

Committee: **Community Services Scrutiny Committee**
Date of meeting: **15th November 2021**
Report Subject: **Active Travel and Safe Routes in Communities 2021/22**
Portfolio Holder: **Executive Member for Environment – Councillor Joanne Wilkins**
Report Submitted by: **Clive Rogers, Head of Community Services**

| Reporting Pathway | | | | | | | | |
|-----------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------|-----------------|-------------------------------|--------------------|---------------------|---------|----------------------|
| Directorate Management Team | Corporate Leadership Team | Portfolio Holder / Chair | Audit Committee | Democratic Services Committee | Scrutiny Committee | Executive Committee | Council | Other (please state) |
| 26/10/21 | 28/10/21 | 04.11.21 | | | 15/11/21 | | | |

1. Purpose of the Report

To provide an update to Scrutiny Committee on Active Travel and Safe Routes in the Community (SRiC) works for the Financial Year 2021/22.

2. Scope and Background

2.1 The Active Travel (Wales) Act was introduced in 2013 to help encourage healthy and sustainable travel throughout Wales and is further supported by the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act 2015. All local authorities in Wales must, by law, encourage walking and cycling as a preferred travel mode for purposeful journeys within short distances. Whilst cycling and walking as leisure activities are healthy in their own right, an active travel journey is one that is taken by a person(s) to get to a destination to carry out a specific task without using a car.

Examples of purposeful journeys are listed below:

- a parent or guardian walking to school to pick their child up
- a person cycling to their local train/bus station to commute to work
- a person walking or cycling to their local pharmacy to collect a prescription.
- A person walking to local shops for shopping activities

2.2 Funding

Since the Active Travel (Wales) Act was introduced, funding has been made available by Welsh Government for local authorities to invest in its Active Travel networks. For the Financial Year 2021/22, this Authority, Blaenau Gwent CBC, successfully applied for funding for the following schemes to enhance its existing and future Active Travel network:

- Ebbw Vale Town Centre Sustainable Link Feasibility study - to determine a suitable sustainable route between the railway station and town centre for pedestrians and cyclists.
- Glyncoed Footpath Upgrading Works – feasibility and design
- The Dingle, Brynmawr – Existing cycle path extension

- Heathfield, Tredegar – Feasibility / design of a suitable footway link from the near-by residential area (Georgetown, Peacehaven areas) to the Bedwellty active travel route.
- Minor Works - includes small scale schemes of localised improvements such as dropped kerbs & tactile paving, lighting, signage, path widening etc to upgrade existing routes to the required standard set by Active Travel guidance.
- Active Travel Network Mapping (ATNM), submission of final draft to Welsh Government and Community and Statutory Consultation

The total amount of funding received for this financial year is £429,000.

2.3 **Resources:**

- 2.3.1 Where possible, in-house officers are working on the delivery of each of the schemes, with officer time funded from the grant and added to the Authority's income generation.
- 2.3.2 The Authority's Engagement Team has helped develop the community and statutory consultation for the Active Travel Network Maps, which contain both existing and future routes. Much of this year's consultation has been undertaken online via CommonPlace, a website developed by Welsh Government to allow local residents and employees within the borough to have their say on existing and future Active Travel routes. A link to the CommonPlace website can be found in Section 7 of this report.
- 2.3.3 Network events were held earlier in the year to promote Active Travel and encourage local residents to use CommonPlace to have their input on existing and future Active Travel routes.
- 2.3.4 The charity, Sustrans, has been commissioned to undertake auditing of the existing ATNM routes and mapping of the potential future routes prior to statutory consultation, which is now live. Following the statutory consultation, which is currently ongoing and due to end on 21st November 2021, Sustrans will review comments received and produce a report and a map showing the existing and future proposed routes. These routes will be mapped on Data Map Wales and will be made accessible to the public.
- 2.3.5 Sustrans works closely with Transport for Wales (TfW), which is the administrative body for the Active Travel Fund programme.
- 2.3.6 See Section 7.1 of this report for a register of Active Travel schemes for this financial year and the associated funding and risk rating for delivery.

2.4 **Update on Safe Routes in Communities**

- 2.4.1 The purpose of the Safe Routes in Communities (SRiC) funding is to support capital schemes that contribute to the Welsh Government's objectives to improve accessibility, safety and encourage walking and cycling in communities (Active Travel). There is particular emphasis on

improving routes to and from schools. The aim is to change how people travel for purposeful journeys, resulting in greater social inclusion and improved community safety. Having more families walking or cycle around their neighbourhoods can also help community cohesion, bringing people together and having people look out for one and other (improving overall safety).

- 2.4.2 The Authority successfully applied for £25,000 of funding under the Safe Routes in the Communities grant scheme for the financial year 2021/22. The funding has been used to commission a feasibility study and design work on footpath improvements between Mafeking Terrace and Georgetown Primary School, Tredegar.
- 2.4.3 In the previous financial year, 2020/21, £19,479 was spent on improving the footpath along Ebenezer Street, Tredegar, providing a safe footpath to help connect Ebenezer Street to Glanhowy School, Tredegar.

3. **Options for Recommendation**

- 3.1 **Option A:** Members accept the report on Active Travel and Safe Routes in Communities
- 3.2 **Option B:** Members accept the report on Active Travel and Safe Routes in Communities and provide suggestions for future Active Travel and SRiC schemes.

4. **Evidence of how this topic supports the achievement of the Corporate Plan / Statutory Responsibilities / Blaenau Gwent Wellbeing Plan**

Both Active Travel and Safe Routes in Communities aim to encourage people to walk and cycle for purposeful journeys, which in turn benefits their health, as they become more active; and the environment, as there is less reliance on private car journeys.

Active Travel is directly linked to the Blaenau Gwent Well-Being Plan which aims to improve the wellbeing of future generations. In addition, using active travel to replace car journeys will help to reduce the amount of carbon emissions and support the Authority's Decarbonisation Plan to become carbon neutral by 2030.

5. **Implications Against Each Option**

5.1 ***Impact on Budget (short and long term impact)***

All works identified will be funded by Active Travel.

5.2 ***Risk including Mitigating Actions***

There is risk that of some of the schemes will be undeliverable within the financial year due to land ownership and resource availability under the Active Travel Programme for 21/22. If schemes are not delivered, then there is risk that the funding for the financial year will be lost.

The following risks have been identified:

5.2.1 Ebbw Vale Town Centre Sustainable Link

The Authority's framework consultant, Capita, recently advised that it cannot undertake the WelTAG Stage 2 report for the Ebbw Vale Town Centre Sustainable Link due to resource availability. This potentially puts the programme at risk as we will now need to procure the report rather than go directly to Capita. We will continue to seek other avenues of delivering the WelTAG Stage 2 report.

5.2.2 The Dingle, Brynmawr

In order to progress this scheme, Welsh Government needs to acquire the lorry yard located on Intermediate Road, Brynmawr under the HoV road scheme. We have been advised that it is unlikely the land will be acquired this financial year and therefore, any progression with this scheme will be delayed until at least 2022/23.

5.2.3 Heathfield, Tredegar

Outline proposals to provide a safe Active Travel route along Heathfield bridge (near Pochin Crescent), Tredegar, have shown there is a possible land dispute that needs to be resolved prior to delivery of a suitable scheme. Due to the very tight timescales it is going to be difficult to undertake a design this financial year due to uncertainty over land ownership.

5.2.4 Mitigation Measures

One of the mitigating actions is to consider using the funding to improve other areas that require active travel improvements where land ownership and resource are not issues. We are currently looking at ways of improving other routes within Blaenau Gwent to enable us to spend the funding allocated for The Dingle, Brynmawr. Options are currently being discussed with Sustrans and will be subject to approval from TfW.

5.3 Legal

Legal has not been consulted for this report.

5.4 Human Resources

In order to deliver the Active Travel schemes, in-house resources and external consultants are required.

In-house resources include:

- Engineers to develop feasibility and engineering solutions and oversee site works for minor works (highways, structures, civil engineering).
- Assistance to lead on land acquisition of private land.
- Community Engagement Officer to prepare engagement material, capture consultation data and report on what locals have said about Active Travel in their area.

- Active Travel Officer to manage projects, project governance, liaise with TfW and Sustrans and ensure all financial claims and future bids are in place.

External resources include:

- Sustrans
- Consultants where required

6. ***Performance Information and Data***

N/A

6.1 ***Expected outcome for the public***

That existing Active Travel routes will be improved to meet current standards per current Active Travel guidance and future routes will be finalised through the consultation process so that works to plan and implement these routes can start.

6.3 ***Involvement (consultation, engagement, participation)***

During this financial year we have carried out consultation with Transport for Wales (TfW) and Sustrans for guidance on how to deliver the schemes. We have carried out community consultation through CommonPlace to gauge what the local community would like to see be improved and implemented in terms of existing and future routes, and also determine what barriers the local community considers there are to Active Travel (condition of pavements, traffic speeds) to see if these could be removed or mitigated to help improve people's perception of walking and cycling for purposeful journeys.

6.4 ***Thinking for the Long term (forward planning)***

Consultation with the public for future routes.

6.5 ***Preventative focus***

N/A

6.6 ***Collaboration / partnership working***

Collaboration with Sustrans (Sustainable Transport consultants), who advise TfW and assist a number of neighbouring authorities.

6.7 ***Integration (across service areas)***

Active Travel is integrated across Infrastructure Services and Community Engagement.

6.8 ***Decarbonisation and Reducing Carbon Emissions***

Active Travel sets out to encourage walking and cycling for purposeful journeys, thereby reducing reliance on car journeys.

6.9a ***Socio Economic Duty Impact Assessment***

N/A

6.9b. **Equality Impact Assessment**
N/A

7. **Monitoring Arrangements**

7.1 Under Active Travel, there are quarterly reviews with TfW.

Background Documents /Electronic Links

Please see table below which shows a register of the Active Travel schemes for 2021/22.

| Active Travel Fund | | | | |
|---------------------------|---|------------|---|--|
| | Description | Value £ | Delivery mechanism | Progress RAG |
| 1 | Minor Works – small scale schemes of localised improvements such as drop kerbs, lighting, signage, path widening etc | 80,000 | In house | Ongoing |
| 2 | Heathfield bridge improvements – Feasibility & Design | 100,000 | In house – feasibility and design | Land Ownership Issues (internal), design resources |
| 3 | Dingle Brynmawr (NCN 46)- Wider active travel enhancements links to Brynmawr Comprehensive school /intermediate road. (This is part of the land acquisition by Welsh Government under the HOV road scheme). | 64,000 | In house | Land Ownership Issues - WG |
| 4 | Active Travel Network Map and Commonplace – Public engagement / consultation | 10,000 | BG engagement Team / Sustrans (mapping) | |
| 5 | Ebbw Vale Town Centre / Station Square Link – Feasibility – WELTAG business case and options appraisal (Framework consultant is unable to undertake these works this year). | 110,000 | External Consultants | Resource Availability |
| 6 | Glyncoed Ebbw Vale – Upgrading Existing Footpath | 35,000 | In-house feasibility and design | |
| 7 | Upgrading Existing Routes (dropped kerbs) | 30,000 | In-house - Installation | |

Commonplace link:

<https://blaenaugwentAT.commonplace.is/>