

Agenda Item	<b>3</b>
Report No	<b>CIA/19/19</b>

## THE HIGHLAND COUNCIL

**Committee:** City of Inverness Area

**Date:** 25<sup>th</sup> April 2019

**Report Title:** Accessing Inverness

**Report By:** Director of Development and Infrastructure, THC  
Partnership Director HITRANS

### 1. Purpose/Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report provides feedback from a public consultation undertaken on the Accessing Inverness project, which looks to improve Active Travel for pedestrians and cyclists within the city centre, focusing on the areas around Inverness Railway Station, Inverness Bus Station and in particular Academy Street. It also seeks approval for the next steps of the project, which is currently at concept design phase and so far has been funded via Sustrans Scotland and led by HITRANS, in partnership with Highland Council.
- 1.2 Following a request by Members at the City of Inverness Committee on 21<sup>st</sup> Feb 2019, **Appendix 1** of this report provides a full summary of the public consultation feedback on a 'you said, we did/will do' basis as well as the Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) for the scheme at **Appendix 2**.
- 1.3 Subject to Committee approval, officers will look to apply for 100% funding to Sustrans Scotland to progress to preliminary and detailed design, including traffic modelling and while ensuring key stakeholder and public engagement.

### 2. Recommendations

- 2.1 Committee is invited to:
- i. note the comments received during the Accessing Inverness consultation and agree the recommended Council responses contained in **Appendix 1**;
  - ii. note the draft EqIA contained in **Appendix 2** and the proposal to create a specific stakeholder working group for EqIA for Active Travel projects within the Inverness City area;
  - iii. agree for officers to apply to Sustrans Scotland for 100% funding, asking for further preliminary design to focus on details from the consultation such as inclusion of signalised crossings, undertaking traffic modelling and ensure key issues around kerb height, loading /taxi/ bus/ disabled bay provision,

and incorporation of cycle parking etc into the street design. This would include key stakeholder engagement. Furthermore, the application would ask for funding to progress towards detailed design, and associated public consultation, to enable a scheme to be progressed to the point where funding could be sought for delivery going forward;

- iv. agree that the Council takes over the management of the Accessing Inverness project going forward, while continuing to work in partnership with key stakeholders including HITRANS and Sustrans Scotland; and
- v. agree that, subject to a positive response from ongoing designs, Council officials should scope opportunities for third party funding to enable future funding bids for project delivery and construction.

### **3. Background and Purpose**

- 3.1 Accessing Inverness is a HITRANS-led project in partnership with The Highland Council to develop outline design proposals for improving walking and cycle routes linking Inverness Railway Station to other parts of the city centre, in particular Academy Street. This design work has been 100% funded by the Scottish Government/Transport Scotland through Sustrans' Community Links Programme to date.
- 3.2 In 2017 HITRANS, in partnership with The Highland Council, applied for Sustrans Scotland funding to look at outline design, feasibility and consultation on improvements to active travel corridors leading to all three entrances to Inverness Railway Station. This project, called Accessing Inverness, is separate from Abellio ScotRail's £6M upgrade to Inverness Railway Station but is intended to complement and add value to that project. This project is also separate to the £6.5M Inverness City Active Travel Network, which has been funded by Community Links PLUS design competition, in partnership with Sustrans.
- 3.3 This report summarises progress to date including, following the report to City of Inverness Area Committee on 21<sup>st</sup> Feb 2019, and provides the 'you said, we did/will do' response to the public consultation which took place at the start of this year. The consultation attracted significant levels of interest from a wide range of stakeholders including BID, Local Access Panel, and other disability groups, active travel stakeholders, NGOs and local members of the public.

### **4. Accessing Inverness Consultation**

- 4.1 The Accessing Inverness consultation was launched on 30 November 2018 with a public drop-in exhibition at the Victorian Market attended by approximately 150 people.
- 4.2 A second public exhibition took place at Eastgate Shopping Centre on 11 January 2019 where Council, HITRANS and Sustrans Scotland representatives were available to answer questions on proposed layouts and options. It is estimated that roughly 250 people viewed this exhibition. An 'on the day' poll was used to gather immediate feedback on the outline designs, in recognition that not everyone would register for the online consultation. The poll used sticky dots, which members of the public could place on 4 key questions to gather support for the full scheme or the various options at Academy Street, Falcon Square and Strothers Lane areas. Appendix 3 presents the results of the 'on the day' poll. On the whole feedback on

the day was very supportive of the scheme proposals. Members of the public were also given the option to take a leaflet away, over 150 were distributed, and respond later.

4.3 The consultation on Accessing Inverness ran for 8 weeks from 6<sup>th</sup> December 2018 to 1<sup>st</sup> February 2019. During this time the outline design materials were available to view and comment online through the Council’s consultation portal [consult.highland.gov.uk](http://consult.highland.gov.uk). The consultation was widely publicised in a number of ways including:

- emails to over 330 stakeholders, agencies and businesses including disability groups, active travel groups, Community Councils, Inverness BID, the Inverness Design Review Panel, and individuals registered on the consultation portal who have expressed an interest in the Inner Moray Firth Area; and
- a series of promoted targeted post on social media, and press releases.

4.4 The promoted Facebook post reached 13,275 users. Over 2000 users actively engaged with the post which also attracted 60 “likes”. Although it is not possible to calculate the exact number of people who accessed the consultation webpages, Google Analytics shows they were visited by approximately 1000 users.

4.5 On the consultation portal 189 views on 6 key questions were received from 51 respondents listed in **Appendix 1**, on a scale of strongly agree – strongly disagree. Several consultees provided additional comments to each of the questions, which are noted and commented on within the appendix.

4.6 Verbatim comments received can be viewed on the [Accessing Inverness consultation portal](#), and a full summary of comments received and the suggested response to these issues is set out at **Appendix 1** for approval by Committee. In addition, the headline comments are summarised in sections 4.8-4.11 of this report with the most frequently mentioned comments captured in the table below:

“They Said”	“We Did or Will Do”
Traffic modelling needs to be carried out to better understand traffic flow and capacity for bus movements	Traffic volume, flow and capacity will be understood further during traffic modelling, which will form part of detailed design phase. This will also look at the changes to traffic from removal of filter lanes as part of scheme. Bus operators have already been consulted and will be key stakeholders throughout the project.
Taxi, Loading and Disabled Parking must be accommodating	At present, the scheme has only highlighted taxi provision at the top of Academy Street, which has 3 spaces less than is current. Engagement will continue with BID and taxi alliance to make sure the current provision of city centre rank spaces is maintained.
Absence of Controlled crossings is not acceptable.	The absence of controlled crossings is noted, and through further preliminary work we will look to address this, looking at key locations where they can be placed into the scheme to meet the needs of all users, while also being looked at in tandem with how

	this links with traffic modelling. We will continue to engage with stakeholders.
Materials used should be of highest quality, but ensure safe in wet/icy conditions.	Use of materials will be considered during future design phases and in consultation with colleagues across different services. Maintenance considerations will also form part of any discussions.
No to shared space and kerb heights must be appropriate.	We are not promoting shared space, the proposed kerb height was adjusted to 60mm through consultation with local access panel, while flat surfaces to enable wheelchairs, other motobility restrictions must be provided. Key details on this will be worked on through further preliminary design.
Connections to wider cycle / walking network to be considered.	The scope of Accessing Inverness is to improve the walking and cycling environment between the rail station, bus station and Rose Street Car Park. However, connections with the wider network will be considered during the next design phase.
Will the Highland Council or the Common Good Fund be required to pay some of the cost?	The next stage of preliminary and detailed design could be 100% funded via Sustrans Scotland through an application process, however options for any construction need further discussion.
Opportunity to move bus station to the Royal Mail site and create the attractive park that the city centre desperately needs.	While opportunities may arise in the longer term to relocate or reconfigure and improve bus station facilities, the priority for this project is to improve current pedestrian and cycling links from the Rail Station to the Bus Station and Rose Street Car Park.

#### 4.7 **Government/ Statutory Bodies**

4.7.1 Overall the Government and Statutory bodies were generally supportive of the scheme. SNH liked the proposals for green infrastructure and urban drainage incorporated into the city centre. They also highlighted the need to ensure links to other key active travel routes to ensure effective usage and modal shift in the city, while focusing on need for associated behaviour change works and traffic management to ensure that cyclists would benefit from the proposed slower speeds and narrower road space. SNH also recognised that retrofitting into a constrained city centre required compromise away from segregated cycle infrastructure.

4.7.2 Highlife Highland are interested and supportive of proposals, and highlighted the benefits to users of the library in terms of ease/safety of access around Farraline Park, while acknowledging that the proposals may see the loss of disabled parking directly outside the library entrance.

4.7.3 SEPA are supportive of the use of permeable pavements or rain gardens and green landscaping to help manage surface water and increase biodiversity and amenity in city centre.

#### 4.8 **Business**

4.8.1 Businesses recognise the importance of Academy Street, Falcon Square and Farraline Park in the city centre, as being the main entrance to the city from public transport, and also a through route for key services and utilities for local businesses. Overall BID and Eastgate support the proposals to make Academy Street and its surroundings more attractive and friendly for people visiting and living in the city, and

support the principles of active travel and lower traffic speeds. They support the use of high quality materials if the project was to proceed.

4.8.2 Businesses are keen that traffic capacity is maintained and are concerned that the proposed removal of filter lanes may increase congestion, and cause delays or driver frustration. BID have also highlighted the requirement for loading, services, disabled and taxi provision which will be addressed through further preliminary work and traffic modelling.

4.8.3 BID are concerned that a lack of controlled crossings may create road safety risks, but were supportive of increased crossing areas.

#### 4.9 **NGOs, including charities and campaign groups**

4.9.1 The response was mixed from **NGOs**, including **charities and campaign groups**.

4.9.2 Overall, Inverness Civic Trust, Paths for All and Own Your Street Inverness are broadly supportive of the proposals. All focused on the improvements the scheme would bring for pedestrian, cyclists and visitors to the city centre and the benefit for health, including the proposed green infrastructure. All support the proposal for high quality materials to be used if the scheme was to develop further.

4.9.3 On the other hand, Putting Inverness Streets Ahead (including several key organisations such as the RNIB) , Inverness Active Community of Empowered individuals (ACE), and National Federation for the Blind UK (Scotland) are broadly unsupportive of many key aspects of the scheme, in particular the outline detail on crossing points, kerb levels and perception of 'shared space' and lack of detail provided to date ( due to nature of concept design) with regards to loading and service provision , disabled space, taxi spaces and links with public transport.

4.9.4 All 6 respondees in this category responded 'other' to the key question regarding crossing points, with several suggesting a mix of signalised, zebra and other crossing options. We will address and respond to these key issues during further preliminary work, including traffic modelling. We will seek to incorporate signalised crossing(s) into the scheme going forward, but we need to understand how this will affect the key traffic flows, congestion etc, while also enabling active travel and use of the city centre for everyone.

#### 4.10 **Individuals**

With 39 **individuals** providing upward of 100 comments between the 6 questions, it would be unfair to summarise at any level. There is support from many for the scheme, but likewise there are several concerns which require consideration to help progress the scheme going forwards. **Appendix 1** provides a full summary of the comments raised and the proposed response for approval by the Committee.

### 5. **Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA)**

5.1 The Public Sector Equality Duty (S149 of the Equality Act 2010) requires public bodies to give due regard to eliminating discrimination, pro-actively promoting equality of opportunity and by fostering good relations between those who share a protected characteristic and those who do not. Undertaking an equality impact assessment allows for an analysis of the impact of policies and practices on the protected characteristics identified in the Act, and to identify mitigation of any

potential negative impact.

- 5.2 The EqIA for Accessing Inverness (**Appendix 2**) is a key document which will be updated as each stage of work develops for the scheme. Recognising the importance of ensuring that Access Inverness follows the principles of accessible design and needs to involve key stakeholder engagement if this scheme progresses, officers are looking to establish an Active Travel EqIA working group for Inverness. This will include key representatives including Inverness Access Panel and other disability groups, active travel stakeholders, members, local transport operators and council officers to ensure a robust group of people feed into the EqIA and discuss the scheme in detail going forward.

## 6. Next Steps

- 6.1 Subject to committee approval, officers will look to apply for 100% funding towards preliminary and detailed design, including traffic modelling, and key stakeholder and public engagement through Sustrans Scotland's new amalgamated 'Places for Everyone' fund, which closes on 1<sup>st</sup> May 2019.
- 6.2 Subject to committee approval, officers will establish a city EqIA working group for active travel schemes, including Accessing Inverness, to ensure a robust method of stakeholder engagement to discuss detail of the scheme.

## 7. Implications

- 7.1 Resource: Resources to complete the application for Places for Everyone will be carried out by officers. We would look to ensure capacity within the Transport Planning team is applied for as part of this application.
- 7.2 Legal: There are no legal implications arising as a result of this report.
- 7.3 Community (Equality, Poverty and Rural): An EqIA has been undertaken and will be updated during the different stages of the project. Accessing Inverness aims to ensure that the improvements to the city centre are designed to provide an accessible, inclusive environment that understands and meets the needs of all user.
- 7.4 Climate Change / Carbon Clever: By promoting active travel improvements that make it convenient and attractive to access city centre destinations on foot or by bicycle, Accessing Inverness aims to increase walking and cycling levels and discourage private car use.
- 7.5 Risk: There is a risk in terms of the change in funding criteria between Sustrans Community Links programme, and the new Places for Everyone. We have been working closely with Sustrans Scotland in partnership on this project to date, and there is an understanding of the complexity of the constraints in transport options in the city centre, which prohibits the scheme to full segregate for cyclists, or to look at one-way or travel restrictions on Academy Street. We will be scored according to the criteria, against other schemes in Scotland, but as officers we feel there is still a strong case for the delivery of this active travel scheme in Inverness.
- 7.6 Gaelic: Gaelic would be considered during detailed design, if we gain approval to progress, to ensure links with the City centre wayfinding strategy, approved on 22<sup>nd</sup>

November 2018.

Designation: Director of Development and Infrastructure

Date: 10 April 2019

Authors: Fiona McInally, Programme Manager, Transport Planning  
Nicole Wallace, Acting Head of Planning and Environment

Background Papers:

1. City of Inverness Area Committee Report and Minutes, 21 Feb 2019