

HELENSBURGH, CARDROSS AND DUMBARTON CYCLEPATH UPDATE

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1. This report updates Members on the progress made since the previous report to the Helensburgh and Lomond Area Committee on 12 March 2024 in relation to the delivery of a dedicated, high quality walking and cycle path linking Helensburgh, Cardross and Dumbarton. The delivery of this path is a stated Council Priority.
- 1.2. Officers are reviewing the large amount of data provided by WSP following termination of their contract in March 2024 for Phase 1 (Colgrain – Cardross) and Phase 2 (Cardross – Dumbarton). This is necessary to identify the outstanding items of work which require to be completed to deliver a robust design package and to satisfy funder requirements.
- 1.3. The Feasibility report for Helensburgh Town Centre East (Phase 3) is currently in draft form with funders for comment.
- 1.4. 2024/25 funding applications have been submitted to Transport Scotland's Places for Everyone (PFE) programme to enable design work to continue.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1.5. It is recommended that the Helensburgh and Lomond members:
 - 1.5.1. Instruct Officers, subject to securing external funding, to seek a new design team to continue development of Phase 1 and Phase 2 designs to complete Developed Design and Technical Design stages.
 - 1.5.2. Support progression of the project to full Technical Design, as required by the external funder.

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2.0 INTRODUCTION

- 2.1. This report updates Members of the progress made since the Helensburgh and Lomond Area Committee on 12 March 2024 in relation to the delivery of a dedicated, high quality walking and cycle path linking Helensburgh, Cardross and Dumbarton. The delivery of this path is a stated Council Priority.
- 2.2. Full details of the project, including previous progress is available in the project update reports previously presented to this Committee.

3.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1. It is recommended that the Helensburgh and Lomond members:
 - 3.1.1. Instruct Officers, subject to securing external funding, to seek a new design team to continue development of Phase 1 and Phase 2 designs to complete Developed Design and Technical Design stages.
 - 3.1.2. Support progression of the project to full Technical Design, as required by the external funder.

4.0 DETAIL

- 4.1. The Council's Active Travel Team, 1.7 FTE (Full Time Equivalent employees), is part of the Strategic Transport Team within the Development and Economic Growth Service. No Council funding is currently received by the Active Travel Team. All project costs, including internal staff costs, have to be funded via successfully securing highly competitive external challenge funds.
- 4.2. In 2023/24 the Active Travel Team secured £2.56M external funding for the development and delivery of a total of 22 projects across Argyll and Bute, including the Helensburgh – Cardross – Dumbarton Cyclepath. This required 18 separate competitive funding applications, to 5 separate funds.

Funding

- 4.3. Transport Scotland's Places for Everyone (PFE) programme is the primary external active travel design funding available in Scotland. It is structured around 8 project stages with a competitive challenge fund, with the 32 local

authorities, 7 regional transport partnerships, two national parks and numerous community groups across Scotland competing against each other to secure the funding each project requires.

- 4.4. As of 2024/25, the construction element of the funding has been taken into a separate competitive fund, Transport Scotland's Active Travel Infrastructure Fund (ATIF). ATIF still requires a separate competitive application to be submitted but is, currently, only open for applications once a year. All projects submitted to ATIF must be ready in all respects to commence construction, including having any legal or regulatory approvals required in place.
- 4.5. A minimum of three new competitive funding submissions are required to complete a project using external funding, with competitive applications required, as a minimum, to PFE prior to Stage 0 (Strategic Definition) and Stage 3 (Developed Design) and to the new Transport Scotland ATIF prior to Stage 5 (Construction). The project stages are (0) Strategic Definition, (1) Preparation and Brief, (2) Concept Design, (3) Developed Design, (4) Technical Design, (5) Construction, (6) Handover & Close Out, and (7) In Use.
- 4.6. While the design work has, to date, been funded by jointly by the Strathclyde Partnership for Transport (SPT) Capital Programme and Transport Scotland's PFE programme, the decision to de-fund the SPT Capital Programme in 24/25 results in the project being fully reliant on securing 24/25 PFE funding or internal Council funding in order to continue work to complete the outstanding design requirements.

Match Funding

- 4.7. The applications guidance for the new Transport Scotland Active Travel Infrastructure Fund (ATIF) for construction ready projects states that all projects submitted for construction funding will require some element of match funding. However, the guidance does not specify a minimum match funding percentage. Rather it states that the ATIF team will engage during the assessment process to determine the requirements for match funding.
- 4.8. While the lack of a specific match funding value to plan against is unhelpful, Officers understand that there is not an expectation from Transport Scotland that match funding would exceed the 30% required by the now terminated PFE Construction challenge fund. Based on not exceeding the 30% value, it is recommended Members plan based on the cyclepath requiring construction match funding not exceeding £2M.
- 4.9. Phasing construction over a number of financial years will enable maximisation of suitable external match funding, however this will result in a longer construction programme. Accelerating the construction programme will require additional match funding to be secured, from internal and/or external sources, which could prove challenging given the current economic climate.
- 4.10. At present no construction match funding has secured. It is likely to be beneficial to the project if sources of construction match funding could be secured at an early

stage, including consideration of any internal Council funds which could be allocated to the delivery of this Council Priority.

Maintenance

- 4.11. Sustrans have requested a written maintenance plan and confirmation of how this will be funded and delivered as a deliverable during the remaining design process. As such, members require to decide how the future maintenance of the cyclepath, including sections of route already in place, will be delivered. At present, the Council does not receive any funding for the maintenance of cyclepaths and none of the current external funding sources secured through competitive bidding for active travel include maintenance as an eligible cost. This anomaly has been repeatedly raised by Officers with Transport Scotland Officials and it is recognised to be inconsistent with the Scottish Government's commitments regarding capital funding for active travel projects.
- 4.12. The Roads and Infrastructure Service are the single service within the Council which includes infrastructure maintenance teams appropriately trained and qualified to undertake maintenance of cyclepaths. However, it is acknowledged these teams are already near capacity delivering the Roads and Infrastructure Service commitments. The Roads and Infrastructure Service has previously stated they do not wish to adopt sections of cyclepath remote from the public road.
- 4.13. Members may wish to consider if there is a role for other organisations and/or local community group volunteers to support the routine maintenance of the cyclepath. While unlikely to be skilled or qualified for the less frequent 'heavier' technical maintenance of drainage or path surfacing, other groups may be able and willing to assist with the more routine elements of maintenance, for example cutting back vegetation / mowing the grass. Similar maintenance work is undertaken by community groups for cyclepaths in other locations.

Design

Phase 1 Colgrain to Cardross & Phase 2 Cardross to Dumbarton

- 4.14. Following termination of WSP's contract in March 2024, Officers have been reviewing the significant amount of data provided by WSP to identify the outstanding items of work which require to be completed to deliver a robust design package and to satisfy funder requirements.
- 4.15. To date, Officers have identified a number of required deliverables which were not completed by WSP prior to termination of their commission:
- Ground Investigation
 - Habitats Regulation Appraisal
 - Planning Approval
 - Utility Identification
 - Drainage Design
 - Flood Risk Assessment
 - Land valuation
 - Archaeological Assessment

- Site clearance drawings
- Bill of Quantities
- Pre-construction information pack
- Delivery Plan
- Contractor procurement strategy*
- Monitoring and Evaluation Plan*
- Behaviour Change Plan*
- Community Engagement Plan*
- Business Case*
- Cycle by Design Review*
- Maintenance Plan*

*These are requirements introduced by the external funder after the contract was awarded to WSP in 2021.

- 4.16. Officers have applied for 24/25 funding from Transport Scotland's Places for Everyone Programme to enable this work to continue to completion of Concept Design (Stage 2) in 2024/25. A decision in regard to 2024/25 funding is expected in late summer 2024.

Phase 3 Helensburgh Town

- 4.17. The Feasibility report for Helensburgh Town Centre East (Phase 3) is currently in draft form and has been provided to the Transport Scotland Places for Everyone team at Sustrans for comment, as required by their funding agreement.
- 4.18. Officers have applied for 24/25 funding from Transport Scotland's Places for Everyone Programme to enable this work to continue to completion of Concept Design (Stage 2) in 2024/25. A decision in regard to 2024/25 funding is expected in late summer 2024.

Construction (stage 5)

Cardross Rail Station to Geilston Burn

- 4.19. Cardross Rail Station to Geilston Burn. The Council's Roads and Infrastructure Service have completed installation of most elements of the cyclepath through Cardross Park, with only a small amount of fencing still to be installed.
- 4.20. With the changes to the active travel funding model for 24/25 onwards, it is expected that the costs for the remaining fencing work will require to be covered from, as yet to be identified, internal Council budgets.
- 4.21. To protect the public, the bridge over the Geilston Burn has been fenced off until access is agreed to further land on the west side of the Burn to construct the path through to an accessible destination.

Land Acquisition

- 4.22. The delay in award of 2024/25 funding and the review of WSPs design outputs will result in a hiatus in relation to providing information requested by landowners including, for example, detailed drainage designs. Officers will be writing to affected landowner to inform them of the termination of WSP as the design contractor and that, once a new design team are in place, they will be in touch with landowners to progress the discussions.
- 4.23. Officers continue to engage with colleagues in Legal Services to seek to progress approval from Council to develop a CPO for the remaining sections of this important route.

Risk

- 4.24. Risk refers to events which have not yet happened but which could impact on the project if they were to happen. A risk can be negative or positive to the project. Risks are identified through the lifetime of the project and, where possible, mitigation is planned to minimise negative impacts or maximise positive impacts. As risks evolve relatively slowly through the lifetime of a project, it is not expect that the tables below will alter significantly within the current stage of work.
- 4.25. Project risks relate to risks which could affect the overall project. Table 1 provides the top 5 identified project risks and planned mitigation.

Table 1: Selected Project Risks

Risk	Risk Description	Risk Level	Mitigation
Land acquisition	Inability to secure agreement for land required within an acceptable timescale and cost.	High	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Engagement with landowners to gain acceptance of design. 2. Use of Council's Estates Team to lead land acquisition. 3. Consideration of option of a CPO.
Funding	Inability to secure necessary funding to pay of either (a) design work; and/or, (b) construction costs.	Medium	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Close engagement with external funders to ensure project meets their funding requirements. 2. Officers continue to explore potential alternative funding sources. 3. Early engagement with Members to identify potential sources of construction match funding.
Programme	Inability to meet challenging programme timeline.	High	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Regular review of programme. 2. Work with key stakeholders to understand programme drivers and barriers. 3. Establish realistic timescales for each package of work.
Community support	Loss of community support for the project.	Low	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Consult the community on key design decisions as appropriate. 2. Seek to deliver project which meets community's key requirements. 3. Keep community informed via project updates at appropriate

			times, including publicly available quarterly committee reports.
Funder requirements	Failure to meet external funder requirements, thereby losing funding.	Medium	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Engage with funders to fully understand their requirements. 2. Ensure project outcomes/outputs meet funders' requirements. 3. Review funding options regularly to ensure funding sought/secured is most appropriate to the project.

4.26. Design risk refers to risk that the design fail to meet the required standards and/or design conditions imposed by external factors, for example environmental requirements. Design risks, if allowed to occur, can become issues which may mean the project design has to be changed, which can cause delays and cost increases. Defects or failures in the design can also result in an increase in future maintenance costs. Table 2 provides the top 5 identified design risks and planned mitigation.

Table 2: Selected Design Risks

Risk	Risk Description	Risk Level	Mitigation
Ground Conditions	Lack of Ground Investigation (GI) limits understanding of the ground conditions the route will be constructed over.	High	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Design route to be as robust as practicable. 2. Undertake Ground Investigation works at earliest practicable date.
Ecological Impacts	Working adjacent to the Inner Clyde SSSI and RAMSAR site results in additional ecological requirements which the designs must meet.	High	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Engage with regulators, e.g. NatureScot, at early stage in design. 2. Undertake comprehensive ecological surveys to inform design. 3. Develop full Habitat Regulations Appraisal to ensure ecological requirements taken into account in design.
Drainage	Constructed at the foot of the slope, the design will require to cater for all run-off and drainage from the slopes above, while satisfying regulatory requirements.	Medium	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Develop drainage designs through design process. 2. Engage with regulators, e.g. SEPA, at early stage in design. 3. Engage with landowners, as repository of knowledge of existing conditions, during design development.
Flood Risk	The route is close to and, in locations, within areas identified as at risk from 1 in 200 year flood events.	Medium	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Develop flood risk assessment at early stage in design process to identify key areas of risk. 2. Keep flood risk assessment under review through design process. 3. Design of cyclepath to take account of flood risk where appropriate.
Proximity to railway	The majority of the route is in proximity to the live railway and requires to ensure the designs do not negatively impact on the railway.	Medium	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Early engagement with Network Rail to understand their safety and operational requirements. 2. Seek to agree 'standard' approach to mitigating safety and operation requirements which can be applied to all or most of route.

			3. Review of designs to ensure railway safety and operational risk is mitigated appropriately.
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Programme

4.27. **Appendix 1** provides the current programme of the key stages and forecast timescales for each section of the Phase 1: Helensburgh to Cardross section of the Cyclepath; Phase 2: Cardross to Dumbarton; and, Phase 3: Helensburgh: Hermitage Academy to Town Centre.

5.0 CONCLUSION

5.1. Completion of the Helensburgh, Cardross and Dumbarton Cyclepath will provide a dedicated, high quality, accessible walking and cycle route linking Helensburgh, Cardross and Dumbarton. This route will provide opportunities for all in the Helensburgh – Cardross – Dumbarton corridor to travel more sustainably and actively by walking and cycling. This will provide a safe alternative to having to use a private car to travel between these communities and help lower Argyll and Bute’s carbon footprint. Funding for these works has been secured from our key active travel partners with further bids being developed to enable the design and construction of further sections of the cycleway as and when land acquisition has been concluded.

5.2. The delivery of the Helensburgh – Cardross – Dumbarton Cyclepath is dependent on completing the design work, securing highly competitive external challenge funding, committing appropriate match funding and securing access to private land for the route.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS

6.1. **Policy** Completion of this project will support the Council’s SOA outcomes 2: We have infrastructure that supports sustainable growth and 5: People live active, healthier and independent lives. The project also supports achievement of the Scottish Government’s objectives set out in the Cycling Action Plan for Scotland (CAPS) and Let’s Get Scotland Walking - The National Walking Strategy.

6.2. **Financial** The design, construction and land purchase will be funded by external competitive funding applications. External funding is not currently available to cover maintenance costs. To date, the Council has not contributed any funding to design or capital costs.

There is strong evidence that people who are more active, for example by walking or cycling, have been physical and mental health and are less likely to require social care services in later life which could result in a future saving to the Council or HSCP.

- 6.3. **Legal** Continued input will be required from Legal Services to support contractual agreements and land purchase including a CPO should this be deemed necessary.
- 6.4. **HR** None.
- 6.5. **Fairer Scotland Duty:**
- 6.5.1 Equalities Completion of this project will provide opportunities for all in the Helensburgh – Cardross – Dumbarton corridor to travel more sustainably and actively by walking, wheeling and cycling.
- The route has been designed to be DDA compliant and will provide a safe and accessible route for those with mobility aids including wheelchairs and parents/guardians with a child’s pram or buggy.
- 6.5.2 Socio-economic Duty The route, once completed, will offer residents the opportunity to choose to travel using active travel, which are lower cost than alternative modes of transport. The route will also improve access to essential services, retail, leisure and employment opportunities for residents living along the route, with studies demonstrating those who travelled actively had a higher monthly spend in local businesses than those who travel via motorised transport.
- The path will also offer opportunities for individuals to travel for leisure, again encouraging spend in local businesses along and connected by the route.
- 6.5.3 Islands There are no adverse impacts.
- 6.6. **Climate Change** Active Travel is the least carbon intensive mode of travel. Providing the opportunity for residents and visitors to consider an alternative to having to use a private car to travel between these communities will help lower Argyll and Bute’s carbon footprint.
- 6.7. **Risk** There is a reputational risk to the Council if the project is not completed within a reasonable timeframe.
- 6.8. **Customer Services** None.

6.9. The Rights of the Child (UNCRC)

Active travel is the most accessible mode of travel to young people, as it does not have any minimum age limits, does not require any form of licence, is free to use and is not tied to any fixed timetable.

All new active travel infrastructure is designed to be utilised by an unaccompanied 12 year old.

Engagement feedback demonstrates even stronger support for the delivery of the Helensburgh – Cardross – Dumbarton Cyclepath from younger members of the community than the already high overall level of community support. Wider engagement with school pupils indicates that the vast majority of pupils strongly support the provision of new active travel infrastructure, even where it would adversely impact other modes of transport.

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Appendix 1: Helensburgh, Cardross & Dumbarton Cyclepath Programme