

Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice, Communities and Pensioners' Rights
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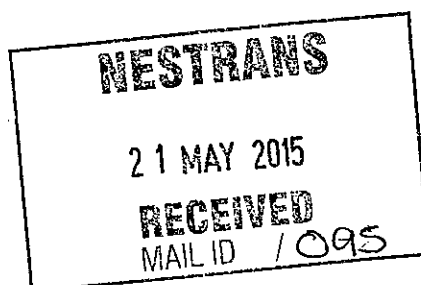


Councillor Ramsay Milne
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LEGACY 2014
XX COMMONWEALTH GAMES
SCOTLAND

Your ref: RD/N1/9
Our ref: 2015/0015529
19 May 2015



Dear Ramsay

Thank you for your letter of 23 April 2015 highlighting to me the concerns about the geographic spread of the National Walking and Cycling Project Plan raised by the Nestrans Board at their meeting on 1 April. We are pleased that the Nestrans Board is taking an active interest in the Project Plan.

As you may be aware, the National Walking and Cycling Network Project Plan has been prepared by Scottish Natural Heritage, Sustrans and Scottish Canals on the basis of implementing National Development 8 of National Planning Framework 3. My launch of the National Walking and Cycling Project Plan earlier this year was preceded by engagement by Scottish Natural Heritage with key delivery partners, including local authorities and regional transport partnerships, in autumn 2014 and earlier liaison on the project proposal in 2013 (to which you refer).

As described on page 65 of National Planning Framework 3, the Scottish Government's view is that the network should focus on closing key gaps, upgrade connecting routes, build on local core path networks and link with public transport. Those priority projects that were thought to require development are listed in the national development. Those projects cannot now be changed as they have national development status, which is only provided for through the National Planning Framework, reviewed on a five yearly basis.

However, there may be scope for some changes to the other categories of routes listed within the project Plan in response to network development review, to which we committed in the Project Plan. For example, these might include other 5 year priority routes without national development status, which can be progressed within 5 years or, indeed longer term priorities which need early action.



The list of routes included in the Project Plan has necessarily been selective, focussing on those that best fit with the project vision and provide a balance in terms of coverage, function and costs. In drawing up the National Walking and Cycling Network project proposal, SNH, Sustrans and Scottish Canals were conscious of the gap in coverage in the north of Scotland, particularly in the north-west and the northern isles, but could only act on the available information at the time. However, we are open to suggestions coming forward in these areas, subject to the caveats set out above.

I understand that the Aberdeenshire Coastal Path, Deeside Way extension and Kirkmichael-Ballater routes were included in the 'Longer term priorities' category based on discussion with staff in Aberdeenshire Council and Cairngorms National Park Authority about likely delivery timescales. The highlighted map sent by Nestrans only depicts the 5 year priorities, but the 20 year vision map of the National Walking and Cycling Network submitted by SNH to Scottish Government in July 2013 shows that the north-east is addressed.

There is a Regional Transport Partnership representative (Eric Guthrie, TACTRANS) on the National Walking and Cycling Network Steering Group, providing for closer engagement with the Regional Transport Partnerships. This provides an opportunity for delivery partners such as Nestrans to receive updates about progress with implementation of the Project Plan and to feed in information.

We are open to route proposals which could be added to the list of 5 year priority routes without national development status or those needing longer term development, and suggest they could be presented to the Project Steering Group via the Regional Transport Partnership representative.

I hope this information is helpful.



ALEX NEIL