

ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

COMMITTEE	Net Zero, Environment and Transport
DATE	07 March 2023
EXEMPT	No
CONFIDENTIAL	No
REPORT TITLE	A93 Banchory to Aberdeen Multi-Modal Corridor Study
REPORT NUMBER	COM/23/010
DIRECTOR	Gale Beattie
CHIEF OFFICER	David Dunne
REPORT AUTHOR	Jane Obi
TERMS OF REFERENCE	7, 8

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 This report advises Members of the outcomes of the Scottish Transport Appraisal Guidance (STAG)-based preliminary options appraisal on the A93 Banchory to Aberdeen Multi-Modal Corridor Study and seeks approval of the recommendations outlined below.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Committee: -

- 2.1 Note the preliminary appraisal report and its outcomes, as summarised in the Executive Summary at Appendix 1, and detailed in the Full Report at Appendix 2;
- 2.2 Instruct the Chief Officer – Operations and Protective Services to implement the “Small Scale, Low Risk Options” for Aberdeen City identified in Table 1 (para 3.12), subject to funding availability;
- 2.3 Note that Aberdeenshire Council acknowledges the outcomes of the report and will progress the “Small Scale, Low Risk Options” within Aberdeenshire, as detailed in Table 2 (para 3.13), where Officers have delegated authority to do so, within current policy and subject to resource availability;
- 2.4 Agree that work to further develop the Options detailed in Table 3 (para 3.15) be progressed and instruct the Chief Officer – Strategic Place Planning to undertake a Detailed Appraisal and Outline Business Case (OBC)), subject to additional funding being secured;
- 2.5 Subject to recommendation 2.4, instruct the Chief Officer – Strategic Place Planning to report the Detailed Appraisal, Outline Business Case, and next steps to the Net Zero, Environment and Transport Committee by summer 2024; and,

- 2.6 Agree that the Options listed in Table 4 (para 3.16) be taken forward in the upcoming Active Travel Network Review project for full oversight when reviewing the city as a whole.

3. CURRENT SITUATION

- 3.1 In 2018, the North East Bus Alliance in its [Terms of Reference and Quality Partnership Agreement](#) identified the A93 Deeside corridor as one of a range of key strategic corridors connecting Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire which would benefit from the delivery of bus improvement measures. The Alliance, of which Aberdeen City Council is a partner, has two overarching objectives which are to address decline in bus patronage in the North East of Scotland, and to achieve year-on-year growth in bus patronage. A number of the strategic corridor studies identified by the Bus Alliance are currently being taken forward through a successful bid to the Scottish Government's Bus Partnership Fund (BPF), whereas others, such as the A93, are being progressed in tandem to the BPF corridors with funding through Nestrans.
- 3.2 In 2021, Aberdeen City Council, on behalf of the North East Bus Alliance and in partnership with Nestrans, commissioned transport consultants AECOM to undertake a multi-modal study (following the Scottish Transport Appraisal Guidance (STAG) process) to identify and appraise options for improving transport connections (particularly public transport and active travel (walking, cycling, and wheeling) along the A93 from Banchory to Aberdeen City centre.
- 3.3 Delivery of public transport improvements and active travel measures support a number of the Council's strategic priorities, particularly in terms of a sustainable economy, a sustainable transport system, a high-quality environment, the continued health and prosperity of our citizens, and reductions in carbon emissions to help meet our Net Zero requirements and targets within our Local Outcome Improvement Plan (LOIP).
- 3.4 The STAG-based preliminary options appraisal stage was completed in December 2022, with the outcomes and conclusions detailed in a Final Report (Appendix 2) and an Executive Summary (Appendix 1). Supporting appendices to the final report are also presented (Appendix 3). This report provides the Committee with a summary of outcomes of this STAG-based preliminary options appraisal stage.
- 3.5 A map of the A93 study area is shown in Figure 1 below:

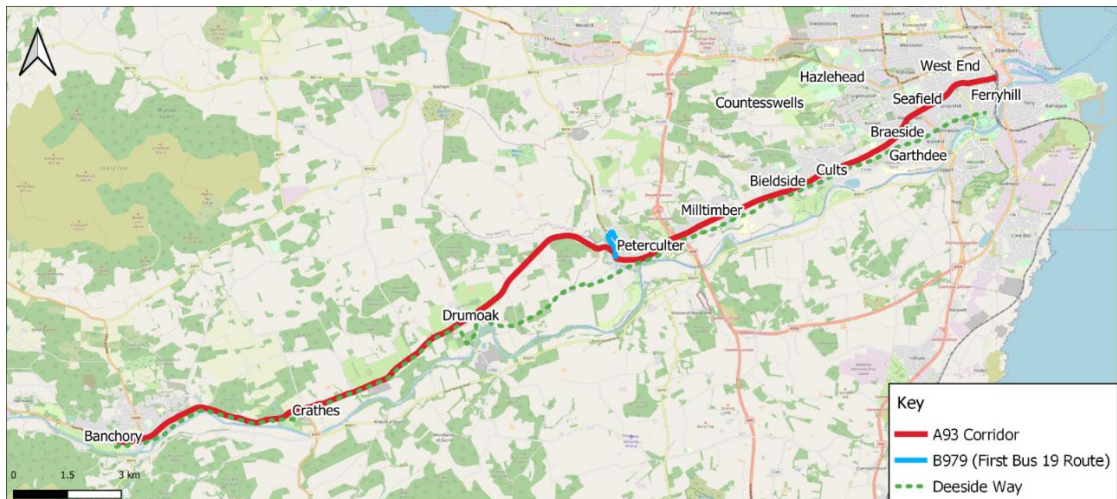


Figure 1: A93 Corridor Study Area

- 3.6 The A93 corridor study focusses on improvements within the built-up areas of Aberdeen and Banchory, the smaller villages along the corridor, and the connecting road, which is largely rural in nature. It should be noted that some of the corridor lies within the administrative boundary of Aberdeenshire Council. Officers from Aberdeenshire Council therefore sit on the client group for this project given that this area sits beyond the City Council's area of Roads Authority duties and responsibilities.
- 3.7 In relation specifically to active travel, improvements to connections to the existing Deeside Way (a popular and mostly segregated path along the route of the old railway line) and to trip generators such as Crathes and Drum Castles have had particular focus. Where possible, this study along the A93 will look to supplement this existing leisure route through additional cycle provisions where feasible.
- 3.8 Information gathered from site visits along the route, a baseline review of transport conditions, and from an extensive consultation process (described further below) has informed the development of a series of Problems, Issues, Constraints and Opportunities (PICOs). Transport Planning Objectives (TPOs) were subsequently developed based on the problems, issues, constraints, and opportunities identified and a long list of options was developed for sifting and appraisal. The TPOs developed for the study are:
- TPO1** Increase the modal share of active travel on the A93 road corridor for all journey types
 - TPO2** Improve accessibility to active travel and public transport infrastructure on the A93 corridor from nearby communities
 - TPO3** Increase the modal share of public transport on the A93 road corridor for all journey types
 - TPO4** Support sustainable communities along the A93 corridor
 - TPO5** Support the role of the A93 corridor as the gateway to Royal Deeside

- 3.9 In line with works to identify the problems, issues, opportunities, and constraints on the corridor and to inform the development of options, the transport consultant undertook a series of targeted consultations with stakeholders and members of the public. The consultations were held in two parts.
- 3.10 The initial round of consultation with stakeholders and the public was undertaken in Autumn 2021 and included distribution of study briefing letters to elected Members at the time and to Community Councils inviting participation and discussions. Two study tours (site visits) of the corridor were also undertaken with stakeholders, including elected Members, and an online map-based ‘Placecheck’ tool was developed which allowed participants to highlight locations of specific issues/problems by placing a point at the location on the map and adding details of the problem. In addition, three workshop sessions were held in May 2022 with pupils at Banchory Primary and Cults Academy where pupils were asked to “*think about what they like and don’t like in the transport network in their local area*” using maps and sticky notes. Feedback received from this initial round of engagement fed into the development of a shortlist of options as the study progressed. These options were then grouped into a number of different packages: Active Travel (AT), Public Transport (PT) and Other Measures (O) (e.g. enforcement and speed restriction measures) for initial appraisal.
- 3.11 The second round of stakeholder and public consultation took place in Summer 2022 and focused on gaining feedback on the six devised options packages. This was undertaken through a Virtual Consultation Room, Public Drop-in Events and Online Drop-in Sessions to reach as wide a section of the community as possible. Further consultation with stakeholders and the general public would be undertaken during the course of the detailed appraisal, subject to Members agreeing to progress the study to the next stage and success with external funding being secured.
- 3.12 The preliminary options appraisal study was completed in December 2022 (Appendices 1 - 3). As part of this study, a package of “Small Scale, Low Risk Options” was also developed (see Section 8.8 of Appendix 2). Officers have considered the “Small Scale, Low Risk Options” within the Aberdeen City boundary and have determined that a number of those identified could be progressed quickly should Members agree to their implementation:

Table 1: “Small Scale, Low Risk” Options for consideration within Aberdeen City

Small Scale, Low Risk Options – Aberdeen City	
AT7:	Conduct a route wide review of wayfinding signage to the Deeside Way
O8:	Review pedestrian safety at island crossings along the A93 corridor
O28:	Implement additional flashing speed limit signs along the A93 corridor
O39:	Implement part-time mandatory 20mph speed limit to support movements to/from the International School on the A93

- 3.13 For those “Small Scale, Low Risk Options” outwith the jurisdiction of Aberdeen City Council, Members are asked to note that Aberdeenshire Council Officers have acknowledged the options detailed in Table 2 (below), and that these will

progress where they have delegated authority to do so within current policy, and subject to resource availability.

Table 2: Small Scale, Low Risk Options for consideration within Aberdeenshire

Small Scale, Low Risk Options - Aberdeenshire	
AT7:	Conduct a route wide review of wayfinding signage to the Deeside Way
AT8:	Redesign access controls onto and on the Deeside Way to improve accessibility
AT17:	Develop an integrated path network which connects settlements south of the River Dee with the A93 and Deeside Way
AT19:	Implement an active travel link from Deeside Way to Drum Castle
AT20:	Implement enhanced path connections between Newmill Hill Forest and the Deeside Way
AT21:	Improve access to the Deeside Way in the west of Drumoak
AT47:	Formalise pedestrian path on north side of the carriageway between Drumoak and Drum Castle
AT56:	Develop a greater network of active travel connections from Park Bridge to the south of the river
AT57:	Redesign access controls at Park Bridge to allow for recumbent cycle sand cargo bikes
AT58:	Implement a contraflow cycle lane on Bridge Street in Banchory
AT59:	Implement an enhanced network of connecting paths from Inchmarlo and Torphins to the A93 corridor
O8:	Review pedestrian safety at island crossings along the A93 corridor
O10:	Increase road signage to tourist destinations and services along the A93 corridor, particularly from the AWPR
O14:	Implement signage to discourage vehicles from parking on the access road designated at the Deeside Way in Drumoak
O21:	Implement gateway signage on approach to Drumoak in both directions
O22:	Implement gateway signage on approach to Crathes in both directions
O23:	Introduce placemaking and gateway features in Banchory Town Centre
O27:	Implement package of measures to support 20-minute neighbourhood in Banchory
O28:	Implement additional flashing speed limit signs along the A93 corridor
O32:	Increase the number of speed limit signs on approach to Drumoak in both directions
O33:	Extend 30mph speed limit 50m east at the eastern entrance to Drumoak
O34:	Reduce speed limit on Sunnyside Drive to 20mph
O35:	Extend 30mph speed limit from Drumoak to Park
O38:	Implement additional 20mph speed limit signage on the High Street in Banchory
O42:	Implement traffic calming measures on Banchory High Street

3.14 The consultant report also details “Selected Options” to be taken forward for further consideration and appraisal across the whole corridor (see Table 6 in Appendix 1). Having considered the full list of “Selected Options” recommended in the report, Officers have identified a number of Key Options that offer potential improvement to the active travel and public transport

experience on the A93 corridor and/or will support delivery. These are detailed in Table 3 below:

- 3.15 The next step would be to progress these options further for a more detailed appraisal and subsequently produce an Outline Business Case for the final identified preferred option(s) for implementation. Should Members agree to progress, a funding bid would be submitted to Nestrans to further progress this next stage of the study and, subject to a successful bid, it is anticipated that an Outline Business Case report detailing the preferred option(s) could be concluded circa summer 2024 and reported back to Committee thereafter.

Table 3: Key and Supporting Options selected for progression to Detailed Appraisal and Outline Business Case

Key Options for Detailed Appraisal	
Active Travel	
AT41:	Implement two-way segregated cycling infrastructure along the A93 corridor in Aberdeen City
AT44:	Implement a shared footway on the A93 corridor between Peterculter and Banchory
AT49:	Implement cycling infrastructure along the High Street in Banchory
Public Transport	
PT1:	Implement an eastbound bus lane along the A93 corridor
PT2:	Implement a westbound bus lane along the A93 corridor
Supporting Options for Detailed Appraisal	
The options below are supporting options that have the potential to support delivery of the Key active travel and public transport options above. They would be progressed as part of the detailed appraisal identifying the final preferred option(s):	
AT1:	Implement early release signals for cyclists at all signalised junctions along the A93 corridor
AT6:	Review priority and crossings at the AWPR Junction and surrounding area for people walking, cycling, and wheeling
AT8:	Redesign access controls onto and on the Deeside Way to improve accessibility
AT25:	Implement additional formalised crossing facilities in Cults
AT29:	Implement additional zebra crossing points in Peterculter
AT31:	Consider locations for additional crossing facilities in Drumoak
AT32:	Implement island crossing point east of Drumoak to enable safe crossing between Drum Castle
AT33:	Implement island crossing point at Crathes to enable safe crossing between bus stops at Crathes Woods
AT34:	Implement a new pedestrian crossing over Station Road to facilitate access to Banchory Primary and Banchory Academy
AT35:	Implement crossing facilities on the western section of Banchory High Street
AT36:	Implement additional cycle parking within Cults, particularly near bus stops
AT38:	Implement a Park and Pedal facility at the former rail station in Peterculter using existing car parking in this location
AT39:	Implement additional cycle parking near bus stops and at the bus terminus in Peterculter

AT40:	Implement additional cycle parking within Banchory Town Centre
PT25:	Conduct a traffic signal review to consider bus priority at all traffic signals along the A93 corridor
O1:	Review the layout of the Great Western Road/Holburn Street Junction, including consideration of signal timings and lane allocation
O2:	Review the layout of the A93/Anderson Drive Junction
O3:	Review the layout of the A93/Pitfodels Station Road Junction
O4:	Review the layout of the A93/Abbotshall Road Junction
O5:	Review the layout of the A93/Malcolm Road Junction
O6:	Review the layout of the A93/Hill of Banchory East Junction
O7:	Review the layout and traffic signal phasing at the A93/Dee Street Junction in Banchory
O16:	Conduct a review of parking in Cults (on and off-street)
O17:	Conduct a review of parking in Peterculter (on and off-street)
O18:	Conduct a review of parking in Banchory (on and off-street)
O43:	Introduce adaptive timings at traffic signals along the corridor

3.16 The options below in Table 4 have also been identified through this study but are recommended to be progressed through the upcoming city-wide Active Travel Network Review rather than through this A93 specific study. The Active Travel Network Review will be a strategic study to inform a costed and prioritised Active Travel Network Plan to set the strategic direction for walking, wheeling, and cycling project delivery within Aberdeen City for the next 10-20 years. Therefore, rather than undertake the options identified in Table 4 below in relative isolation, Officers consider that they would form a better fit within the Active Travel Network Review and be holistically looked at in conjunction with other active travel provisions when reviewing the city as a whole. This Review would be reported to Committee separately and would allow identification of where the gaps might be in the active travel network to allow for a better joined up and coherent network. The resulting plan would then enable a programmed delivery proposal for coherent implementation.

Table 4: Options Selected for consideration within the Active Travel Network Review

Include in the Active Travel Network Project	
AT9:	Implement a continuous cycle route from the Deeside Way (at Duthie Park) to Union Street
AT11:	Implement a contraflow cycle lane on Duthie Terrace to facilitate connection to the Deeside Way
AT12:	Implement a contraflow cycle lane on Dee Street to facilitate connection between the Deeside Way and the city centre
AT13:	Implement a contraflow cycle lane on Ferryhill Place to facilitate connection between the Deeside Way and the city centre
AT14:	Implement a contraflow cycle lane on Ferryhill Terrace to facilitate connection between the Deeside Way and the city centre
AT15:	Implement a contraflow cycle lane on Fonthill Terrace to facilitate connection between the Deeside Way and the city centre
AT16:	Implement a contraflow cycle lane on Prospect Terrace to facilitate connection between the Deeside Way and the city centre

AT17:	Develop an integrated path network which connects settlements south of the River Dee with the A93 and Deeside Way
O19:	Introduce placemaking and gateway features in Cults
O20:	Introduce placemaking and gateway features in Peterculter
O24:	Implement package of measures to support 20-minute neighbourhood in Mannofield
O25:	Implement package of measures to support 20-minute neighbourhood in Cults
O26:	Implement package of measures to support 20-minute neighbourhood in Peterculter

- 3.17 Please note that some of the selected options to be taken forward were specific to bus transport and these are detailed below in Table 5 for further consideration by the bus operators, local authorities and others:

Table 5: Public Transport options for consideration by the bus operators and others

Additional Options for Public Transport	
PT4:	Conduct a route wide review of bus stop provision and infrastructure
PT5:	Consider options to improve boarding and alighting times on bus services along the corridor
PT8:	Enhance opportunities for cycle carriage on bus services on the A93 corridor
PT9:	Utilise app technology to provide real-time information to bus passengers of the ability to take bikes on buses
PT10:	Implement ticketing options for multi-modal journeys
PT17:	Explore the feasibility of implementing Demand Responsive Services to allow surrounding settlements to connect with the A93 corridor (e.g. Inchmarlo and Torphins)
PT21:	Increase the frequency of bus services on the A93

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 Nestrans fully funded the STAG preliminary appraisal stage of the study and has approved a budget of £50,000 for financial year 2022/23 for the funding of the Small Scale, Low Risk Options. Due to insufficient time to deliver the Small Scale, Low Risk Options this financial year, Officers will put a request to Nestrans to carry the funding forward for use in the next financial year 2023/2024. A verbal update will be given to Committee on Nestrans' decision. Any projects which are not able to be completed within the conditions of the specified budget will only be implemented when appropriate funding is sourced.
- 4.2 There is currently no budget for the project to proceed to the Detailed Appraisal and Outline Business Case stage, nor for the implementation of further works, therefore progress will be dependent on the sourcing of continued external funding from Nestrans or any other appropriate funding sources. A funding bid will be presented to the Nestrans Board in early March 2023. The final decision from Nestrans will be reliant on the funding allocated by the Local Authorities to Nestrans, but we would expect a decision soon thereafter to cover this stage of the project.

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 There are no direct legal implications arising from the recommendations of this report, although dependent on the package of small-scale low risk options that are implemented, there may be a requirement for Traffic Regulation Orders (TROs) or Experimental Traffic Regulation Orders (ETROs).

6. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 There are no direct environmental implications arising from the recommendations of this report. However, once detailed appraisal is completed and preferred options or intervention are identified, the subsequent design stages will include an Environmental Impact Assessment to inform any environmental implications of the project.

It should be noted that Environmental considerations are part of the STAG criteria which has influenced the recommendations of this report in terms of the options to be taken forward for more detailed examination.

7. RISK

Category	Risks	Primary Controls/Control Actions to achieve Target Risk Level	*Target Risk Level (L, M or H) *taking into account controls/control actions	*Does Target Risk Level Match Appetite Set?
Strategic Risk	<p>Delivery of active travel and public transport measures supports a number of the Council's strategic priorities, particularly in terms of a sustainable economy, a sustainable transport system, the continued health and prosperity of our citizens, reductions in carbon emissions and a high-quality environment.</p> <p>Failure to deliver active travel and public transport improvements where there is evidence of their effectiveness could undermine the Council's ability to</p>	Continue to work collaboratively to add value in terms of meeting the strategic objectives of partners therefore mitigating against the risk of the council failing to deliver on its strategic sustainable transport priorities	L	Yes

	realise these aspirations.			
Compliance	There are no direct legal implications arising from the recommendations of this report, although dependent on the package of small-scale low risk that are implemented, there may be a requirement for Traffic Regulation Orders (TROs) or Experimental Traffic Regulation Orders (ETROs).	Compliance with statutory processes, ACC procurement regulations, grant conditions and Scheme of Governance with regular progress and spend reporting to Nestrans and the Transportation Programme Board.	L	Yes
Operational	There will be costs associated with maintaining the infrastructure associated with the active travel proposals, should these reach the implementation stage.	Future development work shall identify implications for the revenue budget as schemes are developed further and refined.	L	Yes
Financial	If non-compliant to the grant conditions, there is risk around spend being ineligible or rejected, and therefore having to be absorbed by this Council and partners. An unsuccessful funding bid to Nestrans to progress the next stage of the study would mean funding would need to be externally sourced elsewhere to undertake the study.	Regular monthly reporting to Nestrans will help to reduce this risk. Funding has not yet been secured for this next stage however, submitting a timely detailed funding bid to Nestrans Board for consideration to further fund this next stage of the study will reduce any associated risks.	L	Yes
Reputational	Failure to deliver in accordance with the grant conditions to help meet the Council's (and partners) strategic transport objectives undermines the Council's commitments to improving the transport	Obtain Committee approval to progress works to a detailed appraisal. Continue to work collaboratively to deliver this project and its wider benefits.	L	Yes

	network, achieving the PLACE outcomes set out in the LOIP (Local Outcome Improvement Plan), and supporting Scotland's Climate Change Plan commitment to reduce car kilometres by 20% by 2030.			
Environment / Climate	ACC's net zero vision and strategic infrastructure plan – energy transition: transport emissions are a significant contributor to climate emissions so increasing sustainable travel will be necessary to achieving this sector's required reduction. If active travel and public transport measures are not delivered, ACC would not provide conditions which could encourage more sustainable travel movements which are likely to bring environmental improvements to the city and region.	Continue working with Nestrans to deliver the project and continue to work in partnership to add value in terms of meeting our shared strategic objectives	L	Yes

8. OUTCOMES

	Impact of Report
Aberdeen City Council Policy Statement <u>Working in Partnership for Aberdeen</u>	<p>Reviewing our cycle and active transport network, and work with Aberdeen Cycle Forum to deliver our shared vision of making Aberdeen a cyclist friendly city and provide covered secure cycle storage in suitable locations across Aberdeen.</p> <p>Improving cycle and active transport infrastructure, including by seeking to integrate safe, physically segregated cycle lanes in new road building projects and taking steps to ensure any proposal for resurfacing or other long-term investments consider options to improve cycle and active transport infrastructure.</p>

Aberdeen City Local Outcome Improvement Plan

<p>Prosperous Economy Stretch Outcomes:</p> <p>1. <i>No one will suffer due to poverty by 2026.</i></p> <p>2. <i>400 unemployed Aberdeen City residents supported into Fair Work by 2026.</i></p> <p>3. <i>500 Aberdeen City residents upskilled/ reskilled to enable them to move into, within and between economic opportunities as they arise by 2026.</i></p>	<p>The proposals within this report support the delivery of LOIP Stretch Outcomes 1 to 3 as a good transport network and infrastructure provision means anyone regardless of their social status/economic means can choose a sustainable mode of travel for commuting.</p> <p>A reliable transport network supports economic growth and movement both locally and otherwise and affords the public the opportunity to choose a sustainable mode of travel to and from their workplaces. The proposals within this report aim to provide journey time reliability for buses.</p>
<p>Prosperous Place Stretch Outcomes</p> <p>13. <i>Addressing climate change by reducing Aberdeen's carbon emissions by at least 61% by 2026 and adapting to the impacts of our changing climate.</i></p> <p>14. <i>Increase sustainable travel: 38% of people walking and 5% of people cycling as main mode of travel by 2026.</i></p>	<p>The proposals within this report support the delivery of Place Stretch Outcomes 13 and 14 in the LOIP.</p> <p>A robust and reliable public transport network where well-integrated with active travel infrastructures will encourage public transport uptake and patronage and subsequently contribute towards reducing transport carbon emissions given the move towards alternative forms of fuel by bus operators in the region and the Council's fleet.</p>
<p>Regional and City Strategies</p> <p><i>Regional Transport Strategy (2040)</i></p> <p><i>Local Development Plan,</i></p> <p><i>Local Transport Strategy including the Active Travel Action plan</i></p> <p><i>Regional Economic Strategy</i></p> <p><i>Net Zero Vision for Aberdeen</i></p>	<p>The proposals within this report support Regional and Local Transport Strategies and related strategies, which all aim to deliver a sustainable transport system as well as enhance the connectivity of the existing transport network.</p> <p>To foster a cycling culture in Aberdeen by improving conditions for cycling in Aberdeen so that cycling becomes an everyday, safe mode of transport for all.</p> <p>To increase public transport patronage by making bus travel an attractive option to all users and competitive with the car in terms of speed and cost.</p>

9. IMPACT ASSESSMENTS

Assessment	Outcome
Integrated Impact Assessment	Full impact assessment not required. The study is being undertaken in accordance with the Scottish Transport Appraisal Guidance which appraises impacts across a range of categories (Economy, Environment, Accessibility and Social Inclusion, Safety, and Integration). Further detailed assessments will be undertaken through the development and design process, as appropriate.
Data Protection Impact Assessment	Not required
Other	None

10. BACKGROUND PAPERS

10.1 None

11. APPENDICES

- 11.1 Appendix 1 - A93 STAG Preliminary Options Appraisal - Executive Summary
Appendix 2 - A93 STAG Preliminary Options Appraisal - Full Report
Appendix 3 - A93 STAG Preliminary Options Appraisal - Report Appendices

12. REPORT AUTHOR CONTACT DETAILS

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