

**SUBJECT: ACTIVE TRAVEL**

**MEETING: Cabinet**

**DATE: 3<sup>rd</sup> November 2021**

**DIVISION/WARDS AFFECTED: ALL**

**1. PURPOSE:**

- 1.1 To approve the proposed Active Travel Network Maps in accordance with the legal duty under the Active Travel (Wales) Act 2013.

**2. RECOMMENDATIONS:**

- 2.1 Cabinet approves the Active Travel Network Map Consultation Report, inclusive of proposed draft ATNM, (Appendix A) and supporting documents (Appendix B – D) to enable officers to submit in line with Welsh Government December 2021 deadline.

**3. KEY ISSUES:**

**Background**

- 3.1 The Active Travel (Wales) Act came into effect in 2013 and requires local authorities to continuously improve facilities and routes for pedestrians and cyclists. There is a legal requirement to prepare Active Travel Network Maps (ATNMs) which identifies existing and potential future routes for development. Since 2021, 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 trip destinations, such as education or employment. 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, Project Support Officer and a £2.6m funding application approved by Welsh Government for financial year 2021/22 – following a £1.4m investment in 2020/21. Through an annual bidding process to Welsh Government, the aim

is to improve the current infrastructure across the 7 settlements included within the Active Travel Network Maps (Abergavenny, Monmouth, Caldicot, Chepstow, Gilwern, Usk and Magor & Undy).

- 3.4 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 as identified in the Healthy Weight: Healthy Wales delivery plan. An increase 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 and our holistic approach has embedded this in many service areas.
- 3.5 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**

- 3.6 The recently updated Active Travel guidance explains that the duties under the Act are placed on the local authority generally, rather than a specific department within 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.
- 3.7 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.
- 3.8 One element of the guidance describes Welsh Government expectations for the legal consultation and preparation of the new Active Travel Network Maps. The maps will need to show plans for the development of the network over the next fifteen years. Active Travel Network Maps were due to be submitted to Welsh Government in February 2021 but due to the Covid-19 outbreak, the date has been extended to December 2021. Following Cabinet approval in May 2020, officers undertook a detailed consultation process, as agreed with the consultation plan proposed to members: including a three month engagement phase in 2020 and a 12 week statutory consultation phase in 2021. During this period, 3,819 individual responses were collated from children, young people, adults, businesses and key stakeholders right across Monmouthshire.
- 3.9 The consultation focused 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. The maps were hosted on a digital

system giving users an interactive experience to engage in the process. Each route has been independently audited at both phases of the consultation and amendments made to the network accordingly. The auditing is to understand if the route achieves a defined standard (existing route) or is a route to develop in the future (future route). The effectiveness of this overall process is an important factor in Welsh Ministers' determination of whether to approve the Active Travel Network Maps submitted.

3.10 Detailed information with regards to the process undertaken, and subsequent impact, can be seen in the following documents;

- Active Travel Network Map Consultation Report (Appendix A)
- Active Travel Network Map 2020 Engagement Phase Report. (Appendix B)
- Active Travel Network Map 2021 Statutory Consultation Commonplace Summary (Appendix C)
- Active Travel Network Map Consultation Infographic and Headline Data (Appendix D)

3.11 The data captured throughout the 2020 engagement phase and 2021 statutory consultation has shaped the development of the proposed network. Through annual funding applications, to the Welsh Government Active Travel Fund, focus will be placed on future routes that have been defined as high priority. These routes will align to Monmouthshire's agreed strategic focus for Active Travel 'developing routes up to 3.0 miles where the key destinations focus on travel to; schools, town centres, key employment sites, bus and train stations.' Following submission of the proposed network, and agreement by Welsh Government, the maps will be in place for a three year period until the statutory consultation process is undertaken again.

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

4.1 An evaluation was undertaken as part of the consultation work and agreed consultation plan by Cabinet in 2020 (Appendix E attached for reference). The consultation was delivered in a fully inclusive way throughout the whole process with an opportunity for engagement in a variety of ways (as detailed in Appendix A). 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 approve the proposed Active Travel Network Maps and supporting documentation.	None identified.	Local Authority unable to meet the deadline, as set by Welsh Government, and negatively impact on any future Active Travel related funding.
To approve the proposed Active Travel Network Maps and supporting documentation.	<p>The detailed process undertaken has provided invaluable data to inform changes to our network and form future funding applications.</p> <p>Approval of the ATNM and supporting documentation will enable officers to meet the Welsh Government deadline, and in turn deliver upon our statutory duty as a local authority.</p>	None identified.

## 6. EVALUATION CRITERIA

- 6.1 Progress monitored against the Active Travel Delivery Plan, MonLife Service Plan and Welsh Government Quarterly returns. Monitoring and evaluation arrangements established 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 It remains unclear whether the Active Travel Officer post, and associated posts, 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 both the 2020 engagement phase and 2021 statutory consultation. 370 new routes were identified during the 2020 engagement phase, only 35 highlighted in the 2021 legal consultation which is strong evidence of support for the proposed network.

## **10. BACKGROUND PAPERS:**

- ATNM Consultation Report (Appendix A)
- ATNM 2020 Engagement Phase Report. (Appendix B)
- ATNM 2021 Statutory Consultation Commonplace Summary (Appendix C)
- ATNM Consultation Infographic and Headline Data (Appendix D)
- EQIA Active Travel Consultation (Appendix E)

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