

SUBJECT: ACTIVE TRAVEL

MEETING: Cabinet

DATE: 27th May 2020

DIVISION/WARDS AFFECTED: ALL

1. PURPOSE:

- 1.1 To approve the consultation for the proposed Active Travel Integrated Network Maps and the Future Strategic Focus for Active Travel in accordance with the legal duty under the Active Travel (Wales) Act 2013.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 2.1 Cabinet approves the Active Travel Consultation Plan (Appendix A) and the Active Travel Strategic Focus Paper (Appendix B).

3. KEY ISSUES:

Background

- 3.1 The Active Travel (Wales) Act came in to effect in 2013 and requires local authorities to continuously improve facilities and routes for pedestrians and cyclists. There is a legal requirement to prepare Integrated Network Maps (INMs) and to update the Existing Route Maps (ERM's) which identify current and potential future routes for development. The act also requires new road schemes to consider the needs of pedestrians and cyclists at design stage.
- 3.2 Delivering Active Travel is an identified action in the corporate plan as part of maximising the potential of the natural and built environment and is a key priority for Monmouthshire County Council. Active Travel focuses on providing the correct infrastructure to improve walking and cycling to key destination points such as for education or workplace and improved facilities such as bicycle racks. Active Travel has an important part to play in the delivery of the Green Infrastructure Strategy helping to create Healthy Environments and encourage local communities to use, manage and enjoy their local areas for health, wellbeing and community cohesion. Active Travel is a key contributor to the Climate Emergency Strategy, and delivery of the Planning Policy Wales 10 wellbeing and place-making agenda.
- 3.3 In January 2020 the responsibility of the Active Travel agenda was moved within Monmouthshire, to the MonLife portfolio. Since then progress has been made including the appointment of an Active Travel Officer within MonLife and a £2.5m funding application

submitted to Welsh Government based on previous programmes and initial network maps. Through an annual bidding process to Welsh Government, the aim is to improve the current infrastructure across the 7 settlements included within the Integrated Network Maps (Abergavenny, Monmouth, Caldicot, Chepstow, Gilwern, Usk and Magor). Current Integrated Network Maps, relating to 2018 when they were last due for renewal, are situated here - www.monmouthshire.gov.uk/the-active-travel-act.

- 3.4 MonLife, and wider colleagues, are currently finalising the draft cycle strategy for Monmouthshire. This will be an important document that will support the Active Travel agenda in the coming months and years. In addition to this, insight will be captured to begin the process of developing an Active Travel Strategy for Monmouthshire. The Active Travel Strategy will shape strategic direction for Active Travel and provide clarity on a localised level for future funding opportunities. A deadline of April 2021 has been set by officers to begin working toward this essential piece of work. This will further build on the strategic focus paper (Appendix B) which begins to outline key priorities during the INM consultation period.
- 3.5 There are significant benefits in encouraging greater levels of Active Travel, both on an individual basis and for the environment. For the individual, including walking and cycling in daily routines is an excellent way to improve health and wellbeing. Increases in more people engaged in Active Travel will help reduce traffic levels, decrease air pollution, noise and climate change emissions. Active Travel has a prominent part to play across all service areas within Monmouthshire.
- 3.6 There are strong links between Active Travel, the Green Infrastructure Strategy, and the Rights of Way Improvement Plan promoting opportunities for sustainable access and recreation that encourage healthy lifestyles and improve well-being for communities, including creating and improving safe and pleasant multipurpose routes and well-connected, multifunctional greenspaces.

Welsh Government Active Travel Guidance

- 3.7 In February 2020 Welsh Government published new and extensive guidance for the direction and development of Active Travel, the guidance is open for public consultation until 19th June 2020. The guidance explains that the duties under the Act are placed on the local authority generally, rather than a specific part of the local authority. The guidance is therefore for all parts of the local authority to consider how they can support it. To ensure effective implementation of a local authority's duties under the Act, efficient and effective collaboration amongst service departments with clear understanding of its obligations will be required.
- 3.8 One element of the guidance describes Welsh Government expectations for the legal consultation and preparation of the new Integrated Network Maps. The maps will need to show plans for the development of the network over the next fifteen years. New maps and existing route maps (ERMs) were due to be submitted to Welsh Government in February 2021 but due to the Covid-19 outbreak the date has now been extended to September 2021. Whilst the extension is to be welcomed, it will still be challenging to complete the Welsh Government requirements on consultation. Notable challenges for the consultation include;

- Resource - The significant work involved within the INM consultation will be in addition to other strategic work being focused on. A bid has been submitted to Welsh Government to support this consultation.
- Coordination amongst internal services and external stakeholders.
- Anticipated social distancing measures due to current restrictions for Covid-19 which need to be considered.
- Public confidence in attending consultation events or any face to face sessions.

3.9 The consultation will focus on the coherence of the network rather than simply identifying individual routes. In preparing the maps a considerable amount of detail needs to be illustrated e.g. whether the cycle way is shared with traffic, if it's off road, if it's shared with walkers, bus stops, seating areas, bicycle facilities etc. Once there is agreement on the new maps, routes need to be audited, using experienced and qualified individuals. This is to understand if the route achieves a defined standard. Each route will be given a walking and cycling percentage score to highlight any areas to where improvements need to be made. The effectiveness of this overall process is an important factor in Welsh Ministers' determination of whether to approve an Active Travel Network Map.

3.10 The guidance also provides extensive technical information for highways and planning professionals. This will need to be considered when forming local transport policies and new highways projects. In conjunction with Planning Policy Wales, the guidance supports master planning and design of development sites by ensuring that all newly planned development is fully accessible by walking and cycling (this applies to private and public sector development). The connection to the new Local Development Plan is considered crucial for Active Travel, along with existing plans referenced in 3.2.

3.11 Monmouthshire County Council's Active Travel Officer is currently coordinating a response with views requested from Highways, Planning, MonLife services, Road Safety and Special Projects (specifically Transport). The response to Welsh Government will be finalised in line with the deadline provided of the 19th June 2020.

3.12 Preparation for the consultation exercise has been developed over the last 2 months. This has included, but not limited to;

- Consultation project plan with key tasks and critical path (Appendix A)
- A strategic focus document has been prepared for consultation. (Appendix B)
- Design of Stakeholder questionnaires (draft example provided in Appendix D for reference. Further individual questionnaires have been designed to cover staff, primary and secondary education).
- Preparation of Letters providing the context of the consultation (draft example provided in Appendix E for reference. Further individual letters have been designed to cover stakeholders and staff).

- Development of key Stakeholder lists for internal and external colleagues, inclusive of community groups, businesses and organisations such as Sustrans.
- Liaising with key officers and a small number of external individuals in the pre consultation phase testing document to help shape the final draft.

3.13 A key element of the strategic document (Appendix B) is a suggestion that routes to schools be regarded as a high priority. This area in particular was highlighted by a number of individuals during our engagement with internal and external stakeholders which established the set of high, medium and low priorities and work has already commenced to examine the interconnections with Active Travel.

4 EQUALITY AND FUTURE GENERATIONS EVALUATION (INCLUDES SOCIAL JUSTICE, SAFEGUARDING AND CORPORATE PARENTING):

4.1 An evaluation has been undertaken as part of the consultation work and is attached in the appendices. This evaluation will be updated toward the latter part of the consultation. There are currently no areas of concern and Active Travel contributes in a very positive way on each of the overarching strategic goals of the local authority.

5. OPTIONS APPRAISAL

Option	Benefits	Risks
Not to proceed with the consultation until social distancing lifted	No additional costs	<p>Consultation is the local authority's legal responsibility and dates have been set by Welsh Government. It is unclear on timescales for face to face consultation to resume.</p> <p>Lack of progress in delivery of the consultation could negatively impact on opportunities to secure external funding and breach of legal duty.</p>
To proceed with the consultation, working around current and future social distancing restrictions.	Information collected will be of enormous benefit to the next round of planning and bidding for future funding opportunities.	<p>Legal consultation will start in August until the end of October 2020, with a further opportunity to comment early in 2021.</p> <p>Social distancing may negatively impact this however it will be mitigated by a strong digital presence and face to face engagement in a controlled environment.</p>

6. EVALUATION CRITERIA

- 6.1 Progress will be monitored against the Active Travel Delivery Plan, MonLife Service Plan and Welsh Government Quarterly returns. Monitoring and evaluation arrangements will be in place throughout the consultation period.

7. REASONS:

- 7.1 The Active Travel Consultation Plan identifies actions to be taken across various services to fulfil the legal requirement. Views will be required from a number of services and external stakeholders. The Consultation Plan shows a critical path, ensuring that the Welsh Government deadline can be achieved and ensure that it will not adversely affect future funding or delay Active Travel contributions to the Council's Climate Emergency Plan.

8. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:

- 8.1 The preparation of the Active Travel Consultation Plan and the work detailed within has currently been undertaken within the budget of MonLife. It is anticipating that grant funding for external consultation will be awarded from Welsh Government. The INM consultation has been included within the core funding application which has still to be confirmed by Welsh Government but delayed due to Covid-19, this needs to be considered a risk. Monmouthshire is expecting to receive a total core allocation of £237k with £65k allocated to the INM consultation. External funding will be needed to complete the many requirements set within the legislation.
- 8.2 It remains unclear whether the Active Travel Officer post can be funded in the future from Welsh Government core Active Travel Funding or project development. Should grant conditions exclude then future funding of the post will need to be reconsidered by the local authority.

9. CONSULTEES:

Cabinet and SLT
Chief Operating Officer MonLife
Head of Placemaking, Housing, Highways and flooding
Head of Service – Strategic Projects
Policy Officer Equalities and Welsh Language
Sustrans
Enterprise DMT

- 9.1 A number of internal and external professional colleagues were consulted with during the development of the action plan and key documentation. This included two members of the community, who are actively involved in promoting cycling and walking in Monmouthshire, were consulted with. Comments were obtained from all parties and documentation amended accordingly.

10. BACKGROUND PAPERS:

Appendix A: Active Travel Consultation Action Plan
Appendix B: Active Travel Strategic Focus
Appendix C: Equality and Future Generations Evaluation
Appendix D: Design of Stakeholder Questionnaire
Appendix E: Preparation of Letter for Consultation

AUTHORS & CONTACT DETAILS:

Susan Hughes. Active Travel Officer, MonLife

E-mail: susanhughes@monmouthshire.gov.uk Tel: 07980 749778

Paul Sullivan. Youth, Sport and Active Travel Manager, MonLife

E-mail: paulsullivan@monmouthshire.gov.uk Tel: 07825 853882