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Report to Partnership Board Meeting 15 September 2023

RESEARCH AND STRATEGY DELIVERY

ACTIVE TRAVEL UPDATE

Purpose of Report

This Report provides Board Members with an update on Active Travel projects in which HITRANS are currently involved.

REGIONAL ACTIVE TRAVEL BUDGET (Transport Scotland)

For **2023/24 financial year** HTRANS has been awarded £955,000 from Transport Scotland's Regional Active Travel Fund to include the following programmes:

2023-24 Regional Active Travel Fund Programmes		Total
1. Monitoring <i>Replacing the Sustrans Partnership Fund, this will support installation of multi-modal counters at strategic locations to establish baseline data across Highland region and the Western Isles.</i>		£100,000
2. Transport Integration <i>Better integrate cycling with bus travel by enabling bikes to be carried within buses on routes in the region. Also includes cycle parking and improved active travel infrastructure at transport halts.</i>		£100,000
3. AT Masterplans & 20 Min Communities <i>Support the development of 20 Minute Communities in Moray, Highland and Western Isles, by funding active travel masterplans and placemaking interventions in key settlements.</i>		£150,000
4. Mobility Hubs & Micromobility <i>Better integrate active travel with other modes by co-locating ebikes or folding bikes at transport stops and interchanges; the majority of this budget will support the continuation of the HI-BIKE scheme in Inverness and Fort William.</i>		£250,000
5. Quiet Routes & NCN <i>Develop Quiet Routes as an integral part of connected active travel networks, by supporting delivery of 3 pilot routes and mapping Quiet Route networks in each of our partner Local Authorities.</i>		£150,000
6. Path Improvement <i>Improve accessibility of existing active travel routes, by funding small scale interventions and mapping.</i>		£125,000
7. Resource Support		£80,000

<p><i>Increase capacity within HITRANS to deliver projects with increased active travel budgets and support partner Local Authorities, by increasing staff resource. This will support the eHUBS Project Officer and an additional Business Support Assistant.</i></p>	
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Project Progress:

Monitoring

Grant approved to Highland Council for £30,000 to install additional Vivacity Sensors on routes around Inverness City Centre, to provide baseline evidence for the Academy Street project. Locations for multi modal counters in Stornoway and other Masterplan settlements identified and procurement underway.

Transport Integration

Discussion ongoing with Moray Council and Stagecoach around installing internal bike racks on Service 35; still awaiting cost estimate from Stagecoach. Application pending from Orkney for cycle parking. Initial discussion with CnES on creating a Travel Hub at Stornoway bus station and potentially also Tarbert. Working with Scotrail on Cycling World Championships legacy project to improve cycle parking facilities in Fort William and Inverness.

Mobility Hubs and Micro Mobility

Following the collapse of the bike share operator Bewegen, HITRANS has taken over operation of the HI-BIKE system in Inverness and Fort William, project managed by the eHUBS officer. HITRANS has taken on the customer service operative previously employed by Bewegen, and is contracting in maintenance and bike redistribution. Income from the scheme is now received by HITRANS, but currently costs exceed income so support from the eHUBS project and Regional Active Travel fund are required. Now that the eHUBS project is complete, we are reviewing the ongoing costs of the scheme and will allocate any remaining RATF budget to developing additional mobility and micromobility hubs across the region. A further update can be provided by the eHUBS Project Officer.

Active Travel Masterplans & 20 Minute Communities

This budget has been allocated to Moray Council for developing Active Travel Masterplans for the main settlements across Moray, and for implementing recommendations from the original Keith AT Audit (£36k). Some budget is also set aside for engagement and developing a delivery plan for the Stornoway Active Travel Masterplan, for bridge surveys on active travel routes in Fort William, and to prepare a bid for funding in 24/24 to implement the Fort William Wayfinding Strategy developed during 2021-22.

Quiet Routes and NCN

Approximately half of this budget is going towards implementing the three pilot routes in Highland for which preparatory work was carried out in 22/23; routes are being taken forward in Glencoe, Raasay and Sleat on Skye. Progress has been disappointingly slow, with delays in receiving non-prescribed signage approval and then in delivery of the signs. Area Roads Managers in Highland have been very supportive and helpful, managing the implementation phase of the pilot. The remainder of the budget is earmarked for developing Quiet Routes and networks across the region, with discussions ongoing with Orkney, CnES, Highland and Moray.

Path Improvement Fund

This fund allocates £25,000 to each of our Partner Local Authorities to carry out accessibility improvements to existing routes (eg. vegetation clearance, surfacing, barrier removal), or to create new links between existing paths and settlements. Grants approved for Moray and Orkney, discussions ongoing with other LA's on how they intend to spend this. Deadline for grant allocation was 31st August to enable project delivery by 31st March.

OTHER PROJECTS

The Active Travel Officer continues to co-ordinate the Active Travel Advisory Group, bringing together our Local Authority partners and other partners and stakeholders. This group met in the Spring at Inverness Airport, and will meet again in October in Argyll & Bute.

The Active Travel Officer also sits on active and sustainable travel working groups in CnES, Orkney and Fort William, and has joined the steering group for Places for Everyone funded projects in Oban and Jura.

A Business Support Assistant, Leah Mackay, has been in post since April, based in the Western Isles and funded by the CnES Smarter Choices, Smarter Places allocation. Leah supports our sustainable and active travel work in the Western Isles, and has also contributed to the Scottish Islands Passport project. She has collated a list of the recommendations made in the 6 Active Travel Masterplans for the Western Isles, and is working on promoting free bus travel for Under-22's and Liftshare.

Board Members are asked to note the report.

Report by:	Vikki Trelfer
Designation:	Active Travel Officer
Date:	30th August 2023