

Case Study – Adventure Oban: Active Travel Maps in Schools

Adventure Oban is a community-led charity based in Oban, which aims to enable equal access to Oban's natural playground. Their Active Routes to Schools project aims to increase active travel in Oban, Lorne and the Isles through a focus on children and young people.

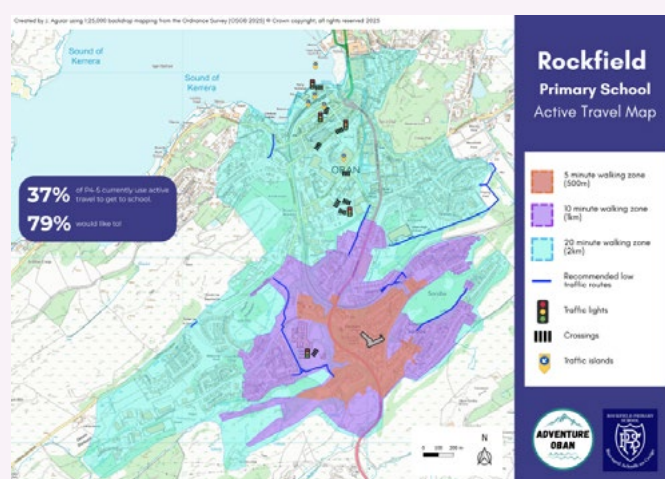


The project was born out of the Active Travel Plan for Oban, which Adventure Oban delivered in 2022 as part of the Sustaining Choices programme with Planning Aid Scotland, supported by the Argyll and Bute Council and Argyll and Bute Coast and Countryside Trust (ACT). Through conversations with hundreds of people in their community, and discussions with other organisations, they identified that 'safer routes to school' was a top priority for improving active travel in Oban. Their engagement showed that less than four children regularly cycle to high school and confidence was low amongst both young people and parents. In addition to this, Argyll and Bute had the lowest rate of active travel on the school commute of any mainland area.

In response to this, Adventure Oban started the 'Active Routes to Schools' project to map safe routes to schools and support behaviour change initiatives with schools. Through a range of sessions,



Adventure Oban staff have worked with over 300 pupils at 5 primary schools in and around Oban, to create the maps, identify the safe routes, distances and build the messaging into the leaflets. A range of age groups from P4 – P7 have taken part, depending on the school, and maps have been created for Rockfield, Park, Taynuilt, Lochnell and Dunbeg primary schools. Through these sessions, the pupils learnt about route planning, recognising barriers and enablers to active travel, and discussed the messaging around the benefits of active travel and how to keep safe.



FEEDBACK FROM E. ROSSITER, PRINCIPAL TEACHER AT PARK PRIMARY SCHOOL:

“Our children really enjoyed developing their mapping and measuring skills, and the process prompted lots of rich discussion about our local area. Seeing the surroundings of the school represented in a map helped them look at familiar streets, roads, paths and housing areas in a new way, particularly in terms of how everything is connected. This also led to many ideas about possible active travel routes to and from school.

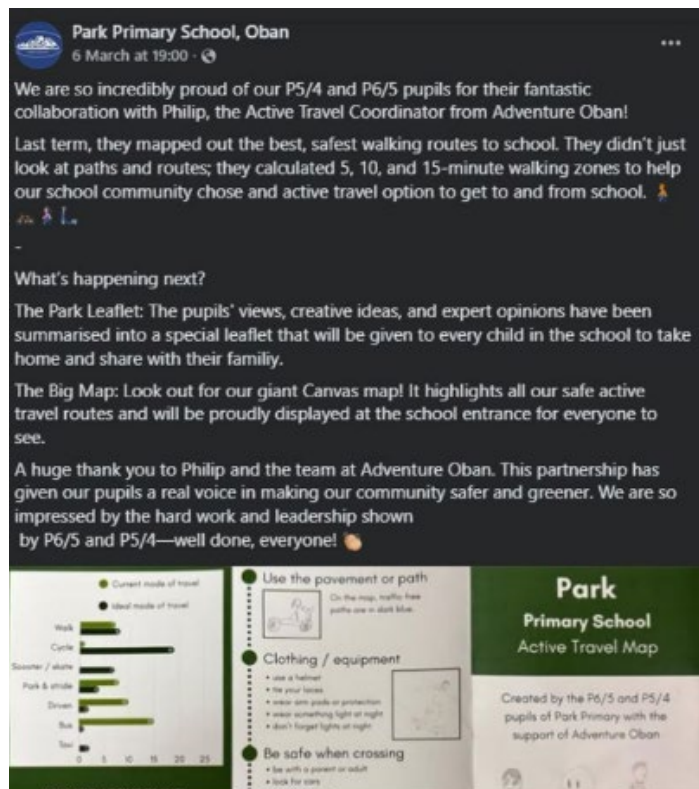
With the better weather approaching—and with the second phase of roof works bringing vehicle restrictions—it feels like a perfect time for families to consider more active travel options.

One child told us they had assumed walking to school would take much longer, but realised it would only take them about ten minutes. Moments like that have been great for building confidence and sparking motivation. We have, however, also heard from some parents about barriers they face. Several have mentioned the difficulty of crossing the main road over to Atlantis, which puts them off allowing their child to walk and leads them to choose the bus instead. The natural steepness of the area also makes some families less confident about children cycling to school.

In the future, it may be worth considering whether a lollipop person could support children crossing the main road—this could enable them to walk up through the forest path and then cross safely to meet their families at Atlantis Leisure after school. Many families have said they prefer to meet there, as there is more space for parking and nearby facilities the children can use before school.

Overall, our engagement with the Active Routes to Schools project has encouraged pupils to think more deeply about their local environment and their own travel choices and the impact they have. It has supported them in recognising that walking and wheeling are realistic options, and it has begun helpful conversations between the school, pupils and families about active travel opportunities and challenges.”

The active travel maps have been made into posters for the school gates and leaflets to be distributed to families. Rockfield Primary received 450 leaflets to be able to give one to each family and have a stock to distribute to new families joining the school community. Likewise, Park PS received 350 leaflets to distribute similarly, and the remaining schools had their leaflets printed and distributed in the final months of the Programme year.



Through Adventure Oban's engagement with pupils, they learnt that while 31% of pupils currently use active travel on the school commute, 76% would prefer to. This means that parents and guardians are the main decision makers in relation to the type of travel used on the school commute. Adventure Oban's active travel mapping project reached parents/caregivers, shared the benefits of active travel as well as safe routes, which should support them to choose active travel more often for their child.