

Agenda Item	3
Report No	TC/10/21

HIGHLAND COUNCIL

Committee: Tourism

Date: 6 December 2021

Report Title: UCI World Cycling Championships 2023

Report By: Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure, Environment & Economy

1 Purpose/Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report updates Members on the 2023 UCI Cycling World Championships being hosted by Scotland where one significant discipline – the downhill mountain biking, is planned to take place at Nevis Range near Fort William.

2 Recommendations

- 2.1 Members are asked to:
- i. note the proposal to host the downhill mountain biking element of the 2023 UCI Cycling World Championships in Highland; and
 - ii. note the different areas where the Council might be involved in the event.

3 Implications

- 3.1 **Resource** – There are no financial implications arising directly from this report at this time, but it is anticipated that as plans for the event evolve, there is likely to be an approach to the Council for financial support towards some elements of the event. In the run up to and during the event there will be a number of areas where the Council will be required to provide services as is the case with any major event. These are yet to be defined but are likely to require staff resources and potentially other related costs.
- 3.2 **Legal** - There are no implications arising directly from this report, but with an event of this scale there will be a number of legal contracts put in place, some of which may involve the Council.
- 3.3 **Community (Equality, Poverty and Rural)** - there are no implications arising directly from this report. However, the hosting of major events does bring economic benefits to the host area including employment and supplier opportunities. With the scale of the

event, it is also anticipated that there will be some disruption to the local community around the time of the event.

- 3.4 **Climate Change / Carbon Clever** - there are no implications arising directly from this report. However, part of the national ambition behind the event is to create a long-term cycling-based legacy for Scotland. As part of this some climate change ambitions will be supported through increased levels of cycling and behaviour changes particularly around cycling as an alternative form of transport.
- 3.5 **Risk** - There are no implications arising directly from this report.
- 3.6 **Gaelic** - There are no implications arising directly from this report. However, in keeping with the Scottish Government and Council's Gaelic policies it is anticipated that the Gaelic language will be incorporated in some aspects of the event.

4 Background

- 4.1 In August 2023, Scotland will play host to the biggest ever cycling event in history – the 2023 UCI Cycling World Championships. This will also be one of the largest events ever staged in Scotland – similar for example to the 2014 Commonwealth Games in Glasgow.
- 4.2 The UCI (Union Cyclist Internationale) is the world governing body for sports cycling and oversees international competitive cycling events. Amongst those events are the world championship events in a number of different cycling disciplines including road, track, mountain biking, BMX freestyle, BMX racing and cyclo-cross.
- 4.3 Traditionally the world championships in any given discipline are held annually with each being a separate event, normally taking place in different countries across the world at different times of year. In recent years, the vision of UCI President, David Lappartient was to bring all these disciplines together into a single event and this in turn attracted a bid by the Scottish Government, EventScotland, Glasgow City Council and others for Scotland to host the inaugural event.

5 2023 UCI Cycling World Championships

- 5.1 After many months of work and further negotiations the Scottish bid was ultimately successful, and it was announced that 13 existing individual World Championship cycling disciplines would be brought together into one mega event for the first time with Scotland hosting the inaugural event.
- 5.2 Glasgow is considered to be the “host city” for the event and will provide many of the facilities for a number of disciplines – for example hosting track cycling at the Sir Chris Hoy velodrome as well as being the main base for elements such as event organisation and media.
- 5.3 However, the differing needs of some disciplines and an ambition to spread the benefits and make use of the quality facilities in other parts of Scotland means some events will be held in other Scottish locations during the fortnight of the championships. This includes for example para-cycling in Dumfries & Galloway and, most notably for the Council, the intention to host the downhill mountain bike racing in Fort William.

6 UCI Mountain Bike World Cup, Fort William

6.1 Since 2002, Fort William has hosted a round of the UCI Mountain Bike World Cup (with the exception of recent events postponed due to Covid) and in 2007 hosted the UCI mountain bike World Championships. Both the town and the venue therefore have a long track record of hosting the event. Following the pandemic related cancellations, the Mountain Bike World Cup returns to Fort William from 21 to 22 May 2022. However, as host to the World Championships in 2023, Fort William would not host a normal round of the world cup as they do in other years.

7 Highland Council Involvement

7.1 As Fort William is an existing host town for one round of the annual Mountain Bike World Cup series, the Council already has an established approach to helping coordinate cross service and cross agency activity related to the event. This is done through an Event Planning group chaired by the Senior Ward Manager and includes services such as licencing, roads, transport planning and other agencies such as Police Scotland. It is anticipated that this approach would be continued for this event.

7.2 While a typical World Cup event at Fort William attracts around 20,000 people over a weekend it is likely that the 2023 event, being higher profile will attract a higher attendance. As it will take place in the busier peak season (August) instead of the more traditional late may / early June shoulder period there are expected to be more significant effects on things like traffic, cycle access and parking. Greater involvement of Council staff in the relevant teams and liaison with organisations such as Transport Scotland and Scotrail are likely to be required due to the increased challenges that may need to be addressed.

7.3 While much of the event itself and related activity such as parking or public access takes place on land under the control of a private operator (Nevis Range) and / or Forestry & Land Scotland it is likely that both these organisations will require to make some physical changes on their property (indeed some such as a new race start and revised course are already being investigated). These developments will likely need planning permission but will also come with a timescale that is heavily influenced by the need to have these developments in place in time for the event. Whilst it is anticipated that the Council can be as supportive as possible it is also recognised that there are set legal requirements that may have to be met around planning or other permissions. In order to provide the best and most timely advice on such matters it has been suggested that a senior planning officer be nominated to sit on the venue development group.

7.4 One key aspect of the event, and a strong part of the Scottish Government's rationale behind bidding for the event is to create a long-term legacy. Many parts of the expected legacy have yet to be fully defined but initial indications are that this will include elements such as: -

- Increasing levels of physical activity and health improvement through cycling
- Increased use of bikes including as a form of green transport
- Increased participation in cycling / mountain biking by children and young people both as a leisure activity and in a sporting / competitive sense
- Increased skills developed through involvement with the event e.g., through volunteering
- Increased profile for the local area and the wider Highlands as a cycling and mountain biking destination

- Increased business opportunities during the event and through the other developments and profile created through hosting the event

In trying to achieve those longer term benefits it is anticipated that there will also need to be future involvement from a number of Council services and High Life Highland.

Designation: Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure, Environment & Economy

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