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Dear Mr Carmichael,

**HITRANS RESPONSE TO THE CYCLING ACTION PLAN FOR SCOTLAND
RE-FRESH CONSULTATION**

The Highlands and Islands Transport Partnership (HITRANS) welcome the opportunity to contribute to the Cycling Action Plan for Scotland Re-fresh Exercise as per your correspondence dated 21 December 2012.

HITRANS full submission is attached to this covering letter but below is a summary of the key elements which it addresses;

- HITRANS recognises the need for strong political leadership and increased funding if the target of 10% by 2020 is to be achieved.
- With the support of its partner Local Authorities and increased ring-fenced funding, there is an opportunity for HITRANS to play a lead role in increasing levels of cycling by implementing its Active Travel Audit Action Plans and working with Transport Scotland, Sustrans, Cycling Scotland, member Local Authorities and other Community Planning Partners.
- HITRANS can demonstrate a recent track record of progressive policy implementation and investment in Cycling by working with its member Local Authorities and other partners to secure significant external funding.
- Given the current high levels of cycling within a number of the settlements within the HITRANS area, including Inverness and Elgin, there is an opportunity for the 10% target to be realistically achieved in these towns within the 2020 timeframe.

Yours Sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads 'Ranald Robertson'.

Ranald Robertson
Partnership Director

HITRANS RESPONSE TO THE CYCLING ACTION PLAN FOR SCOTLAND: RE-FRESH CONSULTATION

The Highlands and Islands Transport Partnership (HITRANS) welcome the opportunity to contribute to the Cycling Action Plan for Scotland Re-fresh Exercise.

The promotion and development of cycling and active travel forms a core element of the HITRANS Regional Transport Strategy in which the following themes are identified as key objectives.

- Promote the long-term development of active travel across the region.
- Enable progress in active travel to be monitored across HITRANS.
- Promote partnership working in promotion of active travel.
- Achieve consistency of standards in infrastructure to support active travel.

HITRANS Active Travel Audits

A key initiative HITRANS has undertaken in order to achieve these objectives is to fund a series of Active Travel Audits for all of its key regional settlements. A link to each of the Active Travel Audits can be found on the HITRANS website from the following link. http://www.hitrans.org.uk/Corporate/Research/Active_Travel

In the development of these Active Travel Audits, HITRANS has placed an emphasis on increasing utility cycling for work and education. Without achieving modal shift in this area the target of 10% of all journeys by bike cannot be achieved.

Each Audit provides an Active Travel Prioritised Action Plan and an Active Travel Masterplan for each settlement. This identifies areas and potential interventions where there is the greatest potential to achieve modal shift or where there is the greatest need for infrastructure for pedestrians and cyclists. The Masterplan identifies a core network for pedestrians and cyclists that provides direct, convenient, and safe links between journey origins and journey attractors.

The Audits have already been successfully used to support investment programmes and provide an invaluable evidence base when applying for external sources of funding. Perhaps most critical of all, member Local Authorities have embedded the Audits within the planning process by adopting them in their Local Transport Strategies and Local Development Plans. This will help ensure that new development caters for walking and cycling and investment is secured for the improving the existing cycling network.

A spreadsheet summarising all the prioritised actions emanating from each of the Active Travel Audits has recently been developed. It is the intention of HITRANS to use this in conjunction with its partner Local Authorities as a means of both monitoring progress of each Audits implementation but also to prioritise future investment.

Achieving the Cycling Action Plan for Scotland's Vision

HITRANS notes the Scottish Governments ambitious target of 10% of all journeys in Scotland to be made by bike. Currently some of the highest levels of cycling to be found in Scotland are in settlements within the HITRANS area including Inverness (5%), Elgin (6%) and Nairn (6%). It is in locations like this that with the right investment and promotion the target of 10% can realistically be achieved and the Active Travel Audit Action Plans for these settlements provide a blueprint for how this target may be realised.

HITRANS is aware of the need to ensure that the impact of available resources is maximised. In this regard, both HITRANS and its constituent Local Authorities can highlight a recent track record of securing significant funding from external resources.

- Moray – Urban Freedom project (£1.2 million including £500,00 ERDF and £200,000 Sustrans)
- Highland - Green and Active Travel ERDF (£560K including £229,000 ERDF and 50,000 Sustrans)
- Highland - Inverness Campus UHI (A9 Overbridge. As part of the new UHI Campus at Inverness a multi-million ‘green’ bridge is being constructed over the A9 trunk road at a cost of nearly £1million to help improve access for students and staff walking or cycling between the new site and Inverness city centre)
- Orkney Islands – ‘Kickstart Kirkwall’ (£1million investment secured through the Smarter Choices Smarter Places project)
- Argyll & Bute – Significant investment in cycling improvements as part of the wider CHORD initiative which was also supported by funding from HITRANS.

CAPS Re-fresh Consultation Questions

1. What themes should the refresh include, with what priorities?

The seventeen Action areas identified within the original Cycling Action Plan for Scotland cover the main actions and outcomes which need addressed. However, it is clear that a select few of these need to be prioritised if real progress is to be made towards the 2020 target.

These include;

- In addition to this Re-fresh, the implementation of the other two key recommendations identified in Cycling Scotland's CAPS Progress Report 2012. Namely, a significant increase in funding, which all the evidence indicates is required to deliver substantive modal shift; and leadership provided by the Transport Minister and senior Members and officials within each Local Authority and Regional Transport Partnership. These recommendations then need come together in a fully costed delivery plan in which those responsible for taking a lead are clearly identified.

Current cycling levels in many towns within the Highlands and Islands are well above the national average and would provide an opportunity with suitable investment for the 10% target to be realistically achieved. HITRANS, the Regional Transport Partnership has the experience and support from its constituent Local Authorities to provide this leadership and suitable democratic accountability within the Highland and Islands area.

- A clear focus on areas where the most significant return for investment can be made. HITRANS welcomes the recent Government announcement of £3.9 million into developing the National Cycle Network Route No. 78 between Inverness and Campbeltown. This network plays an important role in the promotion of cycling at both a local and national level. However, the Active Travel Audits commissioned by HITRANS focus on improving journeys where there is an opportunity for most people to benefit (i.e on journeys of under 5 miles). This means that investment needs to be targeted towards town centres and key arterial routes in order to encourage as many adults and children as possible to cycle to their place of work or education. Where journeys are longer then the focus should be on facilitating the use of cycling as an element of that trip. I.e through secure cycle parking at bus and rail interchanges and the carriage of bikes on buses and trains.
- The full engagement of developers, planners, transport planners and engineers with the land use planning process in order to ensure cycle-friendly development. A significant amount of new development will be progressed between now and 2020 and there is an opportunity to ensure that good planning will help encourage more people to cycle both within new development but also through the reallocation of roadspace and improved facilities in existing population centres. This will require both the refresh and enforcement of travel plans. It will also require further training and support of all those involved in the planning process to initiate a sea change in the application of planning policy. The majority of Development Plans and Transport Strategies have shifted in this direction but their application still often results in development orientated towards car use rather than walking and cycling.

2. What interventions are missing from the set of actions in the current CAPS, and what updates might be made to this set?

The seventeen actions in the original Cycling Action Plan for Scotland identify the majority of the areas that need attention. However, as per the response to Question 1, there needs to be a much greater focus placed on those interventions which will provide the most significant return and in this regard HITRANS would wish to see a concentration of effort on utility cycling for work and education.

In terms of the individual CAPS Actions, a number require attention or refocusing;

Action 6: HITRANS notes the efforts being made to encourage private sector employers to become Cycle Friendly Employers but to date only 118 workplaces have fully engaged in the initiative. Encouraging significantly larger volumes of employers is required.

Action 8: As per response to Question 1 - almost all planning policy, access legislation and design guidance provide an excellent framework for delivering cycle friendly development. However, the evidence is that this is still applied too infrequently and the traditional transport hierarchy prevails. The Re-fresh urgently needs to tackle this disconnect between policy and practice. There is also a need to properly embed sustainable transport within all policy areas especially Health and Education.

Action 9: The installation of secure cycle parking at transport interchanges is a relatively cheap and simple way of encouraging more people to cycle. However, more can be done to encourage bus and rail operators to provide space for bikes and make it easier for passengers to take their bikes with them.

Action 14; A relaxation of the statutory consultation required for some new traffic management measures would help encourage Local Authorities to implement more cycle friendly schemes.

3. Who should play roles in delivering these interventions?

A broad spectrum of public and private sector bodies need to play their role in delivering these interventions. However, it is clear that the Scottish Government needs to lead by example in achieving its ambitious target of 10% by 2020. Primarily, this needs to be in the form of increased ring fenced funding for Local Authorities / Regional Transport Partnerships but also support provided through its key agencies in Transport Scotland and Cycling Scotland. It is also recognised that each Local Authority needs to sign up either through Single Outcome Agreements and or the adoption of local cycling plans / strategies.

At a regional level, HITRANS and its member Local Authorities can demonstrate a track record in this area through the development of Active Travel Audits and investment in their delivery. Discussions have recently been held with our partner Local Authorities and it was agreed that HITRANS with the support of ring-fenced funding could take a lead role in implementing the measures identified in the Active Travel Audit Action Plans by working in partnership with Transport Scotland, Sustrans, Cycling Scotland, member Local Authorities and other Community Planning Partners.

4. What resourcing (and from what sources) would be required to deliver these interventions and make steady progress towards the CAPS vision

It is clear from the evidence provided in the Cycling Action Plan for Scotland Progress Report that investment in cycling and active travel will have to significantly increase for the 10% target to be realised.

The Scottish Government needs to lead by example by increasing the share of the total transport budget allocated to cycling but HITRANS recognises the need for funding to come from a range of public and private sources. As the Progress Report highlights, there is a need to involve other Government policy areas that benefit from cycling including Health and Education. HITRANS is well placed to play a key role in helping to coordinate and maximise investment in active travel at a regional level by exploiting alternative sources of funding provided suitable initial Government funding is made available.

Local communities and the private sector can also play a vital role in helping to deliver the interventions. While the implementation of hard infrastructure can only really be delivered either through the planning process or the responsible Roads Authority there is a need to engage the wider public in the process at every opportunity. This can take many forms. For example in the HITRANS area, recent initiatives delivered through public participation include a Cycle Café in Inverness and a new community group in the Black Isle which has secured Climate Challenge funding to promote cycling and active travel in the local area. Cycle shops, Mountain bike centres and numerous cycling events which are privately operated or funded all help to raise the profile and participation in cycling. Many of the most successful interventions are unfunded and consist of ongoing initiatives to promote cycling in the local area. Within the HITRANS region, the Highland Cycle Campaign is one body which plays a significant role in this regard.

Any investment needs to be sustainable and the increased pressure on the budgets of those bodies responsible for maintaining new cycling infrastructure must be recognised in any new implementation strategy for the Cycling Action Plan for Scotland.

5. What monitoring arrangements should be put in place, with what suggestions for appropriate milestones?

The 2011 census will help provide a new baseline from which the 2020 target will need to be put in context. However, this information alone does not provide the full picture and it is essential, as the Progress Report identifies, to ensure that when transport schemes are appraised for return of funding the full range of cycling benefits are realised.

The Action Plans within each of the HITRANS Active Travel Audits identify the specific interventions required to increase cycling levels within each settlement. HITRANS are currently engaging with member Local Authorities in order to monitor the progress which has been made towards implementation but this resource will also be used to determine priorities for any future active travel funding for which HITRANS is involved in administering.

Similarly at a national level any monitoring arrangements should be able to recognise those areas where interventions have had the most significant impact with future funding being used to focus on those settlements where modal shift has been achieved so that there are examples of success for other areas to aspire to.