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# A review of the 'Smarter Choices, Smarter Places' Programme

**July 2020**





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# Context

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## (1) National

In response to the global climate emergency, the Climate Change Act 2019 sets a target for Scotland to meet net-zero emissions of all greenhouse gases by 2045. Transport is currently the largest contributor to Scottish emissions making up 37%, with car use making up 40% of this.<sup>1</sup> By encouraging people to travel actively this will not only help to achieve Scotland's net-zero target but improve public health, reduce inequalities, support the economy and improve quality of life.

Scotland's National Performance Framework identifies environment as one of the nine national outcomes and their vision states: *"our transport infrastructure is integrated, sustainable, efficient and reliable. We promote active travel, cycling and walking, and discourage car reliance and use particularly in towns and cities."*<sup>2</sup>

[The National Transport Strategy 2](#) was published in February 2020, it sets out an ambitious vision for the transport system in Scotland for the next 20 years. The strategy was developed through a collaborative approach with extensive engagement with individuals, businesses and third sector organisations. The strategy looks at the whole transport system in Scotland and considers 'why we travel and how these trips are made, including walking, wheeling, cycling, and travelling by bus, train, ferry, car, lorry and aeroplane'.

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*"The Strategy presents our Vision for Scotland's transport system over the next 20 years: We will have a sustainable, inclusive, safe and accessible transport system, helping deliver a healthier, fairer and more prosperous Scotland for communities, businesses and visitors"*<sup>3</sup>

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The vision is set out into four priorities:

### **Reduce inequalities**

This identifies the need to deliver a fully inclusive society and to ensure everyone in Scotland will 'share the benefits of a modern and accessible transport system'. By focusing on tackling inequalities this will in turn reduce poverty, in particular child poverty.

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1 [The National Transport Strategy 2](#)

2 National Performance Framework [Environment](#)

3 [The National Transport Strategy 2](#)

### Takes climate action

This priority focuses on allowing 'people to make travel choices that minimise the long-term impacts on our climate and the wellbeing of future generations' and helping to deliver the net-zero target.

### Help deliver inclusive economic growth

This priority identifies the importance of transport in delivering Scotland's Economic Strategy's priorities by enabling businesses access to suppliers and customers and people access to reach employment.

### Improves our health and wellbeing

This identifies the importance of linking in with the Public Health Priorities and the need for the transport system to be safe and secure and allow people to make active travel choices to improve their health and physical and mental wellbeing and reduce health inequalities. *"Active travel has the potential to drastically improve both environmental and public health, enhance mental wellbeing and make places more equal and liveable"* (LGiU)<sup>4</sup>



There are a number of key policy and strategies that link into the National Transport Strategy:

[National Performance Framework](#) is Scotland's way to localise and implement the UN's Sustainable Development Goals with a focus on tackling inequalities. It uses National Indicators to measure the progress of the National Outcomes.

[National Planning Framework 2014](#) sets out the long-term vision for development and investment across Scotland.

[Climate Change Plan 2018-2032](#) sets out the plan to drive down emissions over the period to 2032.

The [Transport \(Scotland\) Act 2019](#) has been designed to 'deliver a more responsive and sustainable transport system for everyone in Scotland'.

The [National Walking Strategy 2014](#) has three aims, they are to create a culture of walking as part of everyday travel and for recreation and well-being; better quality walking environments for everyone; and enable easy, convenient and safe independent mobility for everyone.

4 [LGiU Briefing: Looking ahead: Eight ways local government can encourage active travel.](#)

Transport Scotland has produced:

[A Long-term Vision for Active Travel in Scotland 2030](#) which sets out key objectives to get more people using active travel for shorter everyday journeys.

[Active Travel Framework 2019](#) identifies five high level key Active Travel Outcomes which are supported by a number of indicators to monitor progress. It brings together the key policy approaches to improving the uptake of walking and cycling in Scotland for travel.

[Cycling Action Plan for Scotland 2017-2020](#) sets out actions to achieve the vision of “10% of everyday journeys to be made by bike by 2020”.

[Scotland’s Road Safety Framework to 2020](#) aims to ensure we can all use roads in safety, with a vision that no-one is killed on Scotland’s roads and the injury rate is much reduced.

## (2) Local Authority

As referenced above, the National Performance Framework is the mechanism which is used to support the wider public sector, and others, to work together to achieve set outcomes and to measure the extent to which they are attained. One of the indicators in the National Performance Framework measures the proportion of short journeys that adults make by walking or cycling.

Local Authorities in Scotland have responsibility for developing local transport strategies,<sup>5</sup> they are the roads<sup>6</sup> and planning authority for the area,<sup>7</sup> and, in some cases, operate bus and ferry services.

They also have a critical role to play in involving key partners in the local decision making process through Community Planning Partnerships.<sup>8</sup> Given these responsibilities, local authorities are uniquely placed to work collaboratively to support active and sustainable travel within their boundaries.

5 Transport (Scotland) Act 2001

6 Roads (Scotland) Act 1984

7 Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997

8 Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015



# Smarter Choices, Smarter Places

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*“Now in its sixth year, our Smarter Choices, Smarter Places programme supports local authorities in Scotland to encourage more active and sustainable travel choices”.<sup>9</sup>*

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Smarter Choices Smarter Places (SCSP) is Paths for All's grant programme to encourage people to travel more sustainably and is funded by Transport Scotland. The programme has two streams.

1. The Local Authority Fund allocates funding of £5 million to local authorities on a pro-rata basis, with a minimum grant of £50,000. All thirty-two of Scotland's local authorities are seeking to use this funding in 2020/21.
2. The Open Fund awards grants of between £5,000 and £50,000 to third sector organisations and the wider public sector.

The Smarter Choices, Smarter Places programme has a vital role to play in supporting and facilitating the delivery of the national strategies detailed above at a local level and is cited in the Climate Change Action Plan and the Physical Activity Delivery Plan.

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<sup>9</sup> <https://www.pathsforall.org.uk/active-travel/smarter-choices-smarter-places-1/local-authority-fund>



# Objectives

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As a learning organisation, Paths for All is always seeking to ensure that its services are delivered effectively and efficiently. The Improvement Service were asked to engage with agreed local authorities to assess if the Smarter Choices, Smarter Places Programme was delivering its intended outcomes, supporting local strategic priorities and offering value for money.

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*The Improvement Service (IS) is the 'go-to' organisation for local government in Scotland.*

*Being the national improvement organisation for local government in Scotland, our purpose is to help councils and their partners to improve the health, quality of life and opportunities of all people in the geographic area, through community leadership, strong local governance and the delivery of high quality, efficient local services.<sup>10</sup>*

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<sup>10</sup> <https://www.improvementservice.org.uk/what-we-do>



# Process

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To meet the objectives, a desk top review of the documentation that was provided by Paths for All in relation to five local authorities which had received grants from the 'Local Authority Fund' was carried out. These were:

- Aberdeen City
- Angus
- East Ayrshire
- East Dunbartonshire
- South Ayrshire

The local authorities were chosen to ensure that they were representative of the differences that exist Scotland-wide in relation to rurality and population size.

The review process sought to test the following:

- verify grants are being used to deliver SCSP outcomes
- identify vulnerabilities and risks to the SCSP Programme at a project level and identify solutions
- identify the financial and non-financial benefits generated by the SCSP investment
- check that guidance and processes are being followed effectively and identify improvement
- corroborate that the project reporting in the Completion Reports is appropriate and correct.

In addition, one to one interviews were undertaken with four of the five local authorities using a structured questionnaire. A summary report, reflecting both the findings from the individual interviews and a synopsis of the wider review are included in Appendix One. Details of each review are available on request from Paths for All.

It had been intended to apply a similar process to an NHS Board which had received funding through the 'Open Fund' but given the pressures exerted on health services by responding to COVID-19 this was not possible.

A further two interviews took place with local authorities in which there was evidence of good practice that it was felt could be shared as case studies. These are included in Appendix Two.





# Findings

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Whilst there are differences in the activities delivered by each of the local authorities, common themes were identified that will be considered further under the following headings:

- Application and Reporting Process
- Funding
- Lessons Learned

## (1) Application and Reporting Process

In the five years for which it has been running, the application and reporting process used by Paths for All has been reviewed and refined and has now moved to an online system. Local authorities recognised that in the first year of a digital process there were always likely to be initial technical difficulties that will be addressed and resolved in future years. There was a general appreciation that efforts had been made to minimise problems by having a 'testing group' and providing prompt and efficient support when requested. In addition, there was a general consensus that adopting a digital approach would make the grants process more streamlined. The majority of those issues identified in the course of the one to one interviews with local authority staff have been resolved.

It can be challenging to get a balance between having a grants process that provides consistency and is proportionate in terms of reporting requirements, yet still enables adequate scrutiny to take place.

**In general terms the application and reporting process enables adequate verification to take place but there are certain areas which would benefit from review.**

The review process identified inconsistencies in the level of detail and quality of information provided in individual reports. The areas in which this most commonly occurred were:

- *until this year*, completion reports did not always contain supporting evidence from the monitoring and evaluation plans. Whilst this information is now included it is not expressed in terms of the impact created.
- information of sources of match funding.
- confirmation of approval for changing or varying the initiatives that were approved in the application process.

Each of these will be considered in turn.

## (a) Monitoring and Evaluation

Whilst a monitoring and evaluation plan has to be submitted along with the application form for grant funding, the results of the plan, until the most recent year, were not always included in the completion reports. It is acknowledged that gathering data to evidence impact can be challenging- particularly in relation to the longer term impacts that arise from behaviour change. Distinguishing outputs from outcomes can cause problems, however this has been overcome to some extent by the use of a more outcomes focussed application form.

In discussions with representatives from local authorities it became clear that there were wide differences in the approaches taken to planning, delivering and reporting on the impact of the initiatives for which they had received funding. Whilst it is accepted and understood that each local authority will plan and deliver projects in a way that best meets their needs, it would be helpful, and provide a degree of consistency in reporting, if a common approach based on a framework or set of principles could be developed. To ensure, that from the outset, local authorities understand what is expected in relation to the grant conditions and reporting requirements it might be helpful to review the induction process. As well as ensuring all new projects participate in the agreed process, it may be useful to consider offering a shortened version when there are significant changes in the operation of the fund or if there has been a change in the key personnel supporting a project. A manual or guide is currently available, but it is quite lengthy, and its purpose is not to outline a simple shared methodology but to provide information on a variety of available approaches and to sign post useful resources. It might be helpful to review the existing guidance, focus on key information, include some simple frameworks and make it easily accessible using an online platform.



### Recommendation One

Review the current guidance for council officers applying for and receiving Smarter Choices, Smarter Places funding and include simple templates/frameworks to plan and evaluate initiatives. At the same time review and expand the induction process.

Many of the activities provided are designed to raise awareness of active and sustainable travel. Paths for All use the Trans Theoretical Model (TTM)<sup>11</sup> for behaviour change and apply the six stages of progression that it identifies in relation to changing behaviour to active and sustainable travel.

<sup>11</sup> The Stages of Change or Transtheoretical Model was introduced in the late 1970s by researchers James Prochaska and Carlo Di Clemente

**Pre-contemplation:** unaware that other options exist

**Contemplation:** aware of / beginning to understand and consider adopting the given behaviour and may be prepared to seek more information

**Preparation:** actively considering/ beginning to make commitment to adopting a behaviour

**Action:** actually changing behaviour

**Maintenance:** sustaining and consolidating the given behaviour

**Relapse:** revert back to original behaviour.

Going from having a lack of awareness or understanding of active and sustainable travel to actually travelling actively can take some time. The long term attitudinal and behaviour change required takes place over several years and hence the impact of short term initiatives in contributing to this can be hard to measure. This often means that there is more reliance on outputs or numbers than impact or changes. Rather than individual local authorities attempting to measure the impact of initiatives they deliver, it might be useful to review existing research and use it to identify a logic model or theory of change that provides evidence of how the outcomes from short term initiatives can contribute to long term impact. This could be used to develop an indicator bank that projects seeking to deliver such activities could apply- provided the activities met a defined set of criteria.



## Recommendation Two

In relation to the most commonly delivered activities identified by Paths for All, use existing research evidence to identify how these activities will achieve the desired changes and the stages each will progress through. The theory of change that is developed, as a result, will be used to create a bank of indicators that can be applied to individual initiatives.

## (b) Match Funding and Contribution in Kind

In several instances there was a lack of detailed information in relation to the match funding or contribution in kind that was required to meet 50% of the project cost. This was particularly the case when initiatives involving the private sector were involved. It is noted that in the current completion report details of match funding are no longer requested. There is limited evidence of the overall effectiveness of requiring match funding in relation to some initiatives and rather than make it a grant condition it might

be helpful to consider the appropriateness, or otherwise, on an individual basis. An example might be if in relation to a project or activity there is a clear and measurable benefit to the organisation from which match funding is sought, then they should be expected to provide a financial contribution. The same issues did not arise with contributions in kind, which is more easily quantified and specified and linked to particular activities.



### Recommendation Three

Analyse and assess the benefits and practicality of requiring match funding / or a contribution in kind for all activities.

## (c) Approvals for Variations

The Smarter Choices, Smarter Places programme is premised on being flexible and adaptable and enabling adjustments to be made to quickly adapt to local needs and variations. As a consequence, there is the opportunity to secure approval to vary or amend the initiatives that the funding is intended to support. However, in some cases permission appears not to have been sought in advance and there is no evidence of any agreed variation.



### Recommendation Four

Retain the opportunity to review, amend or replace planned initiatives but ensure that the appropriate permissions and agreements are in place **before** action is taken.

## (2) Funding

The Scottish Government Spaces for People<sup>12</sup> is a new, temporary infrastructure programme in Scotland which offers funding and support to make it safer for people who choose to walk or cycle for essential trips and exercise during Covid-19. Whilst this was welcomed, it has again highlighted the challenges in ensuring that any improvements to infrastructure which improve walking and cycling opportunities are widely used. Some councils reported that in the past the focus had been on developing infrastructure projects and connections were not always made with Smarter Choices, Smarter Places funding to support its use, however this is no longer the case. This was not a reflection on the way the programme was promoted but more as a result of the management of budgets within individual local authorities. All were aware

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.sustrans.org.uk/our-blog/projects/2020/scotland/spaces-for-people-making-essential-travel-and-exercise-safer-during-coronavirus>

of the need to find a balance between funding improvements to the infrastructure required for walking and cycling, and initiatives or projects that encouraged people to use it.

Maximising potential usage requires funding for raising awareness of what is on offer and resources to encourage people to use it. Several of those council staff that were interviewed stressed that for this to be effective, staff on the ground working in communities are essential.

In the individual interviews that took place, it was suggested that it would be helpful to improve the linkages between capital infrastructure projects and local initiatives to encourage and promote active and sustainable travel. A more joined-up approach needs to take place at both a strategic level, when decisions about funding are made, and at a local level when projects are being delivered. A starting point for individual local authorities might be to consider if there is scope for improving opportunities for closer collaboration across services. It should be recognised that achieving behaviour change requires long term funding and support. Although Smarter Choices, Smarter Places is an annual funding stream, because it has been in existence for several years, it seems some have an expectation that it will continue on an ongoing basis. In some areas the absence of confirmation of definite funding can adversely affect project planning and delivery and pose challenges in recruiting or retaining personnel. There have been occasions too when the sources from which it is hoped to secure additional funding operate different deadlines.

Having longer term funding and aligning the funding cycles for all the different funds emanating from Transport Scotland would assist in planning.

Smarter Choices, Smarter Places funding often acts as a catalyst and secures contributions from different budgets within local authorities and also enables funding to be secured from a variety of external sources, including the private sector. By supporting staffing and other core costs, Smarter Choices, Smarter Places funding enables effective projects to be sustained and maximises available resources.



### Recommendation Five

Whilst recognising that this is out with the control of Paths for All, it would be more efficient and effective if funding was guaranteed for at least three years. It may also be worth examining the feasibility of key funders agreeing a common approach to funding deadlines and requirements

# Lessons Learned

In both the discussions that took place and the review process there were examples where decisions were made based on evidence from previous experiences....and a few instances of the same mistakes being repeated.

There are two common problems that have occurred on a regular basis and which are not being addressed. Firstly, delivering projects in schools given the restrictions of the school year and curricular requirements can be challenging. Whilst teaching staff would like to support initiatives, they often don't have sufficient time. It might be helpful to engage with Education Scotland to discuss how this issue could best be addressed, perhaps by enlisting its support to provide appropriate information for schools. Secondly, given the legal requirements for tendering and procurement, delays when engaging contractors/consultants are common place .Likewise initiatives that involve multiple external partners are frequently subject to delay. A longer lead in time could help address these difficulties.

However, there are many extremely positive examples of local authorities and their partners which have adjusted or adapted planned initiatives on the basis of what has worked and equally importantly what hasn't.

In the course of individual Interviews and the review process initiatives were identified that are working well, and these could potentially be shared and ,where appropriate, adapted and replicated.

On the dedicated web pages of the Smarter Choices, Smarter Places Programme there are excellent case studies<sup>13</sup> showcasing a variety of initiatives. Whilst these describe the activities in an engaging and informative way, they don't always reflect on the barriers or challenges that may have had to be overcome, outline the key requirements that underpin the approach or its potential for replicability. Perhaps not surprisingly, there aren't any examples of projects that didn't work. The current completion form asks local authorities to identify the lessons learned and it would be useful to find some way of sharing this information more widely.



## Recommendation Six

Consider how best to share examples of effective practice and any lessons that have been learned in relation to what works and what doesn't. Explore the feasibility of adding this information to the existing webpages in a succinct and accessible way.

13 <https://www.pathsforall.org.uk/mediaLibrary/other/english/73319.pdf>

To consider the extent to which five local authorities had allowed their experiences to influence the activities they delivered, a comparison was made between the initiatives that were funded in 2015/16 and 2020/21.

The results are summarised below in Fig. One.

As can be seen, most of the local authorities have become more focussed in relation to the activities they deliver and have concentrated on improving or sustaining approaches that are known to be effective. At the same time, small scale initiatives are being tested and the results used to make minor adjustments or changes. For those initiatives where planned activities have not worked a new approach has been adopted.

**Fig. One: Comparison of activities delivered in 2015/16 and 2020/21 by local authority**

Local Authority	Activities in 2015/16	Activities in 2020/21
Aberdeen City	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Extension of Getabout Brand</li> <li>Raising awareness in schools</li> <li>Car Club</li> <li>Workplace travel planning</li> <li>Feasibility studies</li> <li>Events</li> <li>Bus shelter/ Real Time Passenger Information screens</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continuation of Getabout Brand</li> <li>An I-bike officer and travel tracker will support pupils to travel actively to schools.</li> <li>Sustainable longer journeys will be encouraged through car clubs, hydrogen vehicles and public transport promotion.</li> </ul>
Angus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Create Angus on the Go brand</li> <li>Cycle activities</li> <li>Active travel education and promotion</li> <li>Paths promotion</li> <li>Awareness raising in schools</li> <li>Feasibility studies</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Support for Get on the Go social media campaign.</li> <li>Angus Cycling Hub will deliver a bike recycling programme.</li> <li>All residents will be targeted with the Better Points reward scheme and community planning empowerment projects will embed active travel in community planning.</li> <li>Community focused active travel event.</li> </ul>

Local Authority	Activities in 2015/16	Activities in 2020/21
East Ayrshire	In partnership with South Ayrshire establish a 'pop- up' active travel hub supported by active travel officer and volunteers (Kilmarnock)	Active travel initiatives will be delivered from the Active Travel Hub at Kilmarnock Railway Station. The initiatives will be delivered by Active Travel Officers and locally recruited volunteers and supported by partners.
East Dunbartonshire	Two campaigns - Bears Way and Healthy Habits will support the use of sustainable infrastructure.	<p>A Travel Hub Officer will be employed to deliver initiatives/ empower local communities.</p> <p>Real Time Passenger Information screens will be installed.</p> <p>Walking and cycling maps will be reprinted.</p> <p>An app will be developed for EDC staff to encourage everyday walking and cycling.</p> <p>School initiatives.</p> <p>Develop Active Travel Strategy.</p>
South Ayrshire	In partnership with East Ayrshire establish a 'pop- up' active travel hub supported by active travel officer and volunteers (Ayr)	Active travel initiatives will be delivered from the Ayr Active Travel Hub at Kilmarnock Railway Station. The initiatives will be delivered by Active Travel Officers and locally recruited volunteers and supported by partners.



# Contribution to addressing inequality and disadvantage

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*“Transport can play a role in mitigating the impact of poverty by allowing people to access services and participate in public life, but importantly it also plays a role in preventing poverty and lifting people out of poverty, through access to education and employment.”<sup>14</sup>*

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Whilst the work of the Poverty and Inequality Commission focussed on the barriers created by the costs, accessibility and availability of sustainable public transport, people experiencing social and economic hardship are also less likely to be able to use active modes of travel. There are many reasons for this. Lack of money can be a barrier as the average cost of a bike is £275<sup>15</sup> in current terms, yet a person over 25 claiming income support gets less than £75 per week and if they are under 25 this falls to less than £60.<sup>16</sup>

A lack of safe and pleasant places to walk can also pose challenges.

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*“People’s distance from greenspace and their use and satisfaction of that space vary with the level of deprivation. In the most deprived areas of Scotland, 45% of adults visited the outdoors at least once a week in 2018, compared to 68% of adults in the least deprived areas. Furthermore, the quality of greenspace is perceived to be lower in deprived areas, with 50% of respondents from the 15% most deprived areas agreeing that the quality of their local greenspace had reduced in the past 5 years”<sup>17</sup>*

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People living in deprived areas may not have ready access to the social networks and opportunities which promote active travel.

14 <https://povertyinequality.scot/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/Transport-and-Poverty-in-Scotland-Report-of-the-Poverty-and-Inequality-Commission.pdf>

15 <https://transformscotland.org.uk/wp/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/Transform-Consulting-The-Value-of-Cycling-to-the-Scottish-Economy.pdf>

16 <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/benefit-and-pension-rates-2019-to-2020/proposed-benefit-and-pension-rates-2019-to-2020#income-support>

17 <https://www.gov.scot/binaries/content/documents/govscot/publications/strategy-plan/2020/02/environment-strategy-scotland-vision-outcomes/documents/quality-greenspace-knowledge-account/quality-greenspace-knowledge-account/govscot%3Adocument/quality-greenspace-knowledge-account.pdf>

In recognition of the need to fulfil their responsibilities in relation to the Fairer Scotland Duty<sup>18</sup> local authorities are starting to take steps to use Smarter Choices, Smarter Places funding to improve engagement with people living in areas that rank highly in the Scottish Indices of Multiple Deprivation<sup>19</sup> and to offer support that seeks to overcome social and economic disadvantage, such as providing cycle training and access to affordable bikes.

However, this is an area that would benefit from being given a higher priority.



### **Recommendation Seven**

Consider how the contribution Smarter Choices, Smarter Places funding is currently making to reducing poverty and inequality can be enhanced.

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18 <https://www.gov.scot/publications/fairer-scotland-duty-interim-guidance-public-bodies/>

19 <https://simd.scot/#/simd2020/BTTTFTT/9/-4.0000/55.9000/>

# Implications of COVID-19

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COVID-19 has meant there has been unprecedented levels of walking and cycling over the months of lockdown. UK road travel fell as much as 73%, levels which haven't been seen since 1955.<sup>20</sup> There is still a continued need to avoid public transport where possible, and trends in other countries such as China show there has been an increase in car use following lockdown.<sup>21</sup> By prioritising car use the existing inequalities are re-enforced and those without access to a car are less able to move around safely.<sup>22</sup>

Cycling and walking is key to staying safe and socially distancing as people return to work or take exercise. It is a low carbon form of travel, but its health benefits also mean it increases resilience to diseases and improves health.<sup>23</sup> Attention is now turning to the important role that active travel will have and the increasing complexity this will bring.

Cities and towns need to re-allocate road space not only in the short term but in the medium to long term.<sup>24</sup> In England, the government has issued statutory guidance making it clear it expects local authorities to make major changes to their road layout in order to reallocate space for cyclists and pedestrians. This will encourage active travel and allow for social distancing. Some of these measures include 'pop-up' cycle lanes, cones and barriers to widen footways, reducing speed limits and introducing pedestrian and cycle zones.<sup>25</sup> Sustrans suggest that local authorities can bring forward existing plans and introduce those measures that have already had careful consideration.<sup>26</sup>

The Scottish Government is providing funding of £30 million to support pop-up active travel infrastructure, through the Spaces for People programme. Support will be provided from Transport Scotland and Sustrans Scotland to local authorities.<sup>27</sup> This focuses on delivering projects aimed with immediate benefits for essential journeys.<sup>28</sup>

The Smarter Choices, Smarter Places projects have been impacted by COVID-19, however they can play an important role as the country moves out of lockdown. Paths for All are encouraging the current projects to adapt and amend their activities and have identified a wide range of activities that can be delivered within the current constraints.<sup>29</sup>

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20 [Guardian](#)

21 [BBC](#)

22 [LGiU Briefing: Looking ahead: Eight ways local government can encourage active travel.](#)

23 [Government Business](#)

24 [Government Business](#)

25 [LGiU Briefing: The role of active travel in our recovery from COVID-19](#)

26 [Sustrans](#)

27 [Ibid 7](#)

28 [LGiU Briefing: The role of active travel in our recovery from COVID-19](#)

29 [Paths for all COVID-19 Impacts: advice for funded projects](#)

In the interviews with local authorities there was a recognition that whilst more people were walking and cycling there was significantly less use of public transport. The challenge, it was suggested, would be in sustaining the interest in walking and cycling for exercise and extending its use for short journeys and travelling to work. Local authorities have already responded in a variety of ways, for example, by lending key workers bikes and asking employers to encourage their employees to use active travel on their return to work.

Keeping people engaged will require creativity and increased use of virtual events and social media.

However, on a cautionary note recent figures from Transport Scotland suggest that for the period 13 - 19 July 2020 walking journeys were down by 40%, cycling journeys were up by 30% and car journeys were down by 15%.<sup>30</sup>

Given that walking as a mode of transport has declined in recent years (20% of journeys in 2018, down from 26% in 2012)<sup>31</sup> and there have been minimal changes in the use of public transport, if the objectives set out in the National Transport Strategy and climate change targets are to be achieved a major shift in the use of these modes of travel will be required.



### Recommendation Eight

Smarter Choices, Smarter Places funding has made a demonstrable difference in raising the profile of active and sustainable travel with local communities, but consideration should be given to adjusting the programme to prioritise activities that support, firstly walking, and secondly public transport.

<sup>30</sup> These figures are prepared by Transport Scotland statisticians and compare actual journeys against a baseline taken from July 2019. Figures are derived from a range of sources.

<https://www.transport.gov.scot/publication/covid-19-transport-trend-data-13-19-july-2020/>

<sup>31</sup> <https://www.transport.gov.scot/media/45852/sct09199889061.pdf>



# Conclusions

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The Smarter Choices, Smarter Places Programme has adapted and evolved to reflect developments in policy and practice in relation to active and sustainable travel. One of the real strengths of the programme is its flexibility, both in relation to funding a wide range of activities that will deliver its outcomes, and also in allowing changes to be made to funded activities to take account of what is happening on the ground.

This review of the programme, although focussing on five local authorities, has identified that there are no causes for concern with the 'light touch' reporting process, although potential improvement areas have been highlighted.

Smarter Choices, Smarter Places funding has been instrumental in developing and sustaining local cross sectoral partnerships.

In relation to influencing local policies, Smarter Choices, Smarter Places funding has produced useful data and intelligence and contributed toward establishing or reviewing local active and sustainable travel strategies.

The availability of resources to support active and sustainable travel has increased as grants awarded have been used to lever additional resources at local level either internally or from external funders.

It is increasingly being recognised that a larger proportion of Smarter Choices, Smarter Places funding should be targeted at those experiencing social and economic disadvantage.

*Please note, a summary of the recommendations is not provided as these should be considered in context in which they are made.*

Report prepared by Karen Carrick. Contributions from Susan Rintoul and Samantha Keogh

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# Appendix One: Summary of the review and interviews for individual local authorities

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## Aberdeen City Council

### Overview

An in-depth discussion took place with Aberdeen City Council in relation to the Smarter Choices, Smarter Places Grants Programme with particular reference to the activities funded in 2019-20. The local authority has structured their Smarter Choices, Smarter Places programme under four initiatives: Getabout in the City; Getabout by Active Travel; Getabout by Education and Getabout by Sustainable and Environmentally friendly vehicle. There is a focus on a series of activities under the four Getabout initiatives: road closure events in the city centre; marketing and raising awareness of Getabout; the production of walking and cycling maps; supporting the city wide car club; raising awareness of public transport and promoting active and sustainable travel in schools

### Key Strengths

In partnership with a wide range of other organisations,<sup>32, 33</sup> The Getabout partnership project seeks to, *“promote healthy and sustainable transport choices for everybody travelling within the region and beyond. All partners take steps to make active and sustainable forms of transport more accessible for their staff, their users and everybody in the North-east.”*

Getabout is both a partnership, and a recognised brand, for sustainable transport initiatives in the North East of Scotland and directs people to one main source for information concerning sustainable transport. Delivering Smarter Choices, Smarter Places initiatives has allowed both Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire Councils, along with partners, to co-ordinate activities supported by the funding. This has enabled maximum benefit to be gained from Smarter Choices, Smarter Places funding and has also strengthened the partnership approach.

Aberdeen City Council and associated delivery partners have tried various; activities, events and initiatives, and have delivered some of the successful projects in more than

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32 The partnership comprises of Nestrans (North East of Scotland Regional Transport Partnership), Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire Councils, NHS Grampian, University of Aberdeen, Robert Gordon University, North East Scotland College, Energy Saving Trust and the James Hutton Institute

33 <https://www.getabout.org.uk/about-us/>

one financial year. When a project has not worked well, lessons have been learned, relevant changes made, or the project has been discontinued. Likewise, when a project has worked well, it has often been upscaled in the following year.

The local authority recognises that providing infrastructure is not enough - support and guidance on what is available and how it may be used safely is essential. Smarter Choices, Smarter Places funding allows the council to deliver a wider range of behaviour change activities that complement a number of the active and sustainable transport infrastructure projects that have been implemented throughout the city.

The 'In Town Without My Car Day' event, an activity which Smarter Choices, Smarter Places funding has been used to support for many years, was very well attended in 2019 and enabled many of both the local authority's and funder's objectives to be achieved. Although event attendees are always encouraged to travel to the event actively and sustainably, a new addition to the 2019 event was to work with both First and Stagecoach and to offer free travel to and from the event from the Park and Ride sites. The 2019 event was used to raise awareness of how a section of Union Street could be used differently once motorised vehicles had been removed. As well as offering a wide range of active and sustainable transport attractions, the event included a number of stalls where people could get more information about the active and sustainable travel choices on offer in Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire.

## Policy Development

The Local Transport Strategy (2016-2021) is Aberdeen City Council's main transport strategy document and is designed to guide the planning and improvement of the local transport network on a five year basis. The Local Transport Strategy is in the process of being updated to reflect the various changes that have taken place in Aberdeen City since it was adopted, potentially the most notable change in transport terms is that the Aberdeen Western Peripheral Route is now operational., Aberdeen City Council has an Active Travel Action Plan 2017-2021<sup>34</sup> which, is currently being refreshed.<sup>35</sup> Active and sustainable travel is also considered in key policies in the Aberdeen City Local Outcome Improvement Plan (LOIP)<sup>36</sup> with a focus on creating a 'people friendly city' and in individual area based locality plans.

## Funding

Without the Smarter Choices, Smarter Places funding some of the activities delivered by the local authority might not have been possible. Whilst Aberdeen City Council is committed to supporting and enabling sustainable travel, given the limited resources and real term reductions in local authority funding<sup>37</sup> the current level of activity would have been unlikely to be achieved.

34 <https://committees.aberdeencity.gov.uk/documents/s65438/Aberdeen%20Active%20Travel%20Action%20Plan%20Appendix%201.pdf>

35 <https://consultation.aberdeencity.gov.uk/place/active-travel-action-plan-refresh/>

36 <https://communityplanningaberdeen.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/Final-LOIP-24-April-17.pdf>

37 [https://www.audit-scotland.gov.uk/uploads/docs/report/2019/nr\\_191217\\_local\\_government\\_finance.pdf](https://www.audit-scotland.gov.uk/uploads/docs/report/2019/nr_191217_local_government_finance.pdf)



Being able to support Smarter Choices, Smarter Places initiatives and activities through making a contribution in kind instead of matching funding is welcome.

## Project Planning and Evaluation

Activities involve a number of delivery partners, which often include those with whom work has been undertaken in previous financial years. In relation to individual activities, internal controls are in place to ensure that key targets are met, project budgets are accounted for and any underspends are identified and managed. When services are commissioned externally the Council's procurement processes are applied. Getabout partners who are using funding to deliver initiatives are responsible for following the financial controls of their respective organisations.

Quality measures are applied, however social value in relation to impact is not measured.

Specific data collection methodologies are used that are relevant for each project in terms of measuring performance. Relevant questions are included in the Council's annual City Voice Survey along with targeted surveys including the Getabout and other feedback questionnaires.

## Targeting Deprivation

Smarter Choices, Smarter Places activities have been delivered in all four of Aberdeen City's regeneration areas. In the 2018-19 academic year, the I Bike project worked with the Northfield Academy Associated School Group (ASG) and an Active Travel Day was delivered at West Park School (one of the schools in the Northfield ASG).

Efforts are made to ensure that economic disadvantage is not a barrier to active and sustainable travel.

## Impact of COVID-19

In the short term it is likely that there will be a shift away from public transport and Aberdeen City Council is encouraging individuals to use active travel as they return to work. The local authority has offered activities to support individuals during this time which include: maps for walking trails; cycle maps; encouraging children to travel actively and guidance on how to use public transport safely. As Co Wheels has been classed as an essential service by the Scottish Government, additional support for the Aberdeen Car Club has been put in place using Smarter Choices, Smarter Places funding. This will help to ensure that key workers and other members of the public have access to a vehicle if they do not own a car, or are unable to use public transport at this time.

The current situation has made active travel part of everyday living - there are more bikes and less cars on the road - and this offers an opportunity to support behavioural change.

## Key findings from review of reports

Aberdeen City Council have received funding from the Smarter Choices, Smarter Places programme of grants managed by Paths for All in the following years: 2015/16, 2016/17, 2017/18, 2018/19 and 2019/20.

Summary of findings:

- From the documents provided there was a clear audit trail from Application through to Completion Report with exceptions for 2015/16 and 2016/17. In these years information on the funded initiatives was extracted from the evaluation plans and completion reports.
- The majority of changes to initiatives were detailed in the documentation.
- Final Costs were detailed and contained match funding detail.
- Lessons learned were detailed.
- The Council operated an impartial Review Team to monitor progress of projects (AECOM).
- Data is collected on, but not limited to; event participation, numbers of people or business engaged with and interactions on social media. The Council also monitors the effectiveness of campaigns via "City Voice Data".

## Lessons Learned

To encourage increased bus usage, and minimise the number of people driving into the city centre, there needs to be increased promotion of 'park and ride' facilities. In 2019-20, one of the Smarter Choices. Smarter Places projects consisted of a marketing campaign to raise awareness of the park and ride sites. As a result of collaborating with both First and Stagecoach it was possible to offer free travel to and from the park and ride sites for those going to an event.

Initially the local authority focussed on delivering the Smarter Choices, Smarter Places, programme by dividing the city into four geographical areas, each containing at least one major employer with whom the local authority could try and work. These consisted mainly of oil companies who had members of staff whose remit included travel planning. Following the downturn in the oil industry and resultant redeployment and redundancy this approach was no longer possible. Therefore, the decision was taken to restructure the programme with a greater focus on transport modes and users.

The local authority has reviewed how best to engage with the business community. Currently through a European Union funded project called CIVITAS PORTIS,<sup>38</sup> it has included a travel planning work package with businesses in three areas of Aberdeen.

<sup>38</sup> <https://civitas.eu/>

The information and experience gained from this initiative might be used to inform future Smarter Choices, Smarter Places bids.

# Angus Council

## Overview

An in-depth discussion took place with Angus Council in relation to the Smarter Choices, Smarter Places Programme with particular reference to the activities funded in 2019-20. The council has focussed on increasing sustainable travel in Angus which includes: journeys to school; visits to key attractions; marketing bus journeys in partnership with Stagecoach and investing in a programme 'Cycling, Walking and Safer Streets in Angus'. The approach taken has been developed over several years and supported by successive grants from Smarter Choices, Smarter Places since 2015.

The council recognises that changing behaviours in relation to travel choice is challenging – particularly in rural areas such as Angus- and that it is well placed to lead and enable the cultural change that this requires.

## Key Strengths

The council recognises that to realise their objective of making sustainable travel a part of daily life, support from local communities is essential. Significant efforts have been made to engage with communities through the community planning process and the council have demonstrated a willingness to adopt plans based on the views expressed by local communities. Following on from its success in engaging key members of the Brechin community, and other stakeholders, in a process designed to identify practical, affordable and deliverable measures to increase uptake of active and sustainable travel modes, the council plans to adopt a similar approach in other areas. The council supports community plan projects by ensuring small amounts of funding are available to deliver agreed activities. The community in Brechin decided to use this funding to provide a real time public transport information sign in the local medical centre.

The council has established effective partnerships in both the third and private sectors.

In developing the 'Cycling, Walking and Safer Streets' programme, communities have been heavily involved in identifying potential routes and shaping the strategy.

As part of the community action plan Angus Cycle Hub<sup>39</sup> suggested an active travel route between Friockheim and Arbroath. Funding was secured for a feasibility study and an extremely well attended public engagement exercise was held.

In partnership with Stagecoach, fares are discounted for a limited period during the summer holidays. The scheme called the 'Holiday Hop' is modelled on one that is used in Dundee in which Dundee City Council, in conjunction with bus operators, offers a reduced fare of 20p to children when they travel with an adult fare payer or concession ticket holder.

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39 <http://www.voluntaryactionangus.org.uk/localitylocator/4362/angus-cycle-hub/>

## Policy Development

Angus Council has an 'Active Travel Strategy' which was adopted at the Communities Committee on 15 November 2016.<sup>40</sup>

The Smarter Choices, Smarter Places funded activities have been influential in securing community buy-in and have influenced the locality plans.<sup>41</sup>

## Funding

Without the Smarter Choices, Smarter Places grants programme many of the activities delivered by the council would not have been possible. Whilst the council is committed to supporting and enabling sustainable travel, given the limited resources and real term reductions in council funding<sup>42</sup> the current level of activity would have been unlikely to be achieved.

Match funding can be problematic, particularly when all the projects do not go to plan. This has resulted in underspends in some areas. It was felt that simplifying the process would help. One way of doing this might be by aligning funding to a particular activity but not attaching it to specific projects.

## Project Planning and Evaluation

Individual projects are delivered by identified leads who come from a range of backgrounds e.g. council staff and external consultants. Each lead is responsible for reporting on agreed metrics (including financial information) by set deadlines, and this is reviewed in the course of meetings which take place at regular intervals. The measures reported will depend on the type of activities delivered by individual projects.

On some occasions it has not been possible to deliver the planned projects. The reasons for this vary. For example, it was not possible to deliver WOW, a year-round walk to school challenge, because a representative who could go and speak to local schools was not available,

When carrying out evaluations it has been difficult to identify which baseline data should be collected -although it was noted that the new online reporting system should help overcome this. Although data collection methods will need to be established for each initiative, in relation to each project a simple evaluation takes place. Basic data collection methodologies tend to be used such as the 'Hands Up' survey.<sup>43</sup>

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40 <https://www.angus.gov.uk/sites/angus-cms/files/2017-07/401.pdf>

41 [https://www.angus.gov.uk/community\\_empowerment/planning\\_for\\_the\\_future/planning\\_for\\_the\\_future\\_of\\_angus/locality\\_plans](https://www.angus.gov.uk/community_empowerment/planning_for_the_future/planning_for_the_future_of_angus/locality_plans)

42 [https://www.audit-scotland.gov.uk/uploads/docs/report/2019/nr\\_191217\\_local\\_government\\_finance.pdf](https://www.audit-scotland.gov.uk/uploads/docs/report/2019/nr_191217_local_government_finance.pdf)

43 [https://www.livingstreets.org.uk/media/3792/wow-baseline-survey\\_commercial.pdf](https://www.livingstreets.org.uk/media/3792/wow-baseline-survey_commercial.pdf)

## Targeting Deprivation

In Angus there are small pockets of poverty within more affluent areas . As a result, it can be quite difficult to proactively reach areas of deprivation. An active travel festival was held in Arbroath close to an area of deprivation but offered in an inclusive way. Recycled bikes were offered at reduced rates and participants encouraged to use an active travel route through centre of Arbroath.

## Impact of COVID-19

There is increased physical activity and more people are walking and cycling for leisure. This provides an opportunity to encourage people to walk or cycle for other journeys for which they might previously have used a car.

The council also intends to seek to improve bus services between Forfar and Dundee.

## Key findings from review of reports

Angus Council have received funding from the 'Smarter Choices, Smarter Places' programme of grants managed by Paths for All in the following years: 2015/16, 2016/17, 2017/18, 2018/19 and 2019/20.

Smarter Choices, Smarter Places requires successful applicants to provide the following documentation: an application form ; a monitoring and evaluation plan and a final completion report.

These are the basis on which the review was based.

From the documents provided the activities agreed in the application forms are reflected in the completion reports.

- Explanations were provided for the majority of changes to planned initiatives.
- Final Costs were detailed and contained information on match funding.
- Lessons learned were detailed.

## Lessons Learned

Engaging a number of self-employed contractors can be challenging in a rural area due to the limited availability of appropriately qualified individuals.

School staff may not always have capacity to support planned projects and hence planned activities may need to be agreed well in advance.

To meet competition requirements there needs to be a recognition of the time that is required to advertise and award contracts.

## East Ayrshire Council

### Overview

An in-depth discussion took place with representatives from East Ayrshire Council and sustrans in relation to the Smarter Choices Smarter Places Programme with particular reference to the activities funded in 2019-20. This part funds Active Travel Hubs in Ayr and Kilmarnock in which Sustrans Scotland staff work and provide information, engagement opportunities and facilities aimed at encouraging the local community and visitors to travel more actively.

### Key Strengths

Local authority and sustrans staff have demonstrated that they seek to learn from both their own experiences and those of others. When initiatives have not progressed as planned, or delivered the impact anticipated, staff have either adapted the approach taken or sought to introduce replacement activities.

The involvement of volunteers in initiatives is encouraged and there are several examples of occasions on which their participation has been extremely useful, for example, delivery of a green infrastructure audit, supporting activities at the active travel hub and enabling cycling initiatives.

The council has established wide ranging local partnerships- including the Department for Work and Pension and HMP Kilmarnock. The partnerships are particularly effective because partners act as 'trusted intermediaries' and promote active travel to their individual employees or members. For example, the Chamber of Commerce encourage local businesses supporting active travel to take part in an awards scheme and all three of NHS Ayrshire & Arran's main hospitals have been awarded 'Cycle Friendly Employer' status from Cycling Scotland.

The focus in recent years in relation to local authority investment has been on capital works, but there is a recognition that this approach alone is not enough to influence the long term behaviour change that active and sustainable travel requires.

An Active Travel Hub is based within Kilmarnock station community village and promotes active travel by offering support and access to a wide range of activities and initiatives.

### Policy Development

East Ayrshire's local development plan promotes sustainable travel<sup>44</sup> and it is referenced in supplementary guidance on Green Infrastructure.<sup>45</sup>

44 <https://www.east-ayrshire.gov.uk/PlanningAndTheEnvironment/Development-plans/LocalAndStatutoryDevelopmentPlans/Promoting-sustainable-transport.aspx>

45 <https://www.east-ayrshire.gov.uk/Resources/PDF/P/Planning-SG-Green-Infrastructure-Open-Space-Complete.pdf>

The Community Plan<sup>46</sup> acknowledges the importance of physical activity but makes no specific reference to the contribution that can be made to improving levels by supporting active travel. However, there is scope to address this in the delivery plans.

The Kilmarnock Infinity Loop Project aims to encourage more cycling and walking by improving green spaces around the town and connecting them with a 'figure of 8' route that can be used for active travel to work and school.

## Funding

Without the Smarter Choices, Smarter Places grants programme some of the activities delivered by the council might not have been possible, although being able to make a contribution in kind instead of match funding is welcome. Whilst the council is committed to supporting and enabling sustainable travel, given the limited resources and real term reductions in council funding<sup>47</sup> the current level of activity would have been unlikely to be achieved.

## Project Planning and Evaluation

Smarter Choices, Smarter Places funding is used to support a variety of initiatives each of which has different reporting systems. In relation to determining the activities for which funding will be sought, the council takes direction from national strategies and programmes.

To demonstrate the impact of their activities the council uses 'before and after' surveys and collects qualitative data through testimonials.

## Targeting Deprivation

Through asking participants who take part in activities to share their postcode, which in the overwhelming majority of cases they willingly did, the council can demonstrate that 19% of beneficiaries come from an area of that ranks highly in the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation.<sup>48</sup>

The council also links active travel to improving employability by seeking to up-skill volunteers hence increasing their employment prospects and offering free bikes to individuals who are returning to work.

## Impact of COVID-19

It was acknowledged that active travel has become more common as a result of COVID-19, but the challenge will be to build on it. The council will look at both encouraging active travel for short journeys and also suggesting local employers ask individuals returning to work and key workers to consider using active and sustainable

46 <https://www.east-ayrshire.gov.uk/Resources/PDF/C/Community-Plan-2015-2030.pdf>

47 [https://www.audit-scotland.gov.uk/uploads/docs/report/2019/nr\\_191217\\_local\\_government\\_finance.pdf](https://www.audit-scotland.gov.uk/uploads/docs/report/2019/nr_191217_local_government_finance.pdf)

48 <https://simd.scot/#/simd2020/BTTTFTT/9/-4.0000/55.9000/>



travel. A potential issue is that sustainable travel in East Ayrshire can be dependant on using bus services.

In the immediate future virtual activities are likely to replace public events. This has already happened locally with cycling.

## Key findings from review of reports

East Ayrshire Council have participated in the Smarter Choices, Smarter Places programme in 2015/16, 2016/17, 2017/18, 2018/19 and 2019/20.

Smarter Choices, Smarter Places currently requires successful applicants to provide the following documentation: an application form; a monitoring and evaluation plan; and a final completion report.

From the documents provided there was a clear audit trail from application through to completion reports.

- The majority of changes to initiatives were detailed in the paperwork and action taken when it was identified that planned initiatives were unlikely to achieve the predicted impact.
- Final costs were detailed and contained information on match funding.
- Lessons learned were detailed.

## Lessons Learned

The council have identified that there needs to be flexibility in relation to opening times in the Active Travel Hub and that volunteers play an essential role in supporting and sustaining the hub.

The use of online surveys is an efficient and effective way of gathering data to assess the impact of initiatives.

Greater use needs to be made of data provided by the media company commissioned by the council in identifying areas that attract the greatest interest and then linking this to the activities provided.

Individuals who are just starting to cycle may be reluctant to join led activities and events.

There can be an initial reluctance on the part of some businesses to get involved in active travel initiatives.

Council staff have recognised the need to be flexible and adept at managing the situation when initiatives have not progressed as planned, or delivered the impact anticipated.

## South Ayrshire Council

### Overview

An in-depth discussion took place with representatives from South Ayrshire Council and sustrans in relation to the Smarter Choices, Smarter Places Programme with particular reference to the activities funded in 2019-20. This part funds Active Travel Hubs in Ayr and Kilmarnock in which Sustrans Scotland staff work and provide information, engagement opportunities and facilities aimed at encouraging the local community and visitors to travel more actively.

### Key Strengths

In recent years the local authority has moved towards focussing on developing local initiatives that constitute 'quick wins' or which create the greatest impact in a relatively short time. This is based on testing new approaches and learning from the experience of those initiatives that are most effective. The local authority offers schools in the area the opportunity to participate in the 'Go Active Schools' programme. This consists of an award that is given to schools that make a commitment and take steps to promote active travel.<sup>49</sup>

There has been a shift from larger scale projects towards smaller locally based initiatives targeted at local needs.

The active travel hub based at Ayr Station promotes active and sustainable forms of travel and is readily accessible to both locals and visitors. Whilst it proved a good way of supporting individuals to get both information and resources, unfortunately structural difficulties around the station have affected visitor numbers.

Innovative ways have been established to reach out to, and engage with, individuals experiencing social and/or economic disadvantage by working with community based organisations which are already supporting individuals in this position. Examples of this include initiatives involving Ayr College and the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme.

South Ayrshire and East Ayrshire now deliver a shared Council roads and transportation service which offers opportunities to jointly promote active and sustainable travel and information about relevant events.

Providing Infrastructure in itself is not enough there is a need to have support on the ground that encourages and enables its use.

### Policy Development

Accessible Ayr<sup>50</sup> seeks to transform the accessibility of Ayr Town Centre for people on bike and foot by improving the infrastructure required to support active travel.

49 <https://www.south-ayrshire.gov.uk/goactive/schools-award.aspx>

50 <https://accessibleayrmap.commonplace.is/about>

The local authority is in the process of creating an active travel strategy and this will be supported by the results of activities delivered through Smarter Choices, Smarter Places funding.

The Road Improvement Plan<sup>51</sup> makes specific reference to Smarter Choices, Smarter Places funding for the Active Travel Hub.

The Ayrshire Roads Alliance delivers shared local authority roads and transportation services to communities across East and South Ayrshire.<sup>52</sup> A blog<sup>53</sup> attached to the site provides Information about forthcoming events linked to active travel. There might be scope for considering how the profile of active and sustainable travel might be raised within the Alliance.

## Funding

Without the Smarter Choices, Smarter Places grants programme some of the activities delivered by the council might not have been possible, although being able to make a contribution in kind, for example for rent or salaries, instead of match funding, is welcome. Whilst the council is committed to supporting and enabling sustainable travel, given the limited resources and real term reductions in council funding<sup>54</sup> the current level of activity would have been unlikely to be achieved.

Match funding this year proceeded as planned- an element of contribution in kind in relation to staff time was also included.

Having a fairly short time scale to plan projects can be challenging. There are a variety of funding streams that support active and sustainable travel- many originating from Transport Scotland and which can be used collectively. It was suggested that it would be helpful if all the key dates for close of applications, awards etc were aligned. To achieve, and importantly sustain, behaviour change long term funding is needed.

## Project Planning and Evaluation

The council develops proposals for activities by encouraging input from a wide range of sources and considers the responses receive in line with emerging priorities. Account is also taken of reports and research produced by sustrans. Project progress is reported on a bi-monthly basis and reports are based on agreed key performance indicators.

The data collection methods used rely on the contribution from user surveys and information gathered by partners such as Ayr College and the Duke of Edinburgh award scheme. Whilst it is acknowledged that impact is more important than output, it is much harder to measure. A further challenge is measuring or assessing the contribution the activities delivered actually make to behaviour change.

51 <https://ww20.south-ayrshire.gov.uk/ext/committee>

52 <https://www.ayrshireroadsalliance.org/About-us/About-us.aspx>

53 <https://blog.ayrshireroadsalliance.org/>

54 [https://www.audit-scotland.gov.uk/uploads/docs/report/2019/nr\\_191217\\_local\\_government\\_finance.pdf](https://www.audit-scotland.gov.uk/uploads/docs/report/2019/nr_191217_local_government_finance.pdf)

A report by sustrans was used to evaluate the effectiveness of the active travel hub in Ayr.

## Targeting Deprivation

As has already been highlighted the local authority, thanks mainly to the activities of front line officers, has been able to engage effectively with individuals defined in the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation<sup>55</sup> in decile 1-3 as a result of the strong local partnerships that have been established.

Activities are targeted at individuals experiencing social and economic exclusion and who have had limited opportunities, such as young people at Ayr College, taking HIVE (Hope, Inspiration, and Vision in Education) courses.

## Impact of COVID-19

Public events are currently not possible, and it is not certain when they will be able to resume. As a consequence, other approaches to communicating key messages will be required.

There has been an immediate need to adapt existing modes of transport to accommodate social distancing requirements. Whilst in the short term use of public transport has fallen as a result of remote working and businesses being closed, ultimately it is hoped to improve the quality of what is on offer through Real Time Passenger Information.

There is an opportunity to promote active travel for purposes other than leisure. This could be facilitated by improving walking and cycling routes and at the same time encouraging individuals to use them.

## Key findings from review of reports

South Ayrshire Council have received funding from the 'Smarter Choices, Smarter Places' programme of grants managed by Paths for All in the following years: 2015/16, 2016/, 2017/18, 2018/19 and 2019/20.

From the documents provided there was a clear audit trail from application through to completion reports.

- The majority of changes to initiatives were detailed in the paperwork and action taken when it was identified that planned initiatives were unlikely to achieve the predicted impact. The Ayr Miles Scheme was abandoned and replaced by the development of a business strategy for the active travel hub. Whilst it does not appear that a change was requested, it was stated that a bike share feasibility study was replaced by a pool bike pilot scheme for council staff. A planned Step Challenge for council staff was scaled back.

<sup>55</sup> <https://simd.scot/#/simd2020/BTTTFTT/9/-4.0000/55.9000/>

- Final costs were detailed and contained information on match funding.
- Lessons learned were detailed.

## Lessons Learned


On a very practical level, delivery plans need to take account of weather dependent activities such as walking.

The best way of engaging with individuals who are experiencing social and economic disadvantage is to form partnerships with organisations who have experience of supporting individuals in this group.

Consideration needs to be taken that initiatives are not duplicating existing activities e.g. the provision of bike maintenance courses in schools in Ayrshire.

Data collection methodologies can be significantly improved if online surveys are used.

Greater use needs to be made of both social media and messaging that engages people -such as animation.



# Appendix Two: Examples of Good Practice

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## Case Study – Highland Council Cycling to Health

### Who – Council and Partners

The grant is managed in Highland Council Infrastructure and Environment Department. On several of the Smarter Choices, Smarter Places projects there has been excellent collaboration within the local authority, particularly with Education and the Carbon Clever Team. The projects funded by the Smarter Choices, Smarter Places grant have also involved effective partnerships with Velocity Cycle Café, NHS, schools, countryside rangers, and Highland and Islands Enterprise.

### What – Outline of activities being delivered

The Smarter Choices, Smarter Places funding is used across four main areas:

- **Health Promotion** – Cycle to Health is a programme which has run for a number of years in Highland and the project has continued through the Smarter Choices, Smarter Places grant. The project works with people with mental health issues doing 1-1 and group cycle sessions, highlighting the benefits of cycling to physical and mental health. Highland Council work with a social enterprise called Velocity Cycle Café to deliver this project.
- **Education Promotion** – The Smarter Choices, Smarter Places grant is used to fund active travel promotion and engagement work in schools through the projects I-Bike, Go-Bycycle, and Bike Academy. These programmes encourage recognition of the importance of children walking and cycling. Bike Academy is a project for children who are struggling in school, they are taught how to fix and rebuild a bike for their own use and earn an SVQ qualification.
- **Marketing and Promotion** – Highland have created promotional materials and radio advertising for their active travel projects, and work with local bus companies to promote sustainable travel.
- **Evidence Gathering** – Highland use data from surveys, pedestrian and cyclist counts, and travel audits to support the targeting of local interventions.

## Why is it effective – Impact?

The activities in Highland are aligned with several national strategies and agendas such as the National Walking Strategy, National Transport Strategy, Cycling Action Plan for Scotland, mental health agenda, and strategies which support children and young people's wellbeing. These have also been useful for Highland to use locally as drivers for implementing active travel projects.

Cycling journeys have increased significantly in Inverness in recent years. Counts of pedestrians and cyclists in local areas are used around Highland to give an idea of the impact of activities and the areas which are popular for active travel. The use of evidence, such as baseline figures from counters, highlights which roads are used locally and ensures that infrastructure is well used. These are also used to inform decision making and target areas which would benefit from infrastructure to support active travel. This use of evidence has kept local politicians engaged and shown the value of projects funded by Smarter Choices, Smarter Places funding.

The promotional and engagement work undertaken has demonstrated a change in attitudes and awareness resulting from projects in schools such as I-Bike, Go-Bike, and Bike Academy. Project workers for these cycling programmes in schools record their interactions and use them to demonstrate the reach of their work. SIMD data has been used to target schools in deprived areas where children may have less access to bikes. Highland also work with local GP surgeries/NHS staff to direct people with mental health issues to beneficial courses such as Cycle to Health.

Data from Highland's evidence gathering activities shows that Cycle to Health increases the frequency that people choose to ride their bikes, their confidence on a bike, their familiarity with local cycling routes, and improves their mental wellbeing. The I-Bike, Go-Bycle, and Bike Academy engagement work with school pupils has been very successful in improving attitudes to cycling and increasing numbers of active travel to school – 68% of pupils say they use a form of active travel to get to school.

Highland have also seen the impact of their activities since the COVID-19 outbreak, with people who have participated in active travel programmes saying that being confident to ride a bike has improved their lockdown experiences as they have been able to exercise and enjoy cycling. These projects had helped increase individual's skills and knowledge in relation to cycling prior to lockdown, and as a result individuals were more confident cyclists and better able to maintain their bikes and keep them on the road.

## How – Replicability

Highland believe that the Cycle to Health could be rolled out everywhere as it is a very effective project and the multiple benefits it delivers could provide significant savings for health services. The enthusiasm of Velocity Cycle Café staff and their care and empathy in delivering this project has been crucial to its success. Highland would also recommend proactive work with local GP surgeries to raise awareness of the

benefits of active travel to health and to encourage them to make referrals to such programmes. Leadership and community engagement have also been highlighted as crucial to the success of working with children and young people and promoting active travel across the local area.

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*“These behaviour change projects could not happen without the enthusiasm of staff delivering them.”*

*“None of these interventions would have been delivered if it wasn't for the Smarter Choices, Smarter Places funding.”*

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## **Future plans – what next?**

### **Impact of COVID-19**

It is estimated that travel levels reduced to around 20/30% at the beginning of lockdown. In the last few weeks travel levels have crept back up to around 70%. Highland see this as an opportunity to encourage more safer routes for walking/cycling. As a result of funding through the Spaces for People fund the local authority plans to put infrastructure in place to continue encouraging active travel. Highland also see an opportunity, once schools return, to encourage active travel by not allowing parking near schools, encouraging people to walk to school and work and to cycle.

Going forward, they would like to see increased flexibility to adapt to changing conditions. It is intended to use marketing and promotion when opportunities arise. Highland have also considered creating an interactive website with walking and cycling routes.



# Case Study – Dumfries and Galloway Council

## Community engagement is critical

### Who – Council and Partners

The grant is managed in Dumfries and Galloway Council Transportation department (Communities Directorate). There has been significant collaboration across the council, and particularly with Education. The external partners working with the council on these activities include the NHS, local GP Practices, local businesses, schools, Rotary Club, and Sustrans.

### What – Outline of activities being delivered

- The national programmes I-Bike and Walk Once a Week (WOW) were joined together in Dumfries and Galloway to provide the local schools with a range of measures encouraging active travel.
- The Dalbeattie Community E-bike Initiative (Partnership with Sustrans) was in development, however the team are currently furloughed due to COVID-19. The project organises all ability e-bike rides in Dalbeattie and the surrounding area, although the e-bikes have currently been reallocated to be used by key workers during COVID-19. A monitoring and evaluation tool was also in development and it is anticipated that it will be utilised in providing detailed data in the future.
- Dumfries & Galloway Council have implemented a staff pedometer challenge to encourage greater physical activity and raise awareness of active travel.

### Why is it effective – Impact?

A key aspect of the activities in Dumfries and Galloway is that they have been led by existing community initiatives and strong governance arrangements are already in place. The projects have built on the seeds of local enthusiasm for active travel and engaged with key partners in Education and Health to bring together initiatives that have satisfied this interest. These activities have demonstrated effective joined-up partnership working involving the NHS, local GP practices, local businesses, the Rotary Club and Sustrans. The strength of this partnership approach highlights the value of the projects and is likely to ensure their longevity.

Two programmes, I-Bike and WOW, have continued to work well together, and the local schools have considered them as a suite of measures that they can utilise to facilitate active travel rather than two separate competing initiatives. This approach has supported productive engagement and increased awareness about active travel amongst both children and parents. These activities are significant drivers of local strategies promoting healthier lifestyles and have improved awareness and attitudes towards active travel in the wider community. Due to COVID-19, there is likely be

further investment in active travel in the future and such activities will continue to drive this approach and provide new opportunities to travel more sustainably.

The public perception of active travel has improved as a result of the activities available in the community. A significant change in attitudes towards active travel has been evident as a result of the staff pedometer challenge. A key aspect to the public perception has been not simply getting 'active people more active' but engaging new people in such activities and encouraging people to adopt new ways of travelling. The COVID-19 pandemic has increased awareness of the importance of physical activity, providing further opportunities for this in the future.

## How – Replicability

Dumfries and Galloway highlighted the strong need for community enthusiasm and drive to take forward active travel projects. I-Bike and WOW are national programmes, however their approach in joining the two together has been unique. This could work well in other local areas if a careful approach to communication is taken.

There are aspects of Dumfries and Galloway's partnership approach that were made easier due to it being developed in a smaller, more rural area. However, there is no reason it could not be adapted in larger areas with a commitment to partnership working. Dumfries and Galloway highlight the importance of organisational structure and need for cooperation and engagement with partners to carry out a successful active travel project.

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*"The engaged people of Dumfries of Galloway made the project a success."*

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## Future plans – what next?

### Impact of COVID-19

Dumfries and Galloway is a rural area with limited public transport. It is anticipated that the pandemic will have a negative impact on attitudes towards bus travel due to social distancing measures. There is already a poor public perception in relation to the availability of public transport, and it may now be seen as only being used in the last resort. This could be an opportunity to promote more active travel, such as walking and cycling.

Going forward, Dumfries and Galloway will also be looking to transform the role of transport within the council. They will seek opportunities to embed active travel in council fleet services. A council staff shuttle bus was considered however this will be delayed due to social distancing requirements.

Smarter Choices, Smarter Places funding could help to develop staff travel initiatives

in the public sector and provide support to other organisations in the community. The approach of Smarter Choices, Smarter Places has been useful to lead into the Spaces for People funding, helping facilitate ways to open up spaces with social distancing. In future, Dumfries and Galloway would consider more initiatives which target particular local challenges such as poverty or isolation amongst the elderly population.

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*The 'go to' organisation for Local  
Government improvement in Scotland*

The logo for Improvement Service, featuring the letters 'is' in a dark blue, lowercase, sans-serif font. The 'i' has a red dot above it, and the 's' has a red dot at the bottom right. Below the 'is' is the word 'improvement' in a dark blue, lowercase, sans-serif font, followed by the word 'service' in a red, lowercase, sans-serif font.  
improvement **service**