

‘Midlothian on the Move’ Draft Strategy for Consultation and new bids to the Active Travel Infrastructure Fund

Report by Kevin Anderson, Executive Director- Place

Report for Decision

1 Recommendations

It is recommended that Council:

- a. Agrees to public consultation on the draft ‘Midlothian on the Move’ Strategy (Active Travel Strategy - ATS) 2024-34, commencing in March 2024.
- b. Agrees to receive a further report in summer 2024 presenting the Council with the final ATS for adoption.
- c. Agrees to extend the validity of the previous ATS to 2024 providing coverage for ongoing projects, until the new ATS is adopted,
- d. Notes that due to short timescales, four bids totalling £899,000 were submitted on 2 February 2024 to the Active Travel Infrastructure Fund (ATIF) for 100% of the costs of school route improvements on Morris Street, Nivens Knowe/A701, Carlops Road and Sherwood Crescent.
- e. Agree the proposals for the four projects as set out in paragraph 3.19.
- f. Agrees expenditure of up to £899,000 in the General Services Capital Plan, subject to successful ATIF grant award(s) by Transport Scotland, to be fully phased in 2024/25.

2 Purpose of Report/Executive Summary

- 2.1** This report seeks approval for the next steps in finalising a new Active Travel Strategy (ATS). It is needed to secure external funding for the projects within the new ATS. Approval is also sought to extend the end date of the previous ATS, giving interim coverage to its projects under development.
- 2.2** The report also details the submission of four bids to the new Active Travel Infrastructure Fund (ATIF) on 2 February, for which approvals to accept and spend from the Capital Plan are sought, if the bids are successful.

Date: 27/02/2024

Report Contact:

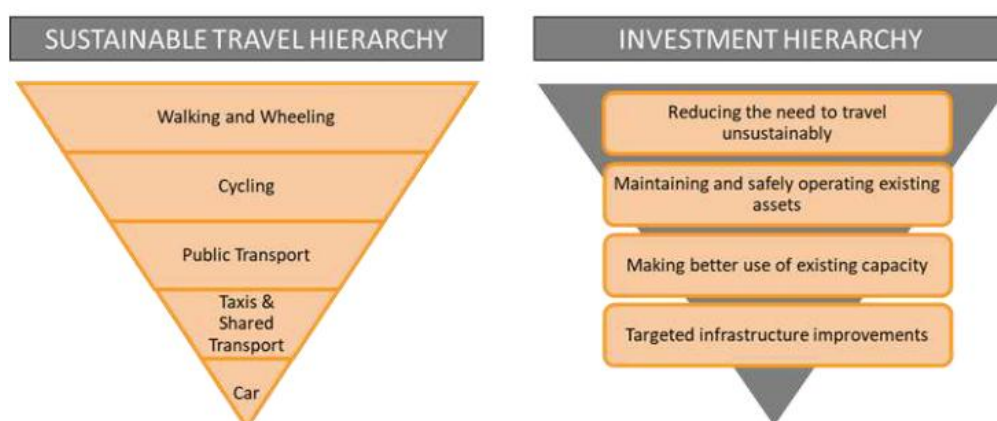
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3. Background

Importance of Active Travel funding as part of sustainable transport

- 3.1** The Scottish Government (SG) has set a legal target of a reduction in car kilometres of 20% by 2030, through the [The Climate Change \(Emissions Reduction Targets\) \(Scotland\) Act 2019](#). The Act requires governments at all levels to contribute to the reduction through long-term, sustainable transport planning and better use of existing assets. The Act emphasises the use of sustainable travel (Active travel and public transport) in achieving the target.
- 3.2** Three key national policies set out the need for well-planned sustainable transport in the context of land use and wider societal outcomes. These are the [National Transport Strategy \(NTS2\)](#), [Climate Change Plan \(2020 Update\)](#) and [National Planning Framework \(NPF4\)](#). All three reinforce the application of new hierarchies to planned investment in transport, as follows:



- 3.3** £320M p.a. of Scotland's Transport Budget is committed to developing and delivering Active Travel (AT) interventions, to make journeys safer and more appealing for those travelling without a car. From 2024/25, transitional funding arrangements apply – including the new, competitive ATIF funding stream. By attracting funds, Councils can deliver sustainable transport projects that provide better health outcomes for people as well as providing better access to local amenities.
- 3.4** Councils must now demonstrate they have an approved Active Travel Strategy (ATS) in place (or are finalising one) to apply for new funding streams. This must conform to new [guidelines issued by Transport Scotland](#) in 2023. Councils must also demonstrate there is sufficient management capacity and appropriate governance in place to deliver on new projects.

Main Report

'On the Move Midlothian 2024-34: Our Active Travel Strategy for Everyone'

- 3.7** A new Midlothian ATS has been drafted in-house, in accordance with new guidelines. It reflects public input and feedback gathered from informal engagement events held since 2021. The working title of the draft ATS, "On the Move Midlothian 2024-34: Our Active Travel Strategy for Everyone" follows local feedback that the terminology 'Active Travel' needs to be shown as inclusive. A copy of the draft strategy is included at Appendix B.
- 3.8** "On the Move Midlothian" requires a full public consultation exercise, to check priorities and to ensure there is strong buy-in to proposals. This is particularly important as the strategy aims to make day-to-day journeys for everyone safer by walking, wheeling and cycling – whether these are journeys to school, shops, community centres or to bus stops and train stations. "On the Move Midlothian". By enabling more active day-to-day journeys the Council can make a positive contribution to national Climate Change targets.
- 3.9** A public survey will be 'open' for a period of 12 weeks from March, with online survey accessible from the Council's Consultation Hub. For those without digital access, hard copies of the survey and printed copies of the draft strategy will be available in all libraries.
- 3.10** Following public consultation, feedback will be analysed, and a final draft produced, with final graphics, for reporting to Council by Quarter 3 of 2024/25.

Resourcing the delivery of the ATS and other Sustainable Transport projects

- 3.11** As part of the 'Midlothian on the Move' Strategy, a ten-year delivery programme has been developed, to ensure the phasing of projects is realistic and deliverable. The 10-year delivery programme will be reviewed annually. Construction ready projects will be added to the Capital Programme once funding can be confirmed and appropriate governance approvals are in place.
- 3.12** Dedicated and consistent staffing deliver focussed strategies that include multi-year projects. The ATS requires officers with experience of developing funding bids, managing, and monitoring funded projects, and industry standards.
- 3.13** The benefit to the Council to date since February 2022 includes funding receipt - including £226,000 from the competitive Places for Everyone (PfE) fund in 2022/23 (an outcome to 2023/24 bids is still unknown), as well as the development of the new ATS, and wider contributions to sustainable transport, including supporting Planning, Roads, and other services as required.

Extending the 'Midlothian Active Travel Strategy 2018-2021' to 2024

- 3.14** Midlothian's previous ATS 2018-2021 was agreed in 2017. It's approved action plan included medium-term projects for that were set for delivery by 2028 and longer-term projects beyond that. Many projects remain relevant and are subsumed into the new ATS; others are in the early stages of development.

Extending the validity of the previous ATS, just until the new, compliant strategy is finalised, would provide policy coverage for these, including:

- the A7 corridor from Newtongrange to Sherriffhall, focussing on active and public transport connectivity,
- connector routes for walking and wheeling in Easthouses,
- studies for active travel along the A701 corridor north of Gowkley Moss junction.

3.15 Further, earlier ATS projects are under early development, with bids for feasibility studies including for Sherriffhall Park and Ride connections to the Wisp and Connecting Bush Loan Road to Seafield Moor Road.

Active Travel Infrastructure Fund Applications

3.16 As part of the transitional arrangements for Active Travel Funding, the Council was advised in the second half of December of the new ATIF fund for construction ready projects of over £100,000 value each, in 2024/25. This means if awarded, delivery will be progressed with urgency.

3.17 Four eligible projects exist within Midlothian that will make a significant improvement to safety on routes to schools, as outlined in the table below:

Table 1: Summary of the four ATIF proposals submitted 2 February 2024

Project Location	Description	£ 2024/25
Morris Road, Easthouses	Improved pedestrian walking and crossing facilities and cycling crossing at the New Easthouses Primary School.	321,000
East-west crossing Routes to Beeslack High School at Nivens Knowe Road and A701, Loanhead	Improved crossing facilities on key roads linking Loanhead to Beeslack High School	300,000
Carlops Road, Penicuik	Improved crossing facilities	141,000
Sherwood Crescent, Bonnyrigg	Improved crossing facilities	127,000
Total value of ATIF bids		899,000

3.18 The ATIF bids closed on 2 February 2024. With a very short lead-in time, officers completed four bids to deliver the projects in Table 1. An outcome is expected towards the turn of the financial year, and acceptance of any funding offers would be subject to Council approval recommended in this report.

4 Report Implications (Resource, Digital and Risk)

4.1 Resource

The proposed capital expenditure of £0.889m would be fully funded by £0.889m of external capital grant funding from Transport Scotland's Active Travel Infrastructure Fund (ATIF) and as such would not give rise to any loan charges implications.

4.2 Digital

None

4.3 Risk

The recommendations and proposals outlined within this report seek to mitigate or manage the risks to the Council set out below.

Not progressing with consultation on the new ATS will miss gathering necessary public input, including from equalities interests, into a key strategy.

Not completing the new ATS will prevent the Council from making bid proposals to Active Travel funding streams, meaning less funding is identified for Midlothian communities, especially in relation to other Council areas.

Not extending the validity of the previous active Travel strategy 2018-2021 would risk projects being taken forward without adequate policy coverage.

Not developing sustainable travel may breach Council duties in relation to the Climate Change (Emissions Reductions Targets) Scotland Act 2019.

Not adequately resourcing the delivery of the new ATS also risk the delivery of existing funded projects and targets, as well as contributing to a deterioration of existing assets that require investment and upgrading.

A loss of suitably skilled and experienced staff would impact on the Council's capability and capacity to develop and deliver long-term approaches and may risk increased costs through the need for consultancy support.

Not agreeing to progress ATIF bids or accept any ATIF award with associated delivery of capital funded projects risks ensuring safety of school children and staff, or risks creating pressures on the Council's capital budget.

4.4 Ensuring Equalities (if required a separate IIA must be completed)

An IIA is underway in relation to the new Active Travel Strategy, and this will be updated through proposed consultation.

4.5 Additional Report Implications

Appendices

Appendix A – Additional Report Implications

Appendix B – “On the Move Midlothian 2024-34: Our Active Travel Strategy for Everyone” - Draft for consultation

APPENDIX A – Report Implications

A.1 Key Priorities within the Single Midlothian Plan

A.2 Key Drivers for Change

Key drivers addressed in this report:

- Holistic Working
- Hub and Spoke
- Modern
- Sustainable
- Transformational
- Preventative
- Asset-based
- Continuous Improvement
- One size fits one
- None of the above

A.3 Key Delivery Streams

Key delivery streams addressed in this report:

- One Council Working with you, for you
- Preventative and Sustainable
- Efficient and Modern
- Innovative and Ambitious
- None of the above

A.4 Delivering Best Value

Utilising a partnership approach to securing adequate staffing levels represents an example of Delivering Best Value.

A.5 Involving Communities and Other Stakeholders

Input into the new ATS from all geographic communities and communities of interest will be actively sought through the consultation period.

A.6 Impact on Performance and Outcomes

The report recommendations all contribute to the Single Midlothian Plan Vision “Midlothian will be a Great Green Place to Grow by achieving our net zero carbon ambitions”.

A.7 Adopting a Preventative Approach

Not applicable

A.8 Supporting Sustainable Development

Development of active and sustainable travel options for communities actively supports sustainable development.