

REPORT TO: ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & INFRASTRUCTURE SERVICES COMMITTEE ON 17 JUNE 2008

SUBJECT: SMARTER CHOICES, SMARTER PLACES – STAGE 2 BID(SUSTAINABLE TRAVEL DEMONSTRATION TOWNS) – ELGIN AREA

BY: DIRECTOR OF ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES

1. REASON FOR REPORT

- 1.1 To inform Committee of the Moray Council's success in stage 1 of the bidding process for the Scottish Government's "Smarter Choices, Smarter Places" project and to seek approval to submit the application in more detail for stage 2 consideration.
- 1.2 To seek approval to approach funding partners and secure match funding for the project as proposed in the stage 1 bid submission.
- 1.3 This report is submitted to Committee in terms of the Council's Administrative Scheme relating to the functions of the Council as Roads Authority

2. RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 **It is recommended that the Committee approve the submission of a stage 2 application and associated documentation to the Scottish Government and to potential funding partners.**

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 Smarter Choices, Smarter Places project funding to develop sustainable travel demonstration towns has been offered to all local authorities in Scotland via a competitive bid process, the first stage of which is now closed. The outline of the stage 1 bid was agreed in principle by the Council's Administration in April 2008 and was then submitted to the Government at the end of April.
- 3.2 Of the 40 original submissions Moray Council are one of only 13 through to the second round of the application process. The project is still oversubscribed nationally and there will be a further sifting of bids after stage 2 of the process.

- 3.3 The bids should demonstrate a joined up approach towards sustainable travel and identify how the local authority will achieve increased proportions of active travel and public transport use as contributions to Healthier, Greener and Safer and Stronger outcomes specified in the National Performance Framework (Concordat Annex A).
- 3.4 As part of the stage 2 application the local authority must demonstrate community backing for the bid. It is proposed that community and business groups are approached with a view to forming a steering group for the project. Feasibility studies of key routes and interventions will be identified as part of the application package submitted to the Scottish Government. It will be expected that each of the feasibilities contain a detailed consultation exercise. Existing community consultation channels will be fully explored.
- 3.5 Full details of the stage 1 submission are contained in **Appendix 1**.

4. **SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS**

(a) Corporate Development Plan/Community Plan/Service Improvement Plan

The Council is committed to improving levels of active travel and public transport usage as outlined in the current Local Transport Strategy:

- Key objective 1c; To improve accessibility to jobs, services and facilities within Moray by realising the potential for public transport, cycling and walking.
- To work with partners to upgrade Moray's stations and facilities
- To increase cycling and pedestrian travel within Moray by developing a comprehensive cycle/pedestrian network incorporating national, area wide and local routes and improved facilities.

There is also a commitment in the Council's newly adopted three year priority plan to:

- Develop and implement a strategy for traffic management in Elgin that will be the basis for provision of a quicker, safer and more reliable transport system in and around Elgin while accommodating future development
- Work with Hitrans to improve the transport infrastructure and make every effort to encourage and facilitate the use of alternative forms of transport to the private car.

The project will also add value to the Council's recently adopted workplace travel plan through cross cutting initiatives and opportunities for sharing best practice.

(b) Policy and Legal

None

(c) Resources (Financial, Risks, Staffing and Property)

If the bid is successful, funding in year 1 (08/09) will be wholly from the Scottish Government. Funding for years 2 and 3 of the project will be reliant on match funding from the local authority or funding partners outwith the Government.

Funding partners will be sought to help with project implementation in years 2 and 3. This will be in addition to 'in kind' support from groups including Hitrans, Sustrans and Cycling Scotland. It is proposed that an application for EU funding is put in place alongside the stage 2 application to the Government.

It is proposed that Elgin Traffic Management capital resource is made available in years 2 and 3 of the project as part of the possible overall funding package. The level of match funding required from this stream will be dependant on European and partner funding outwith the Council and Scottish Government.

The project will be managed where possible from within the Transportation Section through existing job specifications. There will be a need for the use of external consultants for a number of aspects, in particular for larger infrastructure projects, including feasibility studies and detailed design. This will be identified and costed as an integral part of the project bid.

(d) Consultations

Aileen Scott, Principal Solicitor (Commercial and Conveyancing) has been consulted and agrees with the contents of the report.

Deborah Brands, Principal Accountant has been consulted and agrees with the financial implications of the report.

5. CONCLUSION

5.1 The Committee is asked to approve an application for stage 2 of the "Smarter Choices, Smarter Places" Scottish Government project funding and associated supporting funding applications.

Author of Report: Gordon Holland, Transportation Manager
Background Papers:
Ref: GRH/PA

APPENDIX 1



the **MORAY** council

SMARTER CHOICES, SMARTER PLACES MORAY COUNCIL BID - APRIL 2008 PROJECT AREA – ELGIN

Details of LA, community/location and background information

The City of Elgin (population 21,000) is located in the Northeast of Scotland, roughly midway between the major regional centres of Inverness and Aberdeen and six miles inland from the Moray Firth. Elgin's character is much dictated by its role as an administrative and commercial centre along with its physical setting on the "haugh" of the River Lossie. The open parkland on the flood plain of the River Lossie with its landmark monuments of Elgin Cathedral and Ladyhill, is an essential component of Elgin's character. The historic medieval core contains the commercial centre and extensive Victorian neighbourhoods are a feature of the city. These areas have remained largely intact as the railway line and industrial land to the south and the extensive parkland of the "Lossie Corridor" to the north have separated the core of Elgin from its constituent communities of New Elgin to the South and Bishopmill to the North. It has been largely within these latter communities that Elgin has expanded over recent years, and as a result both are characterised by more contemporary urban townscapes.

The project area benefits from the Foehn Effect. This is a phenomena found in meteorology which occurs when a dry wind coming down from mountains warms up as it descends. The effect is a relatively dry, warm wind that can be up to 10°C higher than in neighbouring areas. This unusually dry climate along with the gentle landscape that surrounds Elgin makes the project area an attractive place to explore on foot or by bike and has helped to raise levels of active travel, particularly journeys by bike, above the national average. Travel to work by bike in Elgin is almost 4 times the national average at 5.3%. While journeys on foot (21.5%) are 50% higher than the national average. Car journeys to work are in line with national averages and public transport usage is significantly below national levels.

The mediaeval street plan of central Elgin is well preserved. The main street widens to the old cobbled market place, now known as the Plainstones, which is pedestrianised and connected to parallel streets by a series of narrow wynds and pends. The Bus station is linked to the Plainstones via the St Giles retail centre and affords good connectivity for pedestrians to shops and nearby amenities including the Council Head Quarters. Whilst facilitating the growth and continued expansion of Elgin the three East/West transport arteries; river, trunk road and railway, heavily influence route choice for all transport modes within the city. Limited crossing opportunities, particularly across the railway line from the centre out towards New Elgin and the rapidly expanding residential area of Elgin South, lead to significant traffic congestion at pinch points.

The average distance travelled to work in Elgin by all modes is 7km, although two thirds of all journeys to work in Elgin are below 2km. This figure, combined with the city centre's permeability to active travel modes, aligns the area closely with the project objectives for potential travel behaviour changes.

Average household income in Moray is amongst the lowest in Scotland, although car ownership levels are higher than the national average at 72%. The study area includes planned development for over 1000 new houses in addition to extra retail and leisure facilities. This will present an opportunity to address modal choice at the outset through the planned measures detailed below.

Elgin has good public transport links and has recently benefited from significant investment in improved bus services resulting in 8% overall passenger growth throughout the area. There have also been increases in rail patronage; travel between stations in Moray has grown at 10 – 12% annually during the period 2003-06

Political commitment

The Council is committed to improving levels of active travel and public transport usage as outlined in the current Local Transport Strategy:

- Key objective 1c; To improve accessibility to jobs, services and facilities within Moray by realising the potential for public transport, cycling and walking.
- To work with partners to upgrade Moray's stations and facilities
- To increase cycling and pedestrian travel within Moray by developing a comprehensive cycle/pedestrian network incorporating national, area wide and local routes and improved facilities.

The Council's ruling administration, in its newly adopted three year priority plan, also states that the Council will:

- Develop and implement a strategy for traffic management in Elgin that will be the basis for provision of a quicker, safer and more reliable transport system in and around Elgin while accommodating future development
- Work with Hitrans to improve the transport infrastructure and make every effort to encourage and facilitate the use of alternative forms of transport to the private car.

The Council's ruling administration's Budget Group have agreed to the submission of this bid and the content in principle. The associated details will be reported to the Council's next appropriate service committee meeting in June. Active and sustainable travel has a high profile within the council reflected in the ongoing programme of improvements to infrastructure and associated initiatives. The council is currently implementing its own workplace travel plan and has been successfully working in schools to develop travel plans and encourage modal shift.

Outline of package of measures

A balanced package of behavioural and infrastructure interventions will be implemented in the project area utilising existing baseline data* and information gathered through the recent Local Transport Strategy consultation to identify the most valuable interventions at an early stage. In addition further research will be conducted during year one to ensure that projects that will have the maximum net benefit in terms of modal shift are carried out in the subsequent years.

Recognising the characteristics of the area and prevalent journey types there will be an emphasis on inter-modality within the project as well as a thorough examination of complimentary public transport/active travel activities. Barriers towards increasing active travel levels within the project area will be identified early on to fully realise the potential modal shift for journeys under 5km (the longest journey entirely within the project area)

It is proposed that key trip generators such as schools, workplaces, medical facilities public transport interchanges, leisure facilities and retail outlets are fully engaged with to assist with the gathering of data in year one. These partnerships will also form the basis for delivering the soft interventions later on in the project. Organisations will be encouraged to develop or update travel plans in tandem with the SCSP project thereby locking in any potential benefits beyond the initial implementation period. Information gathered by individual organisations as part of the travel planning process will be collated by the SCSP project development team. Qualitative data will also be gathered from community groups and partner organisations and fed into the project prioritisation process. To ensure early engagement and continued participation in the process incentives such as improved cycle storage or public transport travel vouchers will be made available to organisations producing and implementing travel plans during the SCSP period.

Where appropriate, Individualised Travel Marketing (ITM) strategies will be applied to identify those most receptive to considering modal shift. However, as the total study area population is less than some ITM target groups it will generally be more practical and cost effective to distribute information by geographical area.

Projects that will be initiated as part of the Smarter Choices, Smarter Places funding will include: (in order of implementation – number and scale of projects will be dependant on sufficient match funding at stage 2)

- Establishing a multi-disciplinary group to steer the project.
- Examining existing data and engaging with partners to provide new data to inform the project prioritisation process. Where possible additional data will be gathered as part of the development of travel plans.
- Installing automatic pedestrian / cycle counters to supplement existing data and carry out periodic surveys to monitor progress towards the project goals.
- Feasibility/design studies undertaken to develop key active travel corridors that have already been identified as priorities within Elgin.

- 'Missing Links' feasibility/design studies to tie in with the 'core' active travel corridors and improve access for non-motorised modes to major trip generators.
- Developing a marketing strategy for SCSP in Elgin. Core project branding will be used to target information coherently and link distinct elements within the bid together as a whole.
- Working with local media to highlight initiatives and maintain momentum throughout the project.
- Producing an SCSP Elgin travel information booklet. Containing walking, cycling, bus, rail and car sharing information the booklet will be essential in supporting all other measures and be made available to every household in the project area.
- Developing an SCSP Elgin web site. Information about the project, consultations, user feedback and all leaflets/booklets developed throughout the project will be accessible from the web site as well as timetables and sustainable travel links.
- Integrating with the current School Travel programme to develop and engage with pupils, parents and staff to achieve long term changes in travel behaviour for the school journey.
- Integrating with 'Walk Moray' and 'Jog Scotland' local project plans and working with mountain bike groups to explore opportunities for cross cutting initiatives.
- Introducing real time bus information at key locations across Elgin. Upgrade of main bus station displays to show real time departures. Matrix displays added at other sites across the area. Information will serve as 'free' advertising of services and be instrumental in reassuring new users trying out public transport during the project period.
- Work with bus operators to provide/promote cycle carriage on buses, effectively extending the reach of the existing public transport network.
- Increase cycle storage capacity at key trip destinations and work with partner organisations to improve changing facilities
- Car Share Moray. Using the SCSP project web site to highlight opportunities for car sharing to a local audience. A feasibility study will be undertaken to ascertain the potential take up of a car club scheme in Elgin.
- Co-ordinating visits by cycling groups to raise awareness, offer advice, training and cycle maintenance sessions.
- Ascertaining a suitable location and installing a new DDA compliant crossing at Elgin Railway Station allowing foot, cycle and disabled access to platform 2 and linking the proposed cross city active travel route from New Elgin/Elgin South into the city centre. Improved access to platform 2 along with Network Rail's planned platform lengthening will be crucial to the future development of rail services for Elgin. The current road bridge and roundabouts to the East of the station are significant barriers for pedestrian and cyclist movements between New Elgin and the City Centre.

- Developing innovative ways of communicating project information such as the 'Mode Change Roadshow'. Following an initial invite and co-ordinated with advertising/leaflet drops the pedal powered roadshow will visit workplaces, shopping areas or residential areas distributing travel information and offering Mode Change packs to participants. The roadshow will be an eye catching and self advertising feature within the project portfolio.
- Developing 'Mode Change' try out packs for distribution through the workplace or during public events. Targeted at 'new users' these packs will contain information and incentives relevant to the participants mode change choice. Public transport vouchers, free cycle hire offers, maps, pedometers or similar items will be offered in exchange for participation and an agreement to feedback after the try out.
- Working with partner organisations to host workshops/seminars
- Workplace challenges to tie in with travel planning and support modal shift. Public transport/active travel incentives and competitions to encourage further participation.
- Installing 'Bike Station' cycle rental facilities at rail and bus stations and working with the Moray tourism steering group to increase sustainable tourism to the area.

Optionally (dependant on additional European match funding)

- Co-ordinating with rail partners to provide hourly Elgin-Inverness train services. This will have significant side benefits beyond encouraging modal shift from car to rail for journeys outwith Moray. Opportunities to build in more sustainable travel within the project area will be maximised through the prioritisation of active travel and public transport to access the station.

* Existing data will include information from school and workplace travel plans, traffic counts/surveys and recent feasibility studies and consultations.

Local Partners

The range of measures planned for Elgin will require close co-operation and strategic planning with a range of partner organisations. The following groups have agreed to work with the council on aspects of the Elgin project:

Active Schools Moray, BEAR Scotland, First Scotrail, Energy Saving Trust, Network rail, Highland Rail Partnership, Stagecoach Bluebird, Moray Access Panel, Sustrans, Cycling Scotland, Hitrans, NHS Grampian, Transport Scotland, Paths to Health, Grampian Police and Local Bike Shops.

Other partners will be sought before stage 2 including private sector and local retail outlets to strengthen project delivery.

Engaging with the local community

Extensive public consultation will take place as part of the development of feasibility studies to identify priority projects in year 1. Established models of community engagement will also be used throughout the process including: The Moray Community Planning Partnership, local area forums for Elgin and the LCN.

Further engagement will be generated through creative use of the media, project initiatives such as the 'Mode Change Roadshow' and community workshops to generate grass roots reaction and engage with a broad spectrum of the community.

Match funding

Many partner agencies are willing to support the Moray Council bid in kind and have detailed how time and resources will be made available to help achieve our project objectives. It is proposed that European funding (EU-NPP) be utilised to maintain the match funding during years 2 and 3. Discussions have been initiated and partners will be identified to satisfy EU requirements. Where appropriate, developer contributions will be sought to support the bid.

In addition to this it is proposed that CWSS or equivalent funding streams will in part support the bid beyond year 1. This will be dependant on maintaining redistributed funds if ring fenced budgets are removed after year 1 of the project.

Indicative range of costs (£,000)	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
Data gathering/automatic counter installations	30	10	10
Active travel 'core' network feasibility/design	50		
Active travel 'Missing links' feasibility/design	10	20	
Branding, marketing and advertising	20	25	25
Web site/SCSP booklet development & print	30	20	20
Real time bus information	150	100	15
Cycle try outs, training and maintenance	10	20	20
Elgin railway crossing /cycle network link	400	315	
'Bike Station' hire points			80
Mode Change Roadshow		20	5
Mode Change Packs		25	25
Cycle carriage on buses	10	25	
Improved cycle storage		50	50
Active travel 'core' network implementation - phase 1		*150	
Active travel 'core' network implementation - phase 2			*250
'Missing links' projects		50	50
Workplace initiatives		20	20
TOTALS	710	850	570
Integrated Elgin rail service improvements**	100	270	270

* Estimates pending feasibility studies in year 1

** Dependant on EU funding support