

**LOCHGILPHEAD TO CRINAN CANAL ACTIVE TRAVEL ROUTE: CONCEPT
DESIGN AND FUTURE EXTERNAL FUNDING**

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1. This report provides an update to Members on the progress made to date on the Lochgilphead to Crinan Canal Active Travel Route, highlights the next steps and seeks support for the continuation of the project from Members.
- 1.2. A concept design has been produced for a preferred route alignment based on the findings of a feasibility study and route options appraisal that was completed in August 2023.
- 1.3. A public consultation on the proposed concept design was held between 11th and 28th September. The consultation received 99 responses, with 59% of respondents supportive of the proposal.
- 1.4. The Lochgilphead Community Council have confirmed that they fully support the proposal.
- 1.5. The preferred route alignment largely runs adjacent to the A83. Transport Scotland have confirmed they are happy in principle, but will require to approve the detailed design and technical design drawings before they can sign off on a design.
- 1.6. A short section of the proposed route is within the boundary of the Crinan Canal which is a Scheduled Monument and managed by Scottish Canals. Scottish Canals have indicated that they are supportive of the proposal.
- 1.7. A short section of the preferred option runs over land that is in private ownership. The landowners have been consulted but currently there is no legal agreement in place with the landowners to allow for the use/acquisition of their land to be used for the creation of the new route.
- 1.8. The funding for the feasibility study, options appraisal and concept design has come from Transport Scotland through the Sustrans administered Places for Everyone programme (PFE) which is a challenge fund that requires designs to adhere to strict design parameters in order for them to be considered by the PFE funding application assessment panels.
- 1.9. If members approve the progression of this project additional funding for the developed and technical design stages will be required. At present the best

route to access new funding for this project (and other active travel infrastructure projects) would be through the Transport Scotland PFE programme.

RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the Mid Argyll Kintyre and the Islands members:

- Welcome the progress made to date.
- Support the continuation of the project and the submission of a new PFE funding application for design stages 3-4 (Developed & Technical Design) to complete the design work required.

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2.0 INTRODUCTION

2.1. This report provides an update to Members on the progress made to date on the Lochgilphead to Crinan Canal Active Travel Route, highlights the next steps and seeks support for the project from Members.

3.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

3.1 It is recommended that the Mid Argyll Kintyre and the Islands members:

- Welcome the progress made to date.
- Support the continuation of the project and the submission of a new PFE funding application for design stages 3-4 (Developed & Technical Design) to complete the design work required.

4.0 DETAIL

4.1. The Council's Active Travel Team, 1.7 FTE (Full Time Equivalent employees), 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 project costs, including internal staff costs, have to be funded via successfully securing highly competitive external challenge funds.

4.2. In 2023/24 to date, the Active Travel Team secured £2.56M external funding for the development and delivery of a total of 22 projects across Argyll and Bute, including the Lochgilphead to Crinan Canal Active Travel Route.

4.3. Transport Scotland's Places for Everyone (PFE) programme is structured around 8 project stages with a competitive challenge fund, with the 32 local authorities, 7 regional transport partnerships, two national parks and numerous community groups across Scotland competing against each other to secure the funding each project requires.

4.4. A minimum of three new competitive funding submissions are required to complete a project using PFE funding, with competitive applications required, as a minimum, prior to Stage 0 (Strategic Definition), Stage 3 (Developed Design) and Stage 5 (Construction). The project stages are (0) Strategic Definition, (1)

Preparation and Brief, (2) Concept Design), (3) Developed Design, (4) Technical Design, (5) Construction, (6) Handover & Close Out and (7) In Use.

4.5. Lochgilphead Front Green to Crinan Canal Design Stage 0-2 (work completed to date)

- 4.5.1. An active travel route linking the Lochgilphead Front Green with the Crinan Canal was identified as a community aspiration through the 2016 Rethink the Link Charrette.
- 4.5.2. A preferred route was identified as part of a study carried out in 2020; however due to changes in design standards (Cycling by Design 2021), concerns raised by funders over estimated costs and changes to the funders requirements for active travel projects, the feasibility study and options appraisal was revisited in order to bring it in line with the new design principles and new design stage deliverable outputs required by the funders.
- 4.5.3. In 2022 the project was awarded PFE funding and Stantec were appointed as the consultant design team to progress the project through the new PFE 0-2 design stages and produce a concept design that adhered to the principles of Cycling by Design and that provided a route with as a high a level of service as was practicably possible.
- 4.5.4. The potential routes were split into several sections with each section having at least 2 route options to be considered prior to a preferred option being identified.
- 4.5.5. Through a series of workshops with key stakeholders, including Transport Scotland, Scottish Canals, Argyll and Bute Council and community organisations; the initial long list of options were scored against the Key Principles in Cycling by Design (Safety, Coherence, Directness, Comfort, Attractiveness and Adaptability) alongside the Deliverability and Maintainability of each option.
- 4.5.6. This initial appraisal recommended a preference for two sections of the route, namely (1) for a shared use path between the Front Green and the car park next to the Corran B&B and, (2) for the reinstatement of an old ramp from the A83 up to the canal that is currently overgrown. However no clear preference could be identified for the section required to link these two sections. The options for this missing section were:
 1. A causeway or bridge through the Corran Grazings.
 2. An improved shared walking and cycling route to the south of the A83/A816 junction with full acquisition of the Corran B&B.
 3. An improved shared walking and cycling route to the south of the A83/A816 junction with acquisition of some land that is within the Title of the Corran B&B.
 4. A new road bridge with shared footway.

- 4.5.7. These options were assessed using the Active Mode Appraisal Toolkit (AMAT); a tool published by the Department for Transport (England) for assessing the overall benefits and costs of proposed walking and cycling interventions
- 4.5.8. The AMAT appraisal identified that the preferred option for this section would be to improve the shared walking and cycling route south of the A83/A816 junction with acquisition of a short section of land that is within the Title of the Corran B&B. Land acquisition is required due to the width of the footway between the A83 and the Corran B&B currently being deemed too narrow to be considered as acceptable for a PFE project. Cycling by Design requires a shared use path with an anticipated level of use of less than 300 cyclist per hour (the lowest peak flow threshold used in the document) to have an absolute minimum width of 2.5 metres and the footway width at this section is under 2 metres for an extended length along a curve. Therefore in order to ensure the route provides as high a level of service as is practicable the width of the existing footway needs to be increased. Although the existing pedestrian bridge is also under 2.5m funders have agreed in principle that this structure will not be required to be replaced due to the short overall length and deliverability implications of replacing the bridge.
- 4.5.9. As the majority of the route runs adjacent to the A83 Trunk Road, Transport Scotland are the Roads Authority responsible for this asset. Transport Scotland have been involved in design workshops and although they cannot grant consent to the design until further detail is developed they are supportive in principle.
- 4.5.10. A short section of the new route looks to reinstate an old ramp onto the Crinan Canal. The Canal is a Scheduled Monument managed by Scottish Canals. Scottish Canals have been involved in design workshops and are supportive in principle. Scottish Canals have discussed the project with Historic Environment Scotland and if the project is to proceed it would require the formal consent from both these bodies.
- 4.5.11. The owners of the Corran B&B have been approached and kept informed of the project progress. They have raised concerns about how the project could negatively affect them and the operation of their business. If the project is to progress further investigatory technical survey work will be required to be carried out to help inform future discussion with the owner of the B&B.
- 4.5.12. A consultation on the concept design was held between 11th and 28th September 2023. The consultation received 99 responses, with 59% of respondents supportive of the preferred option. The comments that were unsupportive were largely due to a desire to see a route through the Corran Grazings which was estimated to cost over £5m. The Lochgilphead Community Council have confirmed that they fully support the current proposal.

4.6. **Design Stage 3-4**

- 4.6.1. A PFE funding application has been submitted to allow the project to progress onto design stages 3 and 4. This funding is a challenge fund open to all 32 local

authorities and although the project has been funded for design stages 0-2 there is no guarantee that the project will be awarded PFE funding for 2024/25 to deliver design stages 3-4. It is expected that 2024/25 funding awards will be confirmed in Quarter 1 2024/25.

- 4.6.2. If the project is awarded additional funding for 2024/25 further discussion with the owners of the Corran B&B will be a priority.
- 4.6.3. If the project is not awarded 2024/25 PFE funding, Members have the options of allocating Council funding or the project will require to be paused awaiting funding or terminated.

5.0 CONCLUSION

- 5.1. A concept design for a new active travel route between the Lochgilphead Front Green and the Crinan Canal has been produced for consultation. The results from the consultation show that 59% of respondents were supportive of the concept design.
- 5.2. External funding from PFE has been sought for 2024/25 to progress the concept design through the design stages 3-4. However, award of this funding is not guaranteed.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1. **Policy** Completion of this project will 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.
- 6.2. **Financial** The design and land purchase will be funded by external competitive funding applications. The Council has not contributed any funding to design costs. There is strong evidence that people who are more active, for example by walking or cycling, have improved physical and mental health and are less likely to require social care services in later life which could result in a future saving to the Council or HSCP.
- 6.3. **Legal** Continued input will be required from Legal Services to support any land purchase.
- 6.4. **HR** None.
- 6.5. **Fairer Scotland Duty:**

6.5.1 Equalities	<p>Completion of this project will provide enhanced opportunities for all between Lochgilphead and the Crinan Canal to travel more sustainably and actively by walking, wheeling and cycling.</p> <p>The route has been designed to be DDA compliant and will provide a safe and accessible route for those with mobility aids including wheelchairs and parents/guardians with a child’s pram or buggy.</p>
6.5.2 Socio-economic Duty	<p>The route will improve access to essential services, retail, leisure and employment opportunities for local residents, with studies demonstrating those who travelled actively had a higher monthly spend in local businesses than those who travel via motorised transport.</p> <p>The path will also offer opportunities for individuals to travel for leisure, again encouraging spend in local businesses connected by the route.</p>
6.5.3 Islands	<p>There are no adverse impacts.</p>
6.6. Climate Change	<p>Active Travel is the least carbon intensive mode of travel. Providing the opportunity for residents and visitors to consider an alternative to having to use a private car to travel between these communities will help lower Argyll and Bute’s carbon footprint.</p>
6.7. Risk	<p>There is a reputational risk to the Council if the project is not completed within a reasonable timeframe.</p>
6.8. Customer Services	<p>None.</p>
6.9. The Rights of the Child (UNCRC)	<p>Completion of this project will provide enhanced facilities designed to be suitable for use by an unaccompanied 12 year old.</p> <p>The route has been designed to be DDA compliant and will provide a safe and accessible route for children with disabilities</p>

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The complete Feasibility and Options Appraisal report can be accessed via the
[projects web page](#)