

## **Cycle Path – Rosewell to Auchendinny**

**Report by Kevin Anderson, Executive Director - Place**

### **Report for Decision**

#### **1 Recommendations**

It is recommended that Council:

- i. Notes the feedback received with regards to the proposed surfacing of cycle path NCN196 Rosewell – Auchendinny; and
- ii. Approves a public consultation on retaining the status quo or surfacing of the cycle path, with a further report to Council in August 2023.

#### **2 Purpose of Report**

The purpose of this report is to advise Council of the prospective surfacing of a section of cycle path NCN196 and seeks a decision to move to consultation, whilst noting possible amendments to the project scope, or otherwise to decide on withdrawing the project.

**Date:** 7<sup>th</sup> June 2023

**Report Contact:**

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### **3 Background**

- 3.1 In order to improve surface conditions along the Rosewell to Auchendinny section of the Dalkeith to Penicuik shared use pathway, which follows the route of the dismantled railway, and is now part of Sustrans National Cycle Network route No.196, the Roads Safety & Policy team considered feedback received from the Active Travel Strategy consultation undertaken in 2021.
- 3.2 This section of the route is the only section along the Dalkeith to Penicuik stretch of NCN196 currently without a sealed surface. Improving surface conditions along this 3.5km section of the 17km route from Dalkeith to Penicuik will join up two surfaced sections at either end, and make the path more resilient in poor and wet weather. Improved surface conditions will make walking, wheeling and cycling a year-round option for leisure, commuting and every day journeys between key destinations.
- 3.3 A fully surfaced route will provide an accessible, quieter, off-road option for those travelling from Penicuik and Auchendinny to Rosewell, Bonnyrigg, Dalkeith, and beyond, avoiding the busy A701, steep gradients crossing the River North Esk through Roslin Glen, and busy roads around Auchendinny and Roslin; particular concerns that have been raised in previous consultation feedback.
- 3.4 The vision is to connect this long-distance popular off-road path with the Shawfair to Roslin off-road path, as well as extending the route to Leadburn. Surfacing of this section of path will allow these options to be pursued to provide an extensive long-distance and well connected option for off-road active travel throughout Midlothian and into neighbouring local authority areas.
- 3.5 The proposed work supports Midlothian Council's Active Travel Strategy to provide a safe, accessible, convenient, well-connected and well-maintained core active travel network. The improvements along this stretch of the route form part of our larger programme of active travel improvements throughout Midlothian to enhance the condition, cohesiveness and safety of the active travel network.
- 3.6 The photos below show the current path conditions in March 2023 and June 2023.



3.7 In terms of consultation, the feedback received during the respective process in 2021 provided the following:

**Active Travel Public Consultation, relating directly to improving the surface conditions on the Rosewell to Auchendinny section on NCN196, for cycling and walking:**

- *“I would love to cycle to work (Penicuik to Mayfield) but cycle path gets very muddy in winter. I would use year round if path had better surface between Penicuik and Rosewell.”*
- *“Could the old railway path from Auchendinny to Rosewell be upgraded to tarmac. Penicuik to Dalkeith is difficult by road i.e. Pomathorn Hill, Roslin Glen both of which are steep and also not safe to cycle with cars. Only alternative really is around by Leadburn which is longer. Should be aiming to connect towns via useable routes to encourage commuting etc. this*

*section is rough and not suitable for a road bike which is a real shame as all of the rest from Penicuik to Dalkeith is. Just this 2 mile section. Would be a quick win I think? Also road cycle lanes need improvement/ better maintained or new off road cycle paths created."*

- *"Tarmac path from Straiton [pond] to Loanhead railway path, so it's usable for transport. Tarmac Rosewell-Penicuik path. Tarmac link between railway path and Bilston Ind Est."*
- *"I like the Eskbank-Penicuik route, Danderhall-Roslin route - especially with tarmac."*
- *"Make the Dalkeith to Penicuik cycle path tarmac all the way to encourage road bikes to use it rather than the road."*
- *"The Dalkeith to Penicuik cycleway is a good east-west cycling route across Midlothian (would be better if surfacing on Auchendinny-Rosewell section was improved)"*
- *"More cycle paths and lanes are needed at tarmac grade especially joining towns."*
- *"We use footpaths around our area and these are lovely. Used by walkers and horse riders alike. Not suitable for cyclists though as they can get very muddy"*
- *"Better lighting for foot and cycle paths, tarmac paths in some locations"*
- *"More tarmac routes for cycling / walking"*
- *"I use the old railway from Penicuik to Dalkeith and it has been slightly improved but could be better maintained"*
- *"Too many paths in particular Rosewell to Penicuik have major drainage issues and even the Roslin to Shawfair path is very overgrown in areas. These paths need upkeep. If a road was to have thorns growing along it the Council would trim it. Again the prioritisation of active travel needs to be above the motorised vehicle. Maintaining pot holes on NCN routes will show that the Council is committed to active travel."*

**Feedback from the Active Travel Public Consultation, relating directly to the requirement for a safer, more cycle friendly route from Penicuik to Edinburgh and other Midlothian towns.**

- *"Strategic active travel routes should be identified and maintained, such as Penicuik to Edinburgh"*

**Feedback from the Active Travel Public Consultation, relating directly to the requirement for a safer, connection between Penicuik and Rosewell, Roslin Glen, Auchendinny, Loanhead and Dalkeith etc. to avoid dangerous roads and road conditions.**

- *"B7003 is completely substandard for active travel and needs a continuous footway and traffic reduction."*
- *"Try cycling, using the cycle lanes, from Loanhead to Penicuik: I think you will soon see what maintenance is required."*
- *"Auchendinny- Very dangerous to cycle around here with kids as fast cars take priority and often speed through village."*

- *“At the moment there is no way to cycle through Roslin Glen (Roslin to Rosewell) without using the dangerous road”*
- *“Lots of potholes make cycling dangerous. For example Roslin Glen road was improved a few months ago but has now lots of potholes again”*
- *“Penicuik has a distinct lack of proper roads, by that I mean managing to travel for more than half a mile without hitting a pothole”*
- *“The Lasswade road and Roslin Glen road should be improved for pedestrians and cyclists.”*
- *“The route from Straiton to Penicuik. It's lethal for bikes and cyclists.”*

### **Positive feedback from the 2021 Public Consultation relating to the desire for more off-road dedicated cycle paths**

**Respondents were asked if there were any active travel routes that they liked:**

- *“The dedicated paths are brilliant when they connect places and I think there should be more of these. There's no way I would ride daily from Penicuik to Musselburgh if I had to do it all on the roads. Safe segregated routes are a big factor for me.”*
- *“Following the old railway lines as much as possible e.g. Loanhead”*
- *“Danderhall to Loanhead path because it is safe and segregated, and a wildlife corridor; Eskbank Station to Bonnyrigg Town centre and to Penicuik.”*
- *“Musselburgh to Dalkeith. Eskbank to Penicuik. Loanhead to Danderhall. Like that they link a few areas together and are separate from the road network”*
- *“The Penicuik/Dalkeith railway line is essential and well used. It would benefit from better maintenance and line painting to separate cycles and pedestrians- at least on the paved sections.”*
- *“Old Railway (Penicuik to Hardengreen). More like this would be welcome in the Gorebridge, Mayfield, Newtongrange areas.”*
- *“Penicuik - Musselburgh railway cycle route - scenic/pleasant/well-maintained”*
- *“The cycleway from Penicuik to Dalkeith is great; I use it for running, walking and cycling and it is convenient but also relatively peaceful.”*
- *“Penicuik-Roslin cycle path is lovely, very quiet and I enjoy going through the different woodlands while listening to bird songs.”*
- *“Love the old railway cycle path from Eskbank to Penicuik via Rosewell. Wish there were more routes like this.”*

### **Feedback from the Public Consultation relating to the tarmacked off-road Shawfair to Roslin path- which was seen by many as a positive example of active travel infrastructure**

- *“Old railway line. Roslin to Shawfair. It's flat & isn't muddy.”*
- *“The path from Roslin through Loanhead is excellent, such a pleasant way to move about.”*

- *“Danderhall to Loanhead cycle path, good for 3/4 of my journey then the rest is by a pretty poor condition road”*
- *“I like the path from Shawfair to Loanhead”*
- *“Loanhead cycle way”*
- *“The newish path linking Shawfair and the Loanhead cycle path is nice, particularly the wildflowers where the path goes up to the broad to Dobbies”*
- *“Cycle path/route from Roslin to Loanhead and into Edinburgh”*
- *“Gilmerton to Loanhead and Loanhead to Roslyn”*

**Feedback from the 2021 Public Consultation demonstrating the desire to link the two key off-road paths (Roslin to Shawfair and Penicuik to Dalkeith)**

- *“I like cycling from Loanhead to Danderhall and then back up to Roslin but gutted I can't continue to Penicuik.”*
- *“Love the route from Roslin to Loanhead, can that be expanded right into Penicuik via Auchendinny?”*
- *“Roslin to loanhead to city cycle path and Rosewell to Penicuik cycle path - just to have a safe connection between the two by infrastructure at top of Glen would benefit many locals and tourists walking and cycling”*
- *“I would like to see a cycle route from Auchendinny to Roslin (specifically to primary school). Then we could cycle safely to school. One choice for this is closing Oatslie Road to traffic (proposed by Places for People). I would like to see railway lines such as that to Roslynlee and down to Leadburn opened as cycle routes. The Penicuik to Musselburgh cycle route is fantastic.”*
- *“Linking of paths should be a priority - to make best use of the infrastructure that already exists. For example, if Roslin was linked by path to Auchendinny then the Dalkeith/Penicuik and Roslin/Shawfair railway paths would be linked.”*

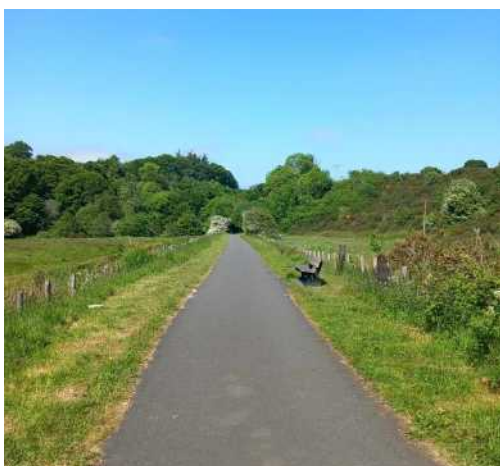
### **3.8 Positives and negatives of surfacing the path**

- + Improved accessibility for wheelchairs, prams, buggies, skateboards, scooters, road-bikes- for a range of purposes from leisure to everyday journeys and commuting
- + Improved accessibility/appeal in autumn and spring when conditions can get very muddy and slippery
- + The route would provide a very realistic and appealing alternative for those wanting to commute, away from the busy roads and steeper gradients
- + Less wear and tear on bikes – cleaning and maintaining bikes is a major barrier to people taking part in active travel
- + A surfaced route would place the route on the adopted roads register, meaning we could look to treat the route with grit/salt in winter



conditions (this will not be an option to pursue if the route remains unsurfaced)

- + A fully surfaced route from Dalkeith to Penicuik will open up opportunities to create and expand a fully off-road, joined up, and extensive active travel network into neighbouring local authorities – making travelling by bike a much more realistic option, encouraging a modal shift from car to bicycle.
- Greater likelihood of icy/slippery underfoot conditions in winter
- Impact to horses: from greater risk of slipping and higher impact surface
- Impact to walkers and runners: from higher impact of tarmac compared to softer gravel surface
- Potential increase in conflict between pedestrians/horse riders and cyclists, scooters, skateboarders etc. due to some users travelling at higher speeds, as well as greater numbers of users on the path
- Potential impact on the amenity value/aesthetics of the area of having a black top surface in a rural environment (though the rural nature of the Auchendinny to Penicuik section of the route has not been disrupted through surfacing - see images below)
- Any ecological damage from construction



### 3.9 Summary of concerns raised to surfacing proposals

Twenty direct email communications plus comments on social media platforms.

The large majority of concerns have come from the horse-riding community, concerning slippery conditions in winter, and the impact to horses from the proposed firmer surface.

Other concerns have been raised around impacting on the rural nature of the route, impact to runners and walkers as a result of the firmer surface, impact on the ecology of the area during construction works, and increased conflict between users if higher speed travel and greater numbers are encouraged.

### 3.10 Summary of positive feedback

Only one of the four community councils contacted have responded. The initial response from Rosewell and District Community Council was very positive and strongly in favour of the project. The response to the postponement of the work is included below.

*“Thank you for your email. I’m genuinely shocked and disappointed that people have complained about this work. We’ve waited 12 years for this section to be improved, I think the Penicuik bit was done then. Anyway, I’ll write something when there’s an opportunity because at the moment the path gets boggy and flooded so no one can pass, it’s completely impassable to wheelchairs, elderly unsteady people, skateboarding, rollerblading, scooters, new cyclists (my kids can’t manage on that terrain) and to road bikes. Any mother would need to be wealthy enough to afford an off-road buggy to walk that way and it seemed like it was horse-owners who were unhappy.*

*Anyway- thank you for your endeavours and hopefully we can open up this stretch to the children, buggies, disabled, frail elderly and more modes of transportation than horse owners (Who I suspect would still manage in your new surface). “*

- 3.11 No other positive feedback has been received via email, however positive comments around increased accessibility and year-round use have been noted on social media platforms.

## 4 Outcomes

- 4.1 The existing contract (placed on hold) is for 3m x 4000m (12,000m<sup>2</sup>) of bituminous surfacing and the total contract, which includes preparation works, would cost approx. £370,000. The surfacing is 60mm of AC14, which is 14mm nominal size stone graded bituminous material.
- 4.2 Advantages with this material relates to lower cost, more durable, build time of approx. 4 weeks, readily available from asphalt quarries and utilising framework contractors or our own in-house Roads Operations team.
- 4.3 Disadvantages: can be slippery in winter due to ice and frost, slippery when wet and hard underfoot for horses.
- 4.4 As a potential solution to accommodate the concerns of the horse-riding community, there is scope to consider flexible surfacing. This is an epoxy binder based aggregate and rubber crumb mix. This is a more durable version of the type of surface installed in playparks.
- 4.5 Indicatively, a project involving the surfacing of the complete (12,000m<sup>2</sup>) with a flexi-surface at 35-40mm depth would be approx. £504,000. Use of additional grant funding would be necessary.
- 4.6 Advantages with this material are: durable (20 year guarantee); porous free draining characteristics; does not have the same issues in winter with frost and ice; and the flexible nature with associated grip is ideal for horses and wheeling.
- 4.7 Disadvantages are mainly in relation to build. Likely to be double the build time.



## **5 Next Steps**

- 5.1 Council can approve progression to a public consultation and a further report following recess. Alternatively, Council can approve surfacing the path, as specified, or decide not to progress the project.
- 5.2 Council is advised that funding may be at risk, or not be approved by Transport Scotland for a delayed, abandoned or modified project.

## **6 Resource**

Staffing to facilitate the project will be managed from existing resource.

## **7 Digital**

Information on the approved actions will be displayed on the Council's website and social media channels.

## **8 Risk**

Should it be considered that consultation has been adequate, then by not implementing consultation outcomes, it may expose the Council to reputational risk. Following due process for implementation is necessary.

## **9 Ensuring Equalities**

An Equality Impact Assessment will be necessary on the implementation of the outcome.

## **10 Additional Report Implications**

See Appendix A

## APPENDIX A – Report Implications

### A.1 Key Priorities within the Single Midlothian Plan

The route map outlines the phases of service recovery and transformation which will underpin 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

The report aims to deliver best value.

### A.5 Involving Communities and Other Stakeholders

Extensive public consultation has been undertaken as per the Active Travel Consultation. Given the feedback received, it may be considered necessary that a more targeted consultation is necessary.

### A.6 Impact on Performance and Outcomes

The report aims to measure progress through outcomes.

### A.7 Adopting a Preventative Approach

The report is based on the creation of a wellbeing economy which prioritises prevention, fairness for people, the economy and the environment.

### A.8 Supporting Sustainable Development

The improvement and enhancement of our environment.