locally branded campaign was about. When provided with visual prompts of the campaign logos, awareness was even greater, with 85% of people in Dumfries recognising the logo.

Observed travel behaviour changes between 2009 and 2012 were as follows:

- A higher proportion of trips was made on foot in all areas, with statistically significant increases in five out of the seven pilot areas, and with all changes greater than those recorded in comparable areas in Scotland. The greatest increases were recorded in Larbert/Stenhousemuir, where mode share for walking increased by 21.4 % and Barrhead, where the equivalent increase was 14.8%, against a background trend in comparable areas of 1.6 %
- Cycling mode share increased in five out of the seven areas. The increase in Dumfries was statistically significant, but in only two areas (Dumfries and Dundee) was the increase greater than that recorded in similar areas of Scotland.
- Trips made by bus decreased in five of the seven areas, but a statistically significant increase was observed in East Dunbartonshire. Bus use declined more among people in households without a car, and saving money by switching to active travel modes appears to have been a factor affecting this change.
- Trips made as a car driver decreased in all seven pilot areas by more than the changes observed in other similar parts of the country. The reductions ranged from 19.4% in Larbert/Stenhousemuir to 1.6 % in the East End of Glasgow. These decreases were statistically significant in Barrhead, Dumfries, and the East Dunbartonshire and Falkirk pilots. In all seven SCSP areas, the observed decrease in the proportion of trips made as a car driver was greater than the background trend from comparable areas.
- The mode share of car passenger trips increased in five of the seven areas, particularly for leisure trips and for visiting friends and relatives. The increases were statistically significant in Dundee, Glasgow and Kirkwall, as was the decrease observed in Larbert/Stenhousemuir.

These changes in travel behaviour had impacts which can be related to the SCSP programme goals, although it is not possible to say to what extent these impacts derived directly from the SCSP investment, and to what extent they were due to other factors. The estimated impacts were:

- An average annual financial saving on direct transport expenditure of £62 per resident, equivalent to about £9 million per year across the seven pilot areas.

- Health gains from increased physical activity estimated using standard health impact valuation techniques by discounting future health benefits to the present day are worth £6,150 per 100 population plus £2,024 per 100 population for healthcare savings, equivalent to £10.6 million across the SCSP areas; but established active travel valuation techniques estimate health savings much more highly at £46 million.
- Carbon reductions totalling 16,400 tonnes of carbon dioxide per year, which is valued at £0.9 million per year using current carbon values, equivalent to £6 per capita.

Members have previously sought evidence of the value of investments in smarter choices and this work goes some way to demonstrating a viable rate of return, although difficult to quantify accurately, particularly the long-term benefits which will accrue such as improved health and quality of life aspects.

o Conclusions and the report's recommendations

The experience of the SCSP programme and project delivery provided a rich source of information and learning points that should be valuable to other authorities implementing similar initiatives in the future. These showed how the programme was planned, organised, funded and delivered, integrating established roles in infrastructure and service provision with new roles in promotion, partnership working, organisation, management, and feedback. The analysts recommended that the Scottish Government and Transport Scotland, in partnership with Local Authorities and CoSLA should facilitate and enable wider application of the types of investment piloted through the SCSP programme.

The report contains a number of specific recommendations:

1. Local Authorities could take the lead in *partnership working* by developing *service level agreements* with their NHS partners and other public agencies so that complementary roles and responsibilities are clear, and joint working within the community plan is translated into practical funded programmes. Closer *working with local bus operators* could facilitate joint investment for mutual benefit in bus services. To set an ambitious vision for place making that communities can get behind, detailed *plans for path infrastructure and urban realm* investment should be defined.
2. Improved *communication and branding* could include a communication strategy to enable information and feedback for all people in the community, including partnerships with local media, links to other associated campaigns, and the use of joint branding to present sustainable transport delivery as a coherent integrated approach.
3. *Monitoring and evaluation* should continue to be seen as integral to SCSP delivery, as this is a fast developing field with scope for further improvement. Routine monitoring of local initiatives by Local Authorities would enable more detailed insight into who is responding to specific measures including local panel surveys, counts and user surveys to understand changes over time.
4. The SCSP programme demonstrates the role and benefits of the Scottish Government support for Local Authorities. Successful features of this support include: a national programme to facilitate locally managed promotional activity; further action to support local delivery of safer walking and cycling routes to shops and services; more detailed guidance on appraisal of smarter choices initiatives; and a specific fund to support innovation.

Three years has been a very short period in which to plan and deliver such diverse and complex programmes. Continued action on this developing agenda will enable a smarter Scotland consistent with sustainable development aims.

o Analysis

The project was a short term, low cost programme to test out the value of smarter choices in seven quite different areas. Only the Dumfries pilot managed to lever in more money from Europe to take total spend to £5m. This is closer to the budget per scheme available to demonstration towns in a similar programme conducted by the Department for Transport in England.

The overall conclusions of the seven pilot areas in Scotland's Smarter Choices, Smarter Places programme seem to be:

- The brands were well known and people knew what they meant;
- Walking increased the most, particularly in areas of low car ownership which also have the biggest problems with health. However, the conclusion drawn is that high bus fares were partially the cause, that is reflected in the decrease in bus use in five of the seven areas, with and the most important decreases statistically being in Barrhead and Larbert/Stenhousemuir;
- Cycling did increase, but it has all over Scotland. It was only in Dumfries and Dundee where that increase was statistically significant;
- Car use has declined in all seven areas, and while car use is declining across Scotland, the falls in all of the areas were greater than the Scotland-wide fall with nearly 20% reduction in Larbert/Stenhousemuir;
- Car sharing increased in five of the seven areas, although there was a significant fall in Larbert/Stenhousemuir.

In summary, the programme resulted in larger than average increases in sustainable travel compared to the rest of Scotland except bus use, which declined except for where there was significant investment (in Dumfries and Dundee). The branding and health messages seem to have given a social legitimacy to active travel, in particular walking.

o Implications for North East Scotland

Of the four recommendations contained in the report, authorities in the north east could be considered to already be implementing three of them. In particular, partnership working is already a key way of working through Nestrans, the Health and Transport Action Plan and Getabout. Local initiatives such as the Greenbrae cycling and Peterhead demonstration cycling town projects share many of the characteristics of the Smarter Choices programme. Secondly, branding and communications strategy is an important element of promoting active travel in the north east, notably through the Getabout branding and strategy. Thirdly, monitoring of Getabout and local promotional events is already in place and the Nestrans monitoring report provides an annual overview of transport indicators.

It could be argued that the missing element in developing smarter choices in the north east is support from the Scottish Government. The tendency (as with the recent 'not far, leave the

car' campaign being delivered by Greener Scotland) is for centrally delivered initiatives with little reference to partnership working.

With so much already in place, it could be argued that the north east has developed Smarter Choices programmes without the central funding that the seven pilot areas have benefitted from. It may be worthwhile to revisit the original bids to SCSP in partnership with constituent local authorities and other partners, such as the Health & Transport Action Plan group, to review whether revisiting their potential may be worthwhile.

- **Recommendation**

It is recommended that the Board:

- a) note the content of this report and the documents referred to above.

RD/DK 30 May 2013