

**FALKIRK COUNCIL**

**Subject: SMARTER CHOICES, SMARTER PLACES**  
**Meeting: ENVIRONMENT & HERITAGE COMMITTEE**  
**Date: 15 APRIL 2008**  
**Author: DIRECTOR OF DEVELOPMENT SERVICES**

**1. BACKGROUND**

- 1.1 The Scottish Government announced the launch of its *Smarter Choices, Smarter Places* initiative on 17 March 2008. The vision for this project is to make Scottish communities more sustainable places through increased sustainable travel choices, significant reductions in transport related CO<sub>2</sub> emissions and air quality pollutants, reduced levels of congestion, increased levels of physical activity, increased awareness of healthy ways of living, and community pride in their neighbourhoods. A similar project, Sustainable Travel Towns, has been running in England for the last four years. The results from the demonstration areas within these towns to date are shown in Appendix 2.
- 1.2 The selection process for this project is a two stage competition. Stage 1 seeks initial outline bids from local authorities by 30 April 2008. Successful shortlisted authorities will be informed by 14 May and will then be invited to provide a more in depth and detailed bid at Stage 2 by 9 July.

**2. FUNDING**

- 2.1 The Scottish Government will make up to £4 million resource available for each year for the whole project, with around £1.5 – 2 million per annum capital in years 2 and 3 for cycling and walking infrastructure. This funding will be shared across the whole project and is dependent on how many local authorities come forward with proposals and the nature of the proposals.
- 2.2 Match funding will be required for years 2 and 3 of the project (2009/10 and 2010/11). Match funding may be capital or “resource” (which includes revenue). The Scottish Government intends to run the project for five years in order to plan, implement, monitor and evaluate schemes properly. However, at this point the Government cannot guarantee funding beyond 2010/11.

**3. PROJECT CRITERIA**

At Stage 1 of the project there are five criteria against which bids will be assessed:

- 3.1 Criterion 1: The proposal must relate to a self contained town, city or group of villages with a population between 8,000 and 100,000.
- 3.2 Criterion 2: The local authority must be able to demonstrate political commitment at the highest level.

- 3.3 Criterion 3: The local authority must be able to demonstrate the appropriateness and the potential effectiveness of the proposed package of measures in relation to the aim of the project.
- 3.4 Criterion 4: The local authority must be able to demonstrate that the commitment of local partners has been secured.
- 3.5 Criterion 5: The local authority must be able to explain how it will engage with the wider local community when designing and taking the package of measures forward.
- 3.6 Other items which should be covered in the Stage 1 bid are:
  - (a) commitment to match funding of the project beyond year 1; and
  - (b) a range of indicative costs.

## **4. THE AREA**

- 4.1 Development Services have investigated potential communities for the *Smarter Choices, Smarter Places* project in the context of the Government's criteria. Larbert and Stenhousemuir have been identified as a suitable area for a bid for the following reasons.
- 4.2 Larbert and Stenhousemuir households have a very high level of second and third car ownership compared with the Falkirk Council area average, giving potential for modal shift to sustainable transport modes.
- 4.3 Measures taken now, and in the immediate future to improve access and information to public transport links, will provide opportunities for cycling and walking, and promote a more active lifestyle which will reduce the need for a second or third car.
- 4.4 Stenhousemuir and Larbert have good internal sustainable transport links and options, such as the circular bus route (with recently improved frequencies) and Larbert railway station with its new car parks. They are also geographically discrete within the Falkirk Council area, and have a large number of employers located in the area. A high percentage of residents of Larbert and Stenhousemuir work in the area.
- 4.5 There is a large amount of new development in this area including the new acute hospital, the regeneration of Stenhousemuir town centre and 3,000 new houses at Kinnaird Village. These developments offer good opportunities to positively influence travel behaviour at an early stage. There are also a number of existing businesses that can be targeted through travel planning and a number of schools that are already engaged in the travel plan process. All these organisations, as well as Sustrans, SEStran, First Bus, First ScotRail and CSFT are potential partners and consultees. The Access Forum, the relevant Area Forum and the Health Board would be consulted.

## **5. POTENTIAL PROJECTS**

- 5.1 In order to ensure the most effective spend of any funding for the Smarter Choices Smarter Places initiative, it is essential that we identify, at the outset, those who would be most receptive to the aims and objectives and likely to change their travel behaviour. To this end, it is proposed that a baseline survey be carried out as the initial stage of the project, with a range of possible actions arising from the data collected.

5.2 An illustrative list of potential projects is shown in Appendix 1.

## **6. POLICY, LEGAL AND PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS**

6.1 This initiative supports the Council's sustainable policies within the Falkirk Strategic Community Plan, Local Transport Strategy and Sustainable Falkirk Action Plan.

6.2 There are no significant legal implications. Existing staff, aided by contractors, can carry out the duties of what will be a labour intensive project.

## **7. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

7.1 Falkirk Council, if successful would receive 100% funding in 2008/09, then 50% funding for 2009/10, 2010/11 (and 2011/12, if continued for a fourth year). The 50% funding could be matched from various budgets including capital, revenue, developer contributions (some already received) and staff time 'in kind'. Stage 2 of the preparation process will confirm the estimated cost of the project.

## **8. RECOMMENDATIONS**

8.1 It is recommended that Committee:

- notes the advantages and implications of the *Smarter Choices, Smarter Places* project;
- refers this report to the Council with a recommendation that the Director of Development Services, in consultation with the Director of Finance, submits a Stage 1 bid for the Larbert and Stenhousemuir area to the Scottish Government for the *Smarter Choices, Smarter Places* project; and
- notes that the outcome will be reported to Members.

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**DIRECTOR OF DEVELOPMENT SERVICES**

Date: 9<sup>th</sup> April 2008  
Contact Name: Julie Cole

### **LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS**

Letter of 17 March 2008 from the Scottish Government and COSLA.

Anyone wishing to inspect these papers should contact Julie Cole on 01324 504820.

## **APPENDIX 1 – POTENTIAL PROJECTS**

The following are a potential list of projects which could be undertaken as part of the Smarter Choices, Smarter Places initiative:

- Baseline survey – to be carried out in phases: Phase 1 would use telephone interviews to identify households where more in depth surveying can be carried out on those most likely to engage with the aims of the project. Phase 2 would involve “doorstep interview” with these households, identifying barriers to the uptake of more sustainable travel modes. Phase 3 will provide a personalised transport planning service which will seek to resolve these issues and enable the uptake of more sustainable travel modes. It is proposed that this be carried out by an external contractor, working on a fixed-term contract for specific objectives within the project.
- Infrastructure improvements (key links) – a potential use of the data collected through the baseline survey is in the development of the sustainable transport network, especially to promote walking and cycling. Postcode mapping could be used in order to identify potential weak points in the network where a small capital spend could yield larger benefits.
- Personal Travel Planning - As above, this will be carried out with the intention of resolving identified barriers to sustainable transport issues, and will be tailored to individual circumstances – solutions may include any number or combination of the initiatives outlined below.
- Travel diaries – in order to monitor the effectiveness of the various projects, it is proposed that volunteers taking part in the scheme maintain Travel Diaries, in order to provide an effective monitoring of the project through its term, and providing a data source of travel pattern change throughout the project’s lifetime.
- Mass marketing and promotional campaign – In tandem with, and as a precursor of, the baseline surveys proposed above, a campaign of targeted promotion of sustainable transport options available for the target area is proposed. This should highlight the benefits of modal shift to more sustainable modes under the headings of Environmental, Financial and Health Benefits.
- Public transport promotions / ticketing offers /Sustainable transport loyalty card scheme – a move to more sustainable travel modes will be critical to the success and sustainability of the scheme aims and objectives. Public transport will play a central role, and initiatives to incentivise uptake will also be key to introducing new users, and moving residents from cars.
- Business Travel Plan Network – this could bring together local businesses involved in Travel Planning and allow them to share best practice within the group. It could also give them access to shared benefits, such as bike to work schemes and public transport discounts that may not be available otherwise.

- Car sharing promotion (Tripshare Falkirk) – a system for promoting and enabling car sharing already exists, and would benefit from an intensive, focused, localised promotion
- Adult/family cycle training and guided rides – providing support for families who wish to reduce their car use, get fitter and healthier, but have concerns over safety
- Health walks – building on links to the “Braveheart” programme
- Walk to School projects (ongoing) – there is already a successful programme of events promoting walking to school; walk to school week and “WOW” (Walking on Wednesdays) are well supported and popular. It is proposed to develop this further and promote the programme more to increase levels of uptake.
- Partnership with Recyke a Bike / Dr Bike sessions – Recyke a Bike are a Community Enterprise, based in Falkirk. They recover bikes from the waste streams of Falkirk, Clackmannanshire and Stirling, and return these bikes to use through selling them back to communities. Trials of the Dr Bike service carried out for staff at Municipal Buildings and Abbotsford House during Bike Week 2007 met with some success, with advice and bike checks being carried out within the workplace. Recyke a Bike would like to become involved in building links with communities to offer cheap bike purchase through community events, building levels of bike ownership, developing a “Cycling Community” in a target area
- Cycle storage for community facilities – there is an identified need to improve cycle storage facilities at Council Buildings, with provision of secure cycle storage for public use. The opportunity should be taken, through this application, to improve storage at for example, libraries, community centres, sports centres and town centres.
- Bike hire scheme – A number of different schemes providing bicycles for hire exist, from Inverness providing bikes donated from Police Recovery schemes in order to encourage cycling to and from rail stations, to a larger scale scheme such as the Velib system in Paris. For the proposed area, a smaller scale scheme could be feasible using the Transport hub of Larbert Station as a focus.
- Welcome packs for new developments / residents – work with housing developers and estate agents to distribute packs containing items that will encourage new residents to use alternatives to the car e.g. copies of the Larbert / Stenhousemuir Community Guide, Green Travel Map, discounted bus tokens, bus and train timetables etc.

**APPENDIX 2 – RESULTS FROM DEMONSTRATION AREAS WITHIN THE  
SUSTAINABLE TRAVEL TOWNS PROJECT IN ENGLAND**

Town	Research Data	Mode	Impact since Sep – Nov 04
Darlington	Nov – Dec 05	Public transport trips	+14%
Peterborough	Feb – Apr 06	Public transport trips	+13%
Worcester	Mar – Apr 06	Public transport trips	+22%
Darlington	Sep – Nov 06	Walking trips	+29%
Peterborough	Feb – Apr 06	Walking trips	+21%
Worcester	Mar – Apr 06	Walking trips	+17%
Darlington	Sep – Nov 06	Cycling trips	+79%
Peterborough	Feb – Apr 06	Cycling trips	+25%
Worcester	Mar – Apr 06	Cycling trips	+36%
Darlington	Sep – Nov 06	Car trips	-11%
Peterborough	Feb – Apr 06	Car trips	-13%
Worcester	Mar – Apr 06	Car trips	-12%

Source: Department of Transport