

## ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

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COMMITTEE	Enterprise, Planning and Infrastructure
DATE	24th May 2011
DIRECTOR	Gordon McIntosh
TITLE OF REPORT	Proposed City Centre Event for European Mobility Week 2011
REPORT NUMBER:	EPI/11/140

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### **1. PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to inform the Committee of the European Mobility Week and In Town Without My Car Day events taking place throughout the world in September 2011. The report also requests that Aberdeen City take part in these celebrations by closing to motor vehicles either Union Terrace on Saturday 24th September 2011 or Belmont Street on Saturday 17<sup>th</sup> September 2011 and hosting a sustainable transport-themed event in the roadspace to highlight the City's and the Council's commitment to reducing carbon emissions, improving air quality and promoting sustainable lifestyles.

### **2. RECOMMENDATION(S)**

- 2.1 It is recommended that the Committee:
- a) Support Aberdeen City's participation in European Mobility Week and In Town Without My Car Day 2011; and
  - b) Agree Union Terrace as the preferred location for the event and instruct officers to initiate proceedings to close Union Terrace to motor traffic on Saturday 24th September; or
  - c) Should the predicted impact of the event be such that Members cannot support b), instruct officers to initiate proceedings to close Belmont Street for a smaller scale event on Saturday 17<sup>th</sup> September.

### **3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 3.1. Costs for the road closure, stalls and attractions will be met from grants from the Scottish Government, CARE North and Nestrans. There will be a requirement to cover staff costs for the event, which would be charged as time-in-lieu.

#### **4. OTHER IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 The closure of Union Terrace will involve the temporary rerouting of motor vehicles. Colleagues from Aberdeen City Council's Roads department and Public Transport Unit have stated that the road closure will have a detrimental effect on traffic flows and public transport movements around the City Centre on the day. Public transport operators have been consulted on this proposal and they have indicated significant concerns, stating that the location is inopportune because of the disruption this will cause to bus services.
- 4.2 The closure of Belmont Street would have minimal impact on traffic movements as vehicular access to Belmont Street is restricted and no public transport services use the street.

#### **5. BACKGROUND/MAIN ISSUES**

- 5.1 Every year in September, cities from all over the world participate in European Mobility Week (<http://www.mobilityweek.eu/>), an awareness-raising campaign encouraging public awareness of the need to act against pollution caused by the increase of traffic in the urban environment and promoting the use of sustainable modes of transport such as public transport, walking and cycling.
- 5.2 One of the criteria that must be met for local authorities to participate in European Mobility Week is that there should be an In Town Without My Car Day event, where a road is closed to motor traffic and is instead reserved solely for pedestrians and cyclists. In most cases, the space is filled with events and activities for members of the public to participate in, free from the noise, danger and distraction of motor traffic, therefore allowing them to experience the street environment in a new way.
- 5.3 Aberdeen City Council, as a partner in Getabout, has been involved in three In Town Without My Car Day events to date, starting in 2009 in Newtonhill in Aberdeenshire and continuing in 2010 at Greenbrae School in Aberdeen, closing Greenbrae Crescent in Bridge of Don and arranging a series of sustainable transport-themed activities for the school pupils and a street café for local residents. The event was a great success with both the school and the community and gained significant positive press coverage. This was followed the next day by a similar event in Inch in Aberdeenshire. The Council and the Getabout partnership have the considerable experience needed to organise this event.
- 5.4 This year, the intention is to repeat the format of last year's event on a larger scale, in a more visible location and open to all members of the public. Although a full programme of events has yet to be determined, proposed attractions include Adventure Aberdeen's bicycle roadshow and mountain bike obstacle course, street art, a pavement café and

information stands and kiosks, representing walking, cycling, public transport and related interests.

- 5.5 In terms of staff coverage the Getabout partnership has offered assistance for the event. Volunteers from Nestrans, Aberdeenshire Council, NHS Grampian, the University of Aberdeen, the Robert Gordon University and the Energy Savings Trust will help to arrange activities, promotion and publicity.
- 5.6 A weekend has been selected in order to maximise attendance by both adults and children. Closing the road on a weekend day should also limit any inconvenience to commuters and businesses.
- 5.7 Alternative locations for the event have been discussed with the project team and the Public Transport Unit, but it has been agreed that there are limited opportunities in the City Centre for a significant road closure that does not negatively impact on bus movements. Union Terrace remains the optimum location given the nature of the space required, the potential to use Union Terrace Gardens for some elements, the visibility of the event and the significant footfall that will be attracted and the fact that the Council already has special event temporary traffic management measures in place for the regular closing of Union Terrace for the International Street Market, and members of the public and transport operators are familiar with such diversions.
- 5.8 Should the Committee feel that the impact on the road network and the travelling public will be such that they cannot support such an event on Union Terrace, officers will instead initiate proceedings to hold a smaller-scale event on Belmont Street on Saturday 17<sup>th</sup> September (although September 24<sup>th</sup> is the preferred date for the event, Belmont Street is hosting the Aberdeen Country Fair that day). Although this would not strictly qualify as an In Town Without My Car Day event, as it would take place on a predominantly pedestrianised street, and would be of a significantly lesser scale, the space available should be such that some of the proposed attractions could still take place and the event should still be visible enough to attract a large number of visitors.

## **6. IMPACT**

- 6.1 The Aberdeen Local Transport Strategy 2008-2012 has a vision to develop *A sustainable transport system that is fit for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, accessible to all, supports a vibrant economy and minimises the impact on our environment*. One of the aims of the Strategy is to *Minimise the environmental impact of transport on our community and the wider world*, and holding an event of this sort is an action specifically referenced in the Strategy: *ACC will also investigate the potential to take part in the In Town Without My Car Day European campaign initiative*.

- 6.2 Nestrans' Regional Transport Strategy 2021 outlines a series of measures to improve transport in the region, including four strategic objectives, one of which is *To conserve and enhance the north east's natural and built environment and heritage and reduce the effects of transport on climate and air quality.*
- 6.3 The Community Plan articulates aspirations that Aberdeen will be *an attractive, clean, healthy and safe place to live and work* and that it will *present a strong, positive image of itself both nationally and internationally.*
- 6.4 The Single Outcome Agreement prioritises improving sustainable transport options for the City, particularly the following local outcomes which link to National Outcomes 12 and 14 respectively: *Aberdeen's natural and built environment is protected and the City plays its part in protecting our planet;* and *Minimise the environmental impact of transport on our community and the wider world.* Similarly, *Protect and enhance our high quality natural and built environment* is identified as a Strategic Priority in the Council's Final Draft Business Plan.
- 6.5 This report will be of interest to members of the public as it concerns a proposed free public event in the City Centre and involves closing off a thoroughfare.
- 6.6 It is not anticipated that this proposal will have any negative impact on Equality and Human Rights. The event will be open to all and could, in fact, have a positive impact on certain groups particularly the less able and elderly who will be able to use the street without the heavy traffic that characterises its normal operation. It will raise awareness of and promote walking and cycling, transport modes that may be of particular interest to the young and individuals from low-income households whose ability to travel may be limited by the cost of other forms of transport, such as the car or the bus. The event may also have a positive impact on those with disabilities in that one element of the event is a cycling roadshow, where members of the public can try out a variety of different bicycles for free. The fleet includes a number of bicycles designed specifically for disabled users. It is not anticipated that any group will be adversely affected by the traffic restriction.

## **7. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

- 7.1 None

## **8. REPORT AUTHOR DETAILS**

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