

THE HIGHLAND COUNCIL

Finance, Housing And Resources Committee – 22 January 2014

Agenda Item	19
Report No	FHR/19/14

Carbon Clever Capital Project 2014-15

Report by Director of Transport, Environmental and Community Services

Summary

This report seeks the approval of £250,000 of the £1,000,000 allowance in the capital programme for carbon clever projects in order to complete a strategic east west cycle corridor which will connect from the new University of the Highlands and Islands (UHI) campus to the heart of Inverness City Centre.

1. Background

- 1.1. The Highland Council is currently working towards reducing the amount of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases which are being released into the atmosphere through the Carbon CLEVER Highlands's initiative which has the target of a carbon neutral Inverness in a low carbon Highlands by the year 2025.
- 1.2. Achieving this target will result in multiple benefits including less air pollution, healthier population, more accessible services, stimulated growth, improved infrastructure, and the Highlands will make a significant contribution to mitigate against climate change.
- 1.3. The Inverness City Committee was advised at its meeting on 9th December of the various cycle route enhancements and projects that would improve infrastructure in the City. These were showcased at the Carbon Clever Conference in November 2013 as the vision to aim for by 2025. This strategic east west cycle corridor connecting the UHI campus and the City Centre is one of these projects.

2. Transport Network

- 2.1. The Scottish Household Survey - Local Authority Analysis (2009/10) indicates that 62% of all journeys within the Highland region are less than 5km. A significant proportion of overall trips are however made by car (over 60%), with cycling representing only a 2% overall mode share.
- 2.2. Walking and cycling are capable of substituting for private car travel over shorter distances (less than 5km) and have significant benefits to personal health as well as reducing carbon emissions.
- 2.3. Creating high quality walking and cycling networks will provide the necessary infrastructure to allow a step change in travel behaviour and will be paramount to reducing carbon in Transport.

3. Millburn Road Corridor

- 3.1. Transport, Environment and Community Services are currently examining a potential cycle route which would link from the new UHI Campus and the recently constructed A9 overbridge in the East, through Raigmore Housing Estate to Millburn Road, where it would continue to the heart of the City Centre. This would provide a significant enhancement to the east west cycling corridor in Inverness, and enable a dedicated strategic cycle link to Raigmore, Inshes, and Cradlehall, as well as benefiting areas further afield.
- 3.2. A feasibility study has been undertaken with detailed plans for the route produced. The route is designed to provide a safe and attractive environment for walkers and cyclists which encourages people to consider active travel as an alternative to car travel in order to reduce congestion, reduce pollution and greenhouse gas emissions and encourage health benefits.
- 3.3. The estimate for the full scheme, including an allowance for contingencies, is £638k. Funding has already been secured from a number of sources including the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), Sustrans, Hitrans, as well as contributions from developers through planning consents. The total funding secured is approximately £387,000, which leaves a shortfall of approximately £250,000.
- 3.4. An additional £250,000 contribution from the Carbon Clever fund will allow the completion of a high quality cycle corridor which is likely to encourage a modal shift for residents who can access the route. Should this funding not be secured, a lesser scheme will be progressed which will not provide the same quality or likelihood of encouraging sustainable travel.

4. Implications

- 4.1. Resources required for the project have been identified from the EU and from partners and the Council's contribution can be accommodated in the £1m allowance in the capital programme for 2014/15 for the Carbon Clever Initiative. Further projects for the remainder of this allowance are being identified.
- 4.2. Legal implications arise from the duties and targets on the Council regarding reducing carbon emissions and guidance relating to cycling targets.
- 4.3. Equalities issues generally relate to the need to enable more women to cycle and to make routes safer for younger and older people. For specific project proposals equalities screening will be carried out to encourage fairer access for all groups in the community to cycling opportunities.
- 4.4. The creation of a high quality east west cycle corridor will make a significant contribution to Carbon Clever Highlands which in turn will assist Scotland achieve the legislative requirements of the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009.

- 4.5. As with any capital contract project, there will be a financial risk due to the level of unknowns which could materialise, however a 10% contingency has been allowed for in the overall estimate of £638k.

Recommendations

Members are asked to approve a contribution of £250,000 for the Millburn Road Cycle project from the Carbon Clever Fund to allow the completion of a significant east west cycle link through the heart of Inverness.

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Background Papers: None