
Dunoon Town Centre Spaces for People Medium-Long-term Proposals

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1. As requested by members at the 02 March 2021 Bute and Cowal Area Committee, this report proposes an approach to consider medium to long term aspirations to improve the pedestrian and cycle facilities in Dunoon Town Centre. This would require a review of the existing layouts and space allocated to pedestrians, cyclists and motor vehicles, including parking and loading, within Dunoon Town Centre.
- 1.2. This report also provides Members with some examples from other locations of the types of interventions which potentially could be applied in Dunoon. Any interventions selected would require to be specifically designed to the circumstances in Dunoon Town Centre.
- 1.3. As reported to the Committee on 02 March 2021, the Strategic Transportation Team, part of the Development and Economic Development Service, undertook surveys in 2020/21 of the community, businesses and taxis/private hire operators on proposals for temporary changes in Dunoon Town Centre to increase space available to pedestrians to safely maintain social distancing during the covid-19 pandemic. The community consultation (Jul 2020, 353 responses) identified that two-thirds of respondents supported the proposed temporary measures. However, business and (Feb 2021, 35 responses) and taxi/private hire operator (Feb 2021, 3 response) were less supportive of the proposals. These results indicate that the community wish to see changes in Dunoon Town Centre which would improve facilities for pedestrians and/or cyclists, even if these require removal of some space from motor vehicles. However, work is required with local businesses to gain their support for any future proposals.
- 1.4. Separate to any proposals for Dunoon Town Centre, the Active Travel Officers within the Strategic Transportation Team are progressing work to support pedestrians and cyclists in Dunoon and south Cowal. The measures include improving the pedestrian signage in Dunoon, creating a smartphone app to encourage residents and visitors to explore Dunoon, supporting the establishment of a Cycle Bothy to encourage residents to consider walking/cycling for some journeys and working to develop designs for a high-quality cycle route linking Dunoon and Hunters Quay. All of these projects are funded by secured external challenge funding.
- 1.5. The Council's Active Travel Team (1.3 FTE) is part of the Strategic Transport Team within the Development and Economic Growth Service. No Council funding

is currently received by the Active Travel Team. All work undertaken, including internal staff costs, have to be funded via successfully securing external challenge funds.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1. It is recommended that the Bute and Cowal members:

2.1.1. Note the relevant responsibilities and funding situation of the Roads and Infrastructure Service and the Strategic Transportation Team.

2.1.2. Acknowledge that Strategic Transportation does not have budget or staff resource to progress any changes in Dunoon Town Centre and that there are no suitable challenge funds currently accepting applications which could fund such work.

2.1.3. Welcome the measures being implemented by the Strategic Transportation Team to support residents and visitors to Dunoon and Cowal to travel more actively.

2.1.4. Note that future reports will be submitted at later stages to discuss future aspirations.

Dunoon Town Centre Spaces for People Temporary Proposals

3.0 INTRODUCTION

- 3.1. This report provides a recommended approach to develop medium to longer term aspirations to improve the pedestrian and cycle facilities in Dunoon Town Centre as requested by members at the 02 March 2021 Bute and Cowal Area Committee.
- 3.2. As reported to the Committee on 02 March 2021, the Strategic Transportation Team, part of the Development and Economic Development Service, undertook a total of three consultations in 2020/21 of the community, businesses and taxis/private hire operators on proposals for temporary changes in Dunoon Town Centre to increase space available to pedestrians to safely maintain social distancing during the covid-19 pandemic. The community consultation (Jul 2020, 353 responses) identified that two-thirds of respondents supported the proposed temporary measures. However, business and (Feb 2021, 35 responses) and taxi/private hire operator (Feb 2021, 3 response) were less supportive of the proposals. These results indicate that there is likely to be community support for the development of longer-term changes to improve space and facilities for pedestrians and cyclists in Dunoon Town Centre, even if these require removal of some space from motor vehicles, but that work is required with local businesses to gain their support for any future proposals.
- 3.3. The public streetscape within Dunoon Town Centre, comprising the vehicular road, pedestrian footway and areas of public amenity are the responsibility of the Council's Roads and Infrastructure Service.
- 3.4. Research has demonstrated that increased activity, including travelling actively, has significant physical and mental health benefits, reduces inequality, creates a healthier and more productive workforce and reduces congestion and transport related pollution (e.g. air, noise and visual). As such, measures which encourage active travel deliver benefits and savings across both the public and private sectors while supporting economic development and healthier, happier lives.

4.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1. It is recommended that the Bute and Cowal members:
- 4.1.1. Note the relevant responsibilities and funding situation of the Roads and Infrastructure Service and the Strategic Transportation Team.

- 4.1.2. Acknowledge that Strategic Transportation does not have budget or staff resource to progress any changes in Dunoon Town Centre and that there are no suitable challenge funds currently accepting applications which could fund such work.
- 4.1.3. Welcome the measures being implemented by the Strategic Transportation Team to support residents and visitors to Dunoon and Cowal to travel more actively.
- 4.1.4. Note that future reports will be submitted at later stages to discuss future aspirations.

5.0 DETAIL

Responsibility

- 5.1. The Roads and Infrastructure Service has a wide ranging remit including 2,300km of roads, street lights, car parks, and footways across Argyll and Bute. The service also has responsibility for the provision of school and supported public transport including bus stops, piers and harbours, waste disposal and recycling, and the maintenance of Council greenspace/public open space.
- 5.2. The Strategic Transport Team have secured £55k external challenge funding for active travel in the Dunoon area in 2021/22 including Dunoon Cycle Bothy, Walking and Cycling Maps, new pedestriansignage and the Dunoon Smartphone App. Additional funding for the proposed Cycle Bothy has also been secured through the Crown Estate and Better Places Funding.

Active Travel Improvements

- 5.3. Active Travel is an overarching term covering journeys made by a physically active means, for example walking, mobility aid, wheelchair, cycling or scooting.
- 5.4. Research has demonstrated that increased activity, including travelling actively, has significant physical and mental health benefits, reduces inequality, creates a healthier and more productive workforce and reduces congestion and transport related pollution (e.g. air, noise and visual). As such measures which encourage active travel delivers benefits and savings across both the public and private sectors while supporting economic development and healthier, happier lives.
- 5.5. Provision of high-quality, accessible routes for people to walk, wheelchair, cycle or scoot enable and encourage residents and visitors to travel actively. Research has identified that a lack of a suitable and safe route is one of the most frequently cited reasons for not travelling more actively. These physical barriers can be relatively minor items, for example lack of dropped kerbs, or larger, for example the lack of an off-carriageway route. This is particularly notable within Argyll and Bute where the majority of walking and/or cycling provision is limited or non-existent out with the built up areas, forcing users to walk/cycle on national speed

limit carriageways without footways, and within towns where the streetscape can be dominated by vehicular access and on-street parking.

- 5.6. Changing behaviour to give people the confidence or incentive to travel more actively or overcome challenges that prevent them from choosing to travel more actively can also encourage people to choose to travel actively, especially when allied to improve infrastructure. Examples include providing walking or cycle training, providing individualized travel plans to demonstrate the viability of travelling more actively within their life, providing activities that encourage active travel or providing access to a suitable bicycle.

Finances

- 5.7. The Roads and Infrastructure Service manages the £500,000 Active Travel funding which was included in the Council's 2021/22 budget. It is understood that the Roads and Infrastructure Service have provisionally allocated the full value of this funding for work in 2021/22 and this will be advised to EDI Committee in September by way of an update to Members.
- 5.8. The Council's Active Travel Team (1.3 FTE) is part of the Strategic Transport Team within the Development and Economic Growth Service. No Council funding is received by the Active Travel Team. All work undertaken by the Council's Active Travel team have to be funded via successfully securing external challenge funds. The 2 officer posts (1 is currently on secondment) currently don't receive any Council funding and require to be externally funded by successfully securing challenge funding to recharge staff costs against.
- 5.9. In 2020/21 a one-off covid-19 related £38M fund was made available by the Scottish Government via the Spaces for People (SfP) programme, administered by Sustrans. This funding was to enable safe social distancing while travelling actively for essential journeys to education, employment, retail or for exercise during the pandemic. This funding was a single year measure and Transport Scotland have confirmed that no further funding will be made available via this conduit.
- 5.10. The main conduit for Scottish Government active travel funding is Transport Scotland's Places for Everyone (PfE) programme, administered by Sustrans. PfE is a multi-year, multi-stage highly competitive challenge fund which, based on experience, takes at least 4 years and securing the challenge funding at 3 separate stages to develop a project to a constructible stage. This assumes the requisite funding is secured at every stage of the work. The organisation which administers PfE, Sustrans, has been taking an increasingly active and controlling role in directing the design of PfE projects over recent years which can limit projects considered to be viable for PfE funding to those which already largely meet the objectives and approach of Sustrans. The PfE programme also requires the Council to secure a minimum of 30% of total costs as match funding from other sources. Sustrans have verbally stated that they do not expect to accept any new PfE applications until 2022-23 at earliest.

Evidence supporting pedestrian and cycle improvements

- 5.11. Research has demonstrated that increased activity, including travelling actively, has significant physical and mental health benefits, reduces inequality, creates a healthier and more productive workforce and reduces congestion and transport related pollution (e.g. air, noise and visual). As such measures which encourage active travel delivers benefits and savings across both the public and private sectors while supporting economic development and healthier, happier lives.
- 5.12. Evidence from academic studies and similar measures implemented elsewhere indicates that increasing the space available to pedestrians within town centres, even when it involves the removal of some or all motor vehicles, makes town centres a more attractive destination resulting in increased footfall and increased spend in local businesses. Improving cycle facilities and safe routes have also been found to increase spend in local businesses by encouraging more repeat visits by customers on bicycles.
- 5.13. The Pedestrian Pound (Living Streets, 2018) found improving opportunities to walk and/or cycle, including where motor vehicles are removed to create additional space, increased footfall by between around 30%, with retail sales increasing by 20% to 46%. www.livingstreets.org.uk/policy-and-resources/our-policy/high-streets
- 5.14. Active Travel and Economic Performance (Sustran, Living Streets, TAS; 2017) found pedestrianisation of town centres increase footfall by an average of 30%. The research also identified that while shoppers visiting town centres by car had a higher spend per single visit, shoppers arriving by sustainable travel modes (pedestrian, cyclist, public transport) visited more frequently and had a higher spend over a month. www.sustrans.org.uk/media/4472/4472.pdf and www.sustrans.org.uk/our-blog/opinion/2020/may/what-are-the-economic-impacts-of-making-more-space-for-walking-and-cycling
- 5.15. Economic Benefits of the Reallocation of Street Space (Ryder Architecture, 2020) found that walking and cycling projects can increase retail sales by 30 percent or more, and that if more space is given for walking and cycling and less to cars, the absence of customers arriving by car is more than compensated by people arriving on foot or by bike. This review of evidence also identified that Shoppers accessing the town centre on foot or by bicycle do so more frequently than those accessing the centre by car; that Cycle parking can generate up to five times the retail spend for the same area of car parking; and, that 38% of local residents visit their nearest town centre several times a week for small 'top up' or leisure trips. www.ryderarchitecture.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Economic-benefits-of-the-reallocation-of-space-3.pdf
- 5.15.1. A recent practical example of the benefits of increasing pedestrian space is Union Street, Dundee, which has had significant reallocation of roadspace from motor vehicles to pedestrians during the covid-19 pandemic. Union Street was closed to motor vehicle in July 2020. Following initial concerns, by September 84% of businesses on the street felt the changes had been positive and 62% said it had been good for their business. Access was retained for delivery vehicles outside trading hours and local bus services were re-routed to

neighbouring streets. Support to make this change permanent is now being examined. www.dundee.gov.uk/news/article?article_ref=3746
www.dundeeandanguschamber.co.uk/news/Union-Street-Pedestrian-Zone-0_8522.html
www.eveningtelegraph.co.uk/fp/footfall-boom-leads-to-calls-for-pedestrianisation-of-union-street-to-become-permanent/

Longer-term options

- 5.16. The consultations undertaken in 2020/21 demonstrated support from the community in relation to the proposed temporary measures. This may indicate that there is community support for longer-term improvements to the pedestrian and cycle space and facilities in Dunoon Town Centre, although further community and business engagement would require to be undertaken in relation to any longer-term proposals developed in the future.
- 5.17. Longer-term options could be developed on a permanent basis or on a reoccurring but temporary basis, for example, Edinburgh City Council has an Open Streets programme that closes identified key retail streets to all traffic other than pedestrians and cyclists on the first Sunday of every month between 10am and 5pm.
- 5.18. Any development of potential longer-term options should be led by the Roads and Infrastructure Service as the service responsible for the roads and footways within Dunoon Town Centre and include further community and business engagement to identify the level of support for changes after the covid-19 pandemic.

Existing Active Travel Work in Dunoon – Strategic Transportation

- 5.19. Dunoon pedestrian signage. Refurbishment and replacement of the traditional fingerpost style pedestrian signs in Dunoon. Signs have been repainted white and black to match the other historical signs in Dunoon, 54 finger blades will be updated and replaced. A review of blue cycle road signs identified a number of out of date signs that have been removed. These works cost £17,800 funded from the Smarter Choices Smarter Places programme.
- 5.20. Discover Dunoon smartphone app. Development of a downloadable smartphone app providing a series of digital trails within Dunoon that will encourage residents and visitors to explore their town. The digital trails will complement existing information, displays and exhibitions and include a range of media including photographs, augmented reality, audio, video and text. The app will also provide a 'treasure trail' game aimed at younger residents. A similar app was developed for Campbeltown in 2020 and is available to download for android and apple phones (search "Discover Campbeltown"). The development of the smartphone app is costing £17,900 funded from the Smarter Choices Smarter Places programme.
- 5.21. Dunoon Cycle Bothy. Following the successful establishment of the Ardrishaig Cycle Bothy, Officers are supporting Cycling UK to establish a Cycle Bothy project in Dunoon based on the successful model of the Gourock Cycle Bothy which has

been operating for a number of years. The Dunoon Cycle Bothy will provide support to residents to trial walking and/or cycling including led health walks, led cycle rides, family cycle rides, opportunity to trial electric bikes and advice on the benefits of walking/cycling. Argyll and Bute Council contributed £15,000 from the Smarter Choices Smarter Places programme towards the costs of establishing and operating the Cycle Bothy. It is proposed to complete the refurbishment of the Castle Lodge building to base the Bothy at this location 100% funded by Crown Estate Funding.

- 5.22. Dunoon to Hunters Quay Cycle Route. Concept designs were developed in 2019 for an improved pedestrian and cycle route linking Dunoon Pier to Hunters Quay. Strategic Transportation Officers have submitted a competitive challenge fund application to Transport Scotland's Places for Everyone programme for funding in 2021/22 – 2022/23 to continue the development of these proposals to a constructible standard. As the design requirements imposed by Sustrans on Transport Scotland's Places for Everyone programme projects have evolved since the concept designs were developed, should funding be awarded the updated designs will require to focus on placemaking and segregation of cyclists from both motor vehicles and pedestrians.

6.0 CONCLUSION

- 6.1. The community consultation (July 2020) identified that two-thirds (66.7%) of respondents supported proposals to increase space and facilities for pedestrians and/or cyclists, even where this required space to be reallocated from motor vehicles. However, there were significantly lower levels of support from local businesses (Feb 2021) where around one-third (37%) and none of the taxi/private hire operators (Feb 2021) who responded supported the proposals. These results indicate that there is likely to be community support for the development of longer-term changes to improve space and facilities for pedestrians and cyclists in Dunoon Town Centre, but that work is required with local businesses to gain their support for any future proposals.
- 6.2. Evidence indicates that improving facilities and space for pedestrians and cyclists in Dunoon Town Centre could provide significant benefits to businesses with increased footfall and turnover; as well as increased activity with significant physical and mental health benefits, reduced inequality, supporting a healthier and more productive workforce and reduced congestion and transport related pollution (e.g. air, noise and visual). These improvements could therefore deliver benefits and savings across both the public and private sectors while supporting economic development and healthier, happier lives.

7.0 IMPLICATIONS

7.1. Policy

Improving the infrastructure for pedestrians and cyclists in Dunoon Town Centre support the Council's SOA outcomes 2: We have infrastructure that supports sustainable growth and 5: People live active, healthier and independent lives. The project also supports achievement of the Scottish Government's objectives

set out in the Cycling Action Plan for Scotland (CAPS) and Let's Get Scotland Walking - The National Walking Strategy.

7.2. Financial

None arising from this report.

7.3. Legal

None arising from this report.

7.4. HR

None.

7.5. Fairer Scotland Duty:

7.5.1 Equalities

Improvements to Active Travel increase the opportunities for residents and visitors to Dunoon to travel more sustainably and actively by walking, wheeling and cycling.

7.5.2 Socio-economic Duty

Improvements to Active Travel increase the opportunities for those with mobility aids including wheelchairs and parents/guardians with a child's pram or buggy to access Dunoon town centre more easily.

7.5.3 Islands

There are no adverse impacts.

7.6. Risk

There is a reputational risk to the Council if the implementation of the any proposed changes was not undertaken in a sensitive and timely manner, taking account of feedback received from the engagement undertaken to date and any future engagement.

7.7. Customer Services

None.

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