

## **Report to Partnership Meeting 7 February 2014**

### **RESEARCH AND STRATEGY DELIVERY**

#### **Sustrans Community Links Funding**

##### **Purpose of Report**

To update Members on the HITRANS partnership with Sustrans Scotland, in particular the upcoming deadline for the Community Links Programme 2014/15 and 2015/16.

##### **Sustrans Community Links Programme**

At the Partnership meeting in November 2013 Members were updated on the additional £14million funding available through the Community Links Programme over the next two years.

The guidance notes and criteria for the programme were circulated to all local authorities on 27<sup>th</sup> Nov 2014, with Sustrans' online application becoming live on 13<sup>th</sup> January 2015. The deadline for all bids to the current round is 14<sup>th</sup> February 2015 at 1pm.

With such a tight timescale to compile applications, the HITRANS Active Travel Officer has been liaising directly with the Community Links team at Sustrans and the appropriate staff within each local authority to encourage and support a wide range of applications. The Active Travel Audits have been a valuable asset in prioritising potential projects and identifying community demand for improvements. The meetings with local authorities indicate that there is a real drive to progress either a series of co-ordinated interventions in a particular town/s or develop one or more significant showcase projects which have previously been discounted because of levels of funding required.

For the first time the Community Links applications can be spread over two financial years to facilitate both the delivery of 'shovel ready' projects, while also providing suitable timescales for larger projects to progress feasibility or detailed designs during the first year, with construction during the second.

The HITRANS / SUSTRANS partnership funding would be classed as double counting if used to support Council's in their bids for Community Links funding. Provision is proposed to be made within the 2014/15 Business Plan for a budget of £25,000 from HITRANS core budget to support Council applications to Community Links.

##### **HITRANS Applications**

A meeting between HIE, Highland Council and HITRANS took place on the 9<sup>th</sup> January to discuss options for submitting a Community Links application for a Northern Bus/Foot/Cycle Crossing between the Inverness campus site and the Inverness Retail and Business Park, and also a southern bridge over the railway linking into the residential areas and local community to the east of the site.

Everyone in attendance at the meeting highlighted the benefits of the project. As applications can only be submitted by local authorities and Regional Transport Partnerships, it was decided that HITRANS would submit the application in partnership with HIE, allowing Highland Council to focus on other bids from their area. If successful this could result in an estimated £2.5 Million investment in active travel infrastructure.

HITRANS are also working with Sustrans to consider opportunities for developing sections of the National Cycle Network at Corran through the Community Links programme.

## Recommendation

1. Members are asked to note the report. Further progress reports will be brought to future Partnership Meetings.

| Risk         | Impact | Comment  |
|--------------|--------|--|
| RTS delivery | √      | This work supports RTS objectives and the monitoring of their implementation.  |
| Policy       | √      | This work supports the development of our Active Travel Policies H27a to H27d  |
| Financial    | -      | Budget provision is proposed within the 2014/15 Research and Strategy Delivery Programme as match funding to support Council CL bids while the Inverness Campus project is expected to be revenue neutral. |
| Equality     | √      | HITRANS support for Active Travel helps eliminate the barriers to travel for all and removes a number of physical accessibility barriers.  |

**Report by:** Fiona McNally  
**Designation:** Active Travel Officer  
**Date:** 29<sup>th</sup> January 2014