The following constitutes an Officer level response from North Ayrshire Council to the Consultation Questions on the Inquiry into Active Travel. Contributions have been made by Officers within Planning Services and Infrastructure and Design Services with input from the North Ayrshire Outdoor Access Forum.

**Question 1 - What more can be done to encourage people to change their travelling habits and walk and cycle more?**

There are a number of barriers which currently discourage people from changing their travelling habits therefore it is essential to understand the nature of these barriers and identify measures to address them.

A significant barrier to the modal shift towards active travel is the user’s perception of safety. The predominant perception in society is that roads are not safe for cycling and where distances are too far to walk, cycling is not seen as the obvious option. This is reinforced by the outcome of the consultation on the Cycling Action Plan for Scotland (CAPS) in which 29% of respondents indicated that danger from traffic deterred them from cycling. In addition to this the Walking and Public Space opinion survey commissioned by Paths for All and Living Streets produced comparable results for walking in which 60% of respondents indicated that they would like safe places to cross roads and 59% indicated that they wanted a 20 mile per hour speed limit with this figure increasing to 66% for residents of villages.

Other potential barriers include:

- Lack of integration with other transport modes – it is essential that the links to other modes of transport in particular the public transport system provide opportunities for seamless travel.
- Lack of physical infrastructure – to encourage walking and cycling it is essential that the basic infrastructure e.g. suitable paths, parking facilities, signage and lockers and showers within workplaces or key facilities are available.
- Lack of accessibility – fully accessible off road routes will encourage increased walking and cycling and it is essential that communities themselves are accessible i.e. that it is possible to access local community facilities and services by bike or on foot.
- Lack of information – providing the infrastructure on its own will not result in significant modal shift therefore further activities are required to provide users’ with the information necessary to make informed choices e.g. maps, raise awareness, promote the use of active travel and educate users on its potential benefits. Projects such as the Outdoor Access North Ayrshire project which aim to encourage walking and cycling for everyday journeys will in part address these issues at a local level however further action is required.
- Weather – ultimately the weather will always have a role in influencing users’ choice of transport. It is almost impossible however to mitigate against this.
- Perceived stigma of walking and cycling – there is a perception that walking and cycling are a form of poorer transport in comparison to driving. This needs to be tackled to encourage increased uptake.

There are a number of measures that could be utilised to address these barriers and increase levels of active travel including:

- Improved infrastructure such as increased secure cycle parking at transport hubs, retail facilities, community facilities and healthcare sites and signage.
- Introduction of speed restrictions such as Twenty’s Plenty zones.
- Improved design of streets in line with Living Streets and other good practice guidelines
- Improved maintenance of path networks.
- Improved on road cycle provision such as dedicated cycle lanes and increased signage to improve driver awareness.
• Increased access to on and off-road cycle training for all ages and abilities.
• Improved promotion of path networks through the production of active travel directions and leaflets.
• Improved allocation of resources to active travel projects e.g. creation of cycle routes.

Question 2 - Is enough progress being made in developing and delivering improvements in the uptake of walking and cycling?

No. Whilst some progress has been made through the creation of path networks such as the National Cycle Network and the development of Core Paths Plans further progress is still required to realise the desired modal shift.

The lack of progress is mainly due to the fact that inadequate weight is currently being placed on the significant and positive role that active travel can make to a wide range of policy agendas. For example improvements made to increase the uptake of walking and cycling for active travel can have knock on benefits in terms of health and physical activity which in turn will contribute to a wide range of policies such as national, regional and local transport strategies, Lets Make Scotland More Active strategy for physical activity and Single Outcome Agreements.

This has contributed to active travel not being given high enough a priority within organisations and as a result insufficient funds are targeted towards developing and delivering improvements. Whilst the Cycling Action Plan for Scotland process provides a good example of a way forward it should be noted that it lacks the identification and commitment of adequate levels of funding for implementation.

Media attention is also focussed on new road and bridge building projects, cancelled public transport initiatives and the continuing impact of vehicle emissions on the climate as a result of this there are very few good news stories regarding active travel reaching the public to improve perceptions.

Question 3 - If not, what are the barriers to progress? (for example, lack of policy development, lack of political leadership, lack of funding/investment, the lack of prominence given to active travel in transport policy development, project planning and construction etc.)

The main barrier to progress is the lack of financial resources targeted towards investment in walking and cycling infrastructure. This will become increasingly constrained in future years due to the current financial climate and budgetary constraints within the key delivery organisations e.g. local government organisations.

At present transport expenditure is focussed on road access and to achieve a modal shift it is necessary to target a proportion of the available resources towards non motorised access and public transport. It is estimated that active travel currently accounts for less than 1% of the total transport budget and a more significant commitment is essential to achieving modal shift. A key example of this is the implementation of Core Paths Plans. Whilst the Plans provide a valuable starting point in providing access for everyday journeys, the lack of resources available for their implementation could reduce the potential benefits that can be realised.

The expansion of out of town retail, office and industrial developments over the last few years has also had a significant impact on the choice of transport option. In a number of cases this has discouraged the use of active travel and has a direct impact on the most disadvantaged within populations. It is essential that future developments are accessible by active forms of transport and that walking, cycling and public transport is prioritised over vehicular access when considering future developments. This needs to be promoted through the forthcoming Local Development Plans and national developments such as the Central Scotland Green Network.

Question 4 - Why do walking and cycling policies set out in national, regional and local transport plans not result in a greater modal share for walking and cycling?
Whilst it is recognised that it is often easier to achieve things on a smaller scale within a local transport plan than nationally through a Government initiative it is essential that the Government sets out a policy and creates the environment in which local authorities can operate. As highlighted in the response to Question 2, inadequate weight is currently being placed on the significant and positive role that active travel can make which impacts directly on its level of priority. Local authorities may make small inroads but it needs the national policy makers to make a real statement of intent.

There is also a need for a co-ordinated partnership approach to the improving the modal share for walking and cycling and in particular between the public, voluntary and commercial sectors. In Scotland there are a large number of organisations already working together to deliver policy change and active travel on the ground and this partnership working is essential to the successful delivery of change.

**Question 5 - What further action is required by the Scottish Government, local authorities and other bodies to ensure that significant progress is made in the development and implementation of walking and cycling, particularly if transport is to make a greater and more meaningful contribution to the reduction in greenhouse gas emissions?**

To ensure significant progress in terms of walking and cycling it is necessary to change public perception and the reliance on the car. This requires a partnership approach from wide variety the public, private and voluntary organisations including central government, local authorities, transport partnerships, National Health Services, employers and the wide range of voluntary organisations involved in encouraging access and active travel.

Incentive schemes such as the Cycle to Work scheme also go some way towards doing this but without the types of measures discussed in question 1 are unlikely to achieve real modal shift. All of this however requires significant and sustained investment.

Agreeing and developing towns as areas of vibrant housing, employment and retailing where access can be easily achieved on foot or bicycle and reducing the urban sprawl that forces people to drive. Removing the need to drive creates less demand and that means less CO2 emission and more active travel with all of the health benefits that come from it. Slowing urban vehicle traffic and restricting access will open up streets to pedestrians and cyclists again and creating specific car free routes for leisure and social activities will make walking and cycling an attractive option for people.

**Question 6 - What can Scotland learn from good practice/successful implementation in other countries?**

There are six Cycling Demonstration Towns in England and Cycling England has recently undertaken an analysis and synthesis of the evidence on the effects of investment in the towns from which good practice could potentially be drawn. Successful national initiatives such as the cycle loan facilities used in Bristol and London could also be expanded within key Scottish towns and cities to encourage increased cycling. Further afield there are a number of Northern European communities making sustainable travel work from which Scotland could draw including:

- Freiburg in Germany which provides an example of how a city can adopt a more pedestrian friendly policy and still retain a vibrant community.
- Gent in Belgium which has adopted more cycle friendly policies making the town centre car free and developing cycle routes round the town.
- Nantes in France which has designed its city centre roads to favour public transport and cyclists over the car user.

In addition to this it is important to build on the work already being undertaken in Scotland including the National Cycle Network, development of Core Paths Plans and other activities happening at a local and national level and to ensure that these are adequately resourced to enable them to deliver the desired benefits.