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Response to ACC Bucksburn-Kingswells Link Consultation

Aberdeen Cycle Forum (ACF) would like to thank Aberdeen City Council (ACC) for involving ACF in the consultation process.

Having participated in the original community workshops, read the supplied report and visited the site of the two proposed route options ACF would like to make the following comments:

1 General Comments

ACF recognises any design is a compromise between the needs of differing stakeholder groups. However, we note key users of the path will be school children commuting to the new Bucksburn Academy. Increasing travel by cycling, particularly for children, is a key local and national priority, as referenced in the supplied report. In addition, the proposed Kingswells-Bucksburn path is the "missing link" in the cycling network between the residential areas of Westhill and Kingswells and the major employment areas in Dyce.

It is with these key user groups in mind that ACF has produced this response

2 Route Selection

From a cycling perspective the distances and gradient differences between option 1 and option 2 are marginal, the height gains are small over the distances involved. The new path would only be a section of the route between points in Kingswells or Bucksburn and we do not see the additional 700m as a significant factor in a decision to cycle or not.

Option 1 – the new route – is the preferred route by ACF for the following reasons:

- By staying close to the road, but ensuring sufficient segregation, this has the advantage of minimal impact on the existing path network that has developed over a number of years and is enjoyed by walkers and others..

- The proximity to the existing road would also make the path feel less "remote", a key factor in perceived safety when using the path,

particularly in the winter when daylight is limited. A decision not to permit the child to cycle / walk (alone) is often made by a parent in relation to a perceived risk rather than the actual risk.

- The farm paths crossed would have light traffic and are not seen as a barrier to cycling.

- The run off of any gritting activities on the path can be managed within the existing roads infrastructure (option 2 would result in run off into the conservation area, potentially precluding the gritting of the route).

Irrespective of the route selected ACF wishes to make a number of other points on the path:

3 Route Surface

ACF would recommend the route is surfaced in tarmacadam with a colour selected to have the lowest visual impact for the following reasons:

- Users will be short distance commuters cycling in "normal" clothes wishing to remain "clean". They will be cycling to a "deadline" (start of school / work day) and reliability and availability of the cycle is key.

- Tarmac is the most suitable surface for commuter cycling, resulting in the lowest energy exertion, least dirt transfer to the cyclist and lowest wear on the bicycle itself. The reduced wear increases the reliability and availability of the cycle and hence encourages further cycle use.

- Once installed the use of tarmac has a low maintenance burden. In a world with limited ACC operational expenditure this is a key benefit when compared to other surfaces such as "fine grit" which would require periodic replacement.

4 Route Width / Segregation

ACF would expect that peak flow on the path will occur before / after school hours and is likely to be in one direction alternating at each end of the day. Without knowing the expected journey numbers (e.g. based on school catchments data) ACF would not wish to specify a minimum width in this response.

The path should clearly be wide enough to allow cyclists and pedestrians to pass safely. ACF can not see any need for segregation of cyclists on the path, either physical or white line marking.

The "rules" for the path i.e. shared pedestrian/cyclist, motorised vehicles excluded, need to be clearly signed at each end of the path.

5 Lighting

While high power bicycle lights of 100's of lux are now available they are relatively expensive and will not be owned by the proposed (school) users of the path. The average battery cycle headlamp is designed "*to be seen by*"

not "*to see with*". Any user who mainly cycles on roads with street lighting would typically have such a lower power lamp pointing forward (to be seen by other road users) rather than down (to illuminate the path).

For these reasons ACF maintains that the path **should have some form of lighting**. Figure 1 shows a German example of off road cycle path lighting using standard luminaries. We see this as adequately meeting the requirements of the proposed users.

ACF notes however, that given the "conservation nature" of the area such lighting may not be appropriate and the costs of cabling supply of electrical power may be prohibitive.

If this were the case alternatives that ACF would like to see in the design include "posts", lighting the edge of the path, figure 2, ref 1 , such posts are available in solar powered designs. If used any solar design must have sufficient storage capacity to provide illumination throughout the Aberdeen winter nights and into the morning commute period. ACF would expect a power budget calculation to be performed before solar lights were selected

Figure 1 – Illuminated Cycle Path

Figure 2 – Solar LED Lantern on Cycle Path

In some areas of the UK recessed solar powered "cat eye" lighting has been sunk into off road cycle lanes Figure 3, ref 2, results have not been encouraging and ACF would not see this as a suitable design choice for the Kingswells - Bucksburn Link.

Fig 3 Recessed Solar Powered Lighting

6 Additional Features on the Path

ACF does not see the need for any street furniture e.g. seating, picnic tables, public art etc, on the path, we base this view on the following reasons:

- By their nature such features provide a "congregation point", anti-social behaviour was cited by may consultees in the original workshops as a concern. Providing such features increases the risk of such behaviour
- The costs of street funiture further add to the costs of the project.
- The new (option 1) path is designed as a "commuter link", if street furniture is required it is perhaps more suited to the existing path network .

7 Maintanance

As the path is a school link, particular care needs to be paid to the maintenance of the track. In addition to adoption by ACC the path would need to be included in the winter snow clearing / gritting programe as a "school route".

8 References:

Ref 1 – Cambridgeshire Cycle Campaign
EcoliGhts, A-8741 Weißkirchen - Hopfgarten 18 , Austria
http://www.ecolights.at/en/solar-footpath-lights/solar-footpath-lights.html

Ref 2 – Sustrans Addenbrooke's to Great Shelford cycle route – details available online:
http://www.camcycle.org.uk/newsletters/69/article9.html

9 Further Work:

Should ACC proceed with the construction of the path ACF would be happy to advise on the detailed engineering design of the path with ACC or it's suppliers.