

To: **Audit, Risk & Scrutiny Board**

On: **22 August 2022**

Report by: **Lead Officer**

Heading: **Linking the National Cycle Route 7 with Howwood Review**

1 Summary

1.1 At its meeting on 15 November 2021, members of the Audit, Risk and Scrutiny Board agreed to a request to include a review which would look into linking the National Cycle Route 7 to Howwood was included in the annual programme of activity for the Board for 2021/2022.

1.2 At its meeting on 24 January 2022, members of the Audit, Risk and Scrutiny Board agreed the purpose, scope and timescales of this review.

1.3 At its meeting on 21 March 2022, members of the Audit, Risk and Scrutiny Board noted the update report outlining progress of the review since the previous board meeting on 24 January 2022. This included updates on;

- Contact made with Elected Members and stakeholders including Council officers;
- A site visit; and
- Other complementary reports and studies relating to the subject of this review.

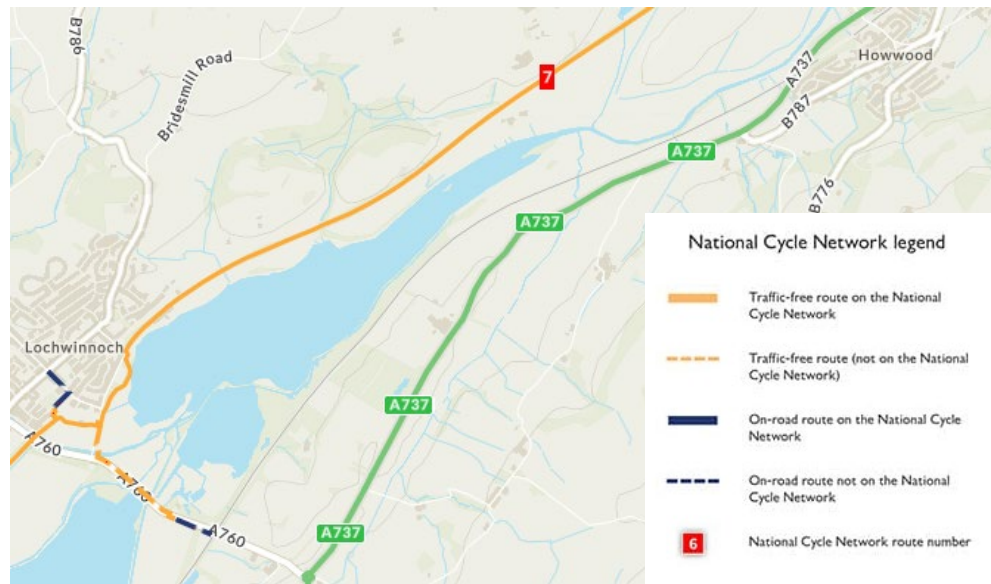
2 Recommendations

2.1 The Board is asked to:

- Note the key findings and accept the recommendations noted in section 5 of this report;
 - Approve the report for submission to the Council meeting to be held on 29 September 2022; and
 - Notes that the Lead Officer is grateful to all stakeholders who participated in the review.
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3 Background

- 3.1 **National Cycle Network Route 7** connects Balloch on the southern banks of Loch Lomond with Aberfoyle, Strathyre, Callander, Lochearnhead and Killin. It forms the southern section of the long-distance Lochs and Glens Way route.
- 3.2 The route is described by Sustrans as having a mixture of traffic-free paths and quiet road sections and being reachable throughout the route via traffic-free paths and also by regular train connections.
- 3.3 From Lochwinnoch it is accessible from an on-road route (not part of the National Cycle Network) from the Main Street (via Church Street / Lochhead Avenue) on the east and also from a mixture of traffic-free route and on road route (not part of the National Cycle Network) from Lochwinnoch Train Station on the west.



- 3.4 In the request for this review into linking the National Cycle Route 7 to Howwood, it was noted that it could also facilitate access to **The Whithorn Way**; a newly mapped 143-mile walking and cycling route, which follows much of the westerly pilgrimage route to Whithorn, which was travelled by pilgrims over centuries.
- 3.5 The route follows established paths and cycleways where possible, including extensive use of the National Cycle & Path Route 7.
- 3.6 To aid users, the route is split into several sections in available guides. Lochwinnoch connects two sections; Paisley to Lochwinnoch and Lochwinnoch to Kilwinning.
- 3.7 There are currently no published dedicated active travel (pedestrian and cycling) routes from **Howwood** to Lochwinnoch.

4 Update on the Review

- 4.1 As set out in the Scoping paper (which was approved by the Board on 24 January 2022), the scope of the review into linking walking and cycling from the National Cycle Route 7 at Lochwinnoch to and from Howwood was to:
- understand the demand;
 - set out the current provision; and
 - identify any other mitigations.
- 4.2 Progress on the review since the last report to Board includes;

- Contacted all current elected members from affected ward (Ward 9) and adjacent ward (Ward 8) and Howwood Community Council to make them aware of the review and to ask for any additional information that could be considered as part of the review.
- Ongoing discussions with officers from relevant services across the Council to ascertain current and planned provisions to help inform the review.
- Further site visit with stakeholders to the National Cycle Route 7 at the locale, the existing core path connecting Station Road to the NCR 7 and the route into Howwood from Station Road. Photographs were also taken at this site visit.

4.3 These early discussions have proved valuable and inform recommendations in this review. The Lead Officer also liaised with relevant officers and services responsible for other works / reviews to ensure that the scope of this review was considered in other items of work to maximise outputs for the relevant review, including this review whilst also minimising duplicate work and costs. These include;

- Awareness that the new Core Paths Plan was approved at Board in January and identifies an aspirational route between NCR7 and Howwood (HOW16).
- Awareness that a feasibility study was commissioned to investigate options for possible Traffic Calming in Kilbarchan, Howwood and Houston which includes recommendations for traffic calming measures in Howwood and a gateway feature within the proposed link from Howwood to NCR7. See paragraph 4.4.11 to 4.4.15 in Key Findings section below.
- Council officers have aspirations to make a funding application for a feasibility study for walking and cycling from the National Cycle Route 7 at Lochwinnoch to and from Howwood. See paragraph 4.4.16 in Key Findings section below.

4.4 **Key findings;**

- 4.4.1 Active travel, including walking and cycling, is widely acknowledged to help improve health and wellbeing¹.
- 4.4.2 The footway currently terminates on the way out of Howwood on Station Road at the bridge over the A737 meaning that there is currently no dedicated and segregated route for safe walking and cycling between Howwood and the National Cycle Route 7 via the most direct route (Station Road). See Figure 3 at Appendix 2.
- 4.4.3 The lack of footway, together with a National Speed limit in this area, make it unattractive for active travel including pedestrians in particular.
- 4.4.4 There appears to be demand for a pedestrian route with desire lines² being evident on the roadside verges along this route. See Figure 3 at Appendix 2.
- 4.4.5 There is an existing core path (LOCH/1 and LOCH/2) some 300m from Howwood Train Station. The section of Station Road which links with the Core Paths has limited pedestrian facilities with no footway in part. The existing core path provides access to the National Cycle Route 7. See Figure 4 and Figure 5 at Appendix 2.
- 4.4.6 The core path (LOCH/1 and LOCH/2) is primarily a leisure orientated route and a track made up of predominantly unbound surface and contains steep incline / declines making it unsuitable for pushchairs and wheelchairs. It has also been suggested that it is known to flood.
- 4.4.7 Whilst this core path is a well-used existing route for pedestrians, with access to the Kenmure Hill Temple and links to the National Cycle Route 7, at approximately 2.5km in length, with uneven surfaces and inclines, it is more circuitous at approximately 1.8km longer than the more direct route along Station Road.

¹ <https://www.sustrans.org.uk/our-blog/research/all-themes/all/active-travel-toolkit-the-role-of-active-travel-in-improving-health>

² A desire lines describes a path created as a consequence of erosion caused by human or animal traffic. The path usually represents the shortest or most easily navigated route between an origin and destination.

- 4.4.8 There has been a long-term aspiration for a more direct active travel route which would connect Howwood to the National Cycle Route 7 via Station Road, utilising existing road infrastructure. A route (HOW/16), has been identified as an Aspirational Core Path in the Core Path Plan since 2009 and remains within 'Renfrewshire Core Paths Plan 2022' which was approved by Council in 2022³. It is however recognised that land ownership and technical matters would require to be considered in detail to facilitate any future route.
- 4.4.9 The Core Paths Plan, which included significant public consultation, demonstrates public and policy support for this aspiration Core Path.
- 4.4.10 A more direct active travel route from Howwood to NCR7, using station road, would also benefit and provide improved access to other existing routes including the Semple Trail⁴ and The Whithorn Way⁵. In addition to the well-publicised benefits of active travel routes, discussions with representatives from The Whithorn Way suggested the following additional benefits from improved access to and from these mapped routes, including;
- Additional footfall and spend in the Community, particularly in accommodation and hospitality;
 - Opportunities to grow accommodation offer due to growing demand from users;
 - Interactions between the Community and users of the routes;
- 4.4.11 Howwood is also particularly appealing to users of these routes due to the presence of the Train Station which allows users to start and/or finish their walk / cycle at Howwood then use the train for their onward journey.
- 4.4.12 Renfrewshire Council commissioned consultants to review the feasibility and options for introducing traffic calming measures in Renfrewshire villages including Howwood.
- 4.4.13 At the time of writing, the outputs from this traffic calming review were still being finalised and will require consultation with Community Councils, Ward Councillors and other relevant stakeholders for review/consultation before final plans are designed.

³ www.renfrewshire.gov.uk/corepaths

⁴ clydemuirshiel.co.uk/visit/things-to-do/walking/routes/semple-trail/

⁵ www.whithorn.com/walk-the-whithorn-way/

- 4.4.14 The interim outputs recommend gateway features at village entry points (including Howwood). Whilst these have not been defined at this point, they usually consist of a combination of signage, change of road markings, physical changes (traffic buildouts or rumble strips) with an aim to reduce the speed of vehicle traffic through villages by building traffic calming measures in the road. See Figure 6 at Appendix 2.
- 4.4.15 The consultant carrying out the traffic calming review carried out a high-level review of a possible connection to NCR7 from Howwood. This included a potential route which indicated a segregated active travel route could be possible. To be explored in further detail, a feasibility study would be required. Council officers have indicated aspirations to apply to Sustrans 'Places for Everyone' for funding to allow this feasibility study to be commissioned.
- 4.4.16 The aim of Sustrans' 'Places for Everyone' is to create safe, attractive, healthier places by increasing the number of trips made by walking, wheeling and cycling for everyday journeys. The scheme is funded by the Scottish Government through Transport Scotland and is administered by Sustrans.
- 4.4.17 Places for Everyone contributes to the Scottish Government's aim for a healthier, environmentally sustainable nation with a strong economy and communities, as laid out in the National Performance Framework.
- 4.4.18 Sustrans' Places for Everyone programme opened to new applications at Stage 0-2 on 25th July 2022, with the deadline for submissions being 23 August 2022. The Decision Making Panel will be held on 31 October 2022 with the aim to make awards within 4 weeks of this date. We are advise that colleagues within Environment & Infrastructure are submitting an application to Sustrans to meet these deadlines.

5 Recommendations

- 5.1 There is evidence of demand and policy support for a safe active travel link between the village of Howwood and the National Cycle Route 7.

It is proposed that opportunities to fund a feasibility study to investigate options for implementing this link should be explored including Sustran's 'Places for Everyone' funding as outlined in paragraphs 4.4.16 to 4.4.18, noting the timescales and deadlines involved (which precede the date of this board meeting).

- 5.2 The feasibility study should take cognisance of the requirement for land acquisition, road safety concerns at the narrow Black Cart Water bridge and other existing information including, but not limited to, 'Renfrewshire Core Paths Plan 2022', 'Villages – Traffic Calming Measures' report and outcomes.
- 5.3 If the funding application is successful, the outcomes from the feasibility study would be consulted with the public including local communities as well as Community Councils and Elected Members. The next phase after feasibility study is detailed design and this would require a further application to secure funding support.

Implications of the Report

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|----|--|--------|
| 1. | Financial | - none |
| 2. | HR & Organisational Development | - none |
| 3. | Community Planning | - none |
| 4. | Legal | - none |
| 5. | Property/Assets | - none |
| 6. | Information Technology | - none |
| 7. | Equality & Human Rights | - none |

(a) The Recommendations contained within this report have been assessed in relation to their impact on equalities and human rights. No negative impacts on equality groups or potential for infringement of individuals' human rights have been identified arising from the recommendations contained in the report. If required following implementation, the actual impact of the recommendations and the mitigating actions will be reviewed and monitored, and the results of the assessment will be published on the Council's website.

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| 8. | Health & Safety | - none |
| 9. | Procurement | - none |

10. Risk - none
11. Privacy Impact - none
12. COSLA Policy Position - not applicable
13. **Climate Risk**
Supporting and enhancing opportunities for active travel is an area being explored as part of Renfrewshire's planning for net zero.
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List of Background Papers

(a) Audit, Risk and Scrutiny Board Annual Programme approved 23/08/2021

The foregoing background papers will be retained within Finance and Resources for inspection by the public for the prescribed period of four years from the date of the meeting.

Author: Kevin Waters
Programme Manager (City Deal & Infrastructure)
Left Council on 14/07/22
Catriona Halliday (Technical Manager – City Deal & Infrastructure) will present the paper.

Appendix 1

Timetable for Linking the National Cycle Route 7 with Howwood Review

Date of Board Meeting	Stage of Review
Monday 24 January 2022	Commencement of review - Complete
Monday 21 March 2022	Continuation of review – Complete
Monday 13 May 2022	No update presented
Monday 22 August 2022	Continuation of review
Tuesday 27 September 2022	Draft report to Board
Thursday 29 September 2022	Final report to Council

Appendix 2 – Photographs

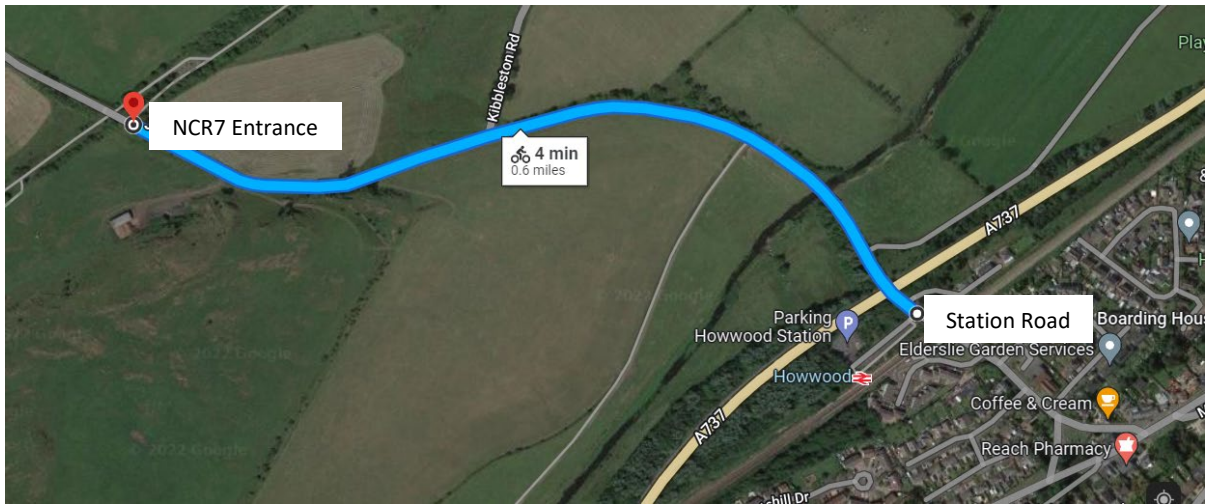


Figure 1 - Approximate Route of direct link from Howwood to NCR7



Figure 2 - Current provision at NCR7 entrance



Figure 3 - Current provision on route out of Howwood



Figure 4 - Entrance to core path (LOCH/1 and LOCH/2) at Howwood end.



Figure 5 - Entrance to core path (LOCH/1 and LOCH/2) at NCR7 end.

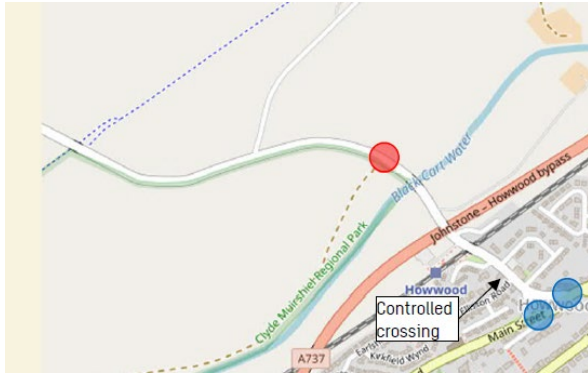


Figure 6 - Proposed location of 'Gateway' traffic calming features from draft 'Villages – Traffic Calming' report.