

Rosskeen to Invergordon shared-use path extension: Engagement outcomes

A report summarising engagement findings from in-person and online engagement conducted by Sustrans on behalf of The Highland Council.



20/01/2025

To find out more, please contact Ruth Morrison [Redacted]

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We connect people and places, create liveable neighbourhoods, transform the school run and deliver a happier, healthier commute. Join us on our journey.
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Project Description

Sustrans and The Highland Council are working collaboratively to consider the extension of the shared use footpath from Alness to Rosskeen, to Invergordon. The aim is to extend the existing Alness to Rosskeen shared use footpath and provide a safe, direct and enjoyable walking, wheeling and cycling connection between Invergordon and Alness.

This route was identified as a priority in the Alness / Invergordon Active Travel Masterplan for improvement. A recent feasibility study led to the chosen route due to the lowest environmental impact and most economic viability. The proposed path runs on the coastal side of the B817 road.

The purpose of engagement is to gauge support for this option, understand any unidentified issues or concerns and ask for community views on the design.

From 2 to 5 December, a programme of in-person engagement was conducted in parallel to an online survey, running 27 November to 6 January. Together, these activities provided an understanding of community priorities, needs, and concerns.

Key findings summary

Community feedback revealed the following major insights, supported by data from surveys and engagement activities. Key findings from in online and in-person engagement settings were:

- 70% of respondents are positive about the proposed route
- Preferences for appropriate lighting, bins and resting places.
- Concerns around traffic safety across the whole route and specific concerns around Rosskeen crossing.
- Concerns around potential lack of route maintenance and its impact on usability.
- Impact on coastal SSSI status and on bird populations (raised by the local port authority).
- 44% of survey respondents' preferred method of travel is cycling (in contrast to 18% of adults who cycle once per week across Scotland), showing a need for active travel infrastructure improvements on this route.

Objectives of the engagement activities

1. **Understand current route usage:** Capture diverse perspectives on current route use, and how changes would impact people differently.
2. **Engage diverse demographics:** Ensure inclusive engagement by reaching varied age groups and backgrounds, including a focus on protected characteristics.
3. **Gather feedback on active travel needs:** Understand current needs for active travel in the area to ensure project viability.
3. **Discuss local concerns:** Evaluate the perceived benefits or challenges of extending the shared-use path for all users including wheelchair users, and those with mobility needs.
4. **Encourage transparency and foster trust:** Facilitate open dialogue on project goals and the importance of feedback in shaping final recommendations.

Insights from Engagement

This section provides an overview of the engagement outcomes and insights from in-person engagement and online engagement through [Commonplace](#). These figures demonstrate the extent of the engagement activities and underscore the community's priorities.

Engagement reach

A combination of online and in-person engagement was conducted. In-person engagement was held at two schools, library drop-in events that were promoted locally and drop-in sessions at places where people were already meeting, such as a parent and toddler group and community Christmas grotto planning session! This approach meant that people, who may not have actively chosen to attend an engagement session or respond to the online survey still had the opportunity to provide feedback.

- 90 community members were engaged in person
- 65 people responded to the online survey
- 155 people engaged in total
- 7 in-person engagement activities were conducted
- 37 participants were under 16 (through school-specific engagement)
- The Commonplace site received 493 visits, meaning a higher number of people were informed of the project than just those who responded.

Current trends in cycling and walking

- For short journeys most residents of Invergordon walk, wheel or cycle.
- Cycling (44%) would be the preferred mode of travel between towns if better infrastructure were in place
- Traffic safety is the most important consideration for the use and uptake of any new route (48%)
- The main barrier to walking, wheeling and cycling between the towns is road safety issues.

Feelings towards the current infrastructure

The majority of participants felt that current provision did not serve many people to walk, wheel or cycle safely between communities.

- 78% of respondents felt the area was unsafe for an unaccompanied 12-year-old to walk or cycle.
- 60% of respondents felt the area was unsuitable for anyone with mobility impairments to walk, wheel or cycle.
- 64% of respondents felt there were insufficient resting places currently along the route.

Respondents in person and online noted the following barriers to travelling actively on the route:

- Speed of traffic
- Unsafe with pets or young children
- Lack of maintenance of hedges and grass edges blocking route
- Dangerous driving
- Consistency of cycling route
- Lack of lighting

Young people identified all the same barriers. Girls were particularly concerned about the area feeling unsafe and would not walk there due to lack of lighting and feelings of isolation. Additional barriers identified by young people included:

- Bad Weather
- Maintenance in relation to potholes, wires sticking out and litter
- No one to go with
- Concern about anti-social behaviour or crime: a dangerous environment
- The incline

Sentiment towards the project

Across all engagement activities, the proposals were generally received positively, with 70% of online respondents stating they were happy or satisfied with the proposals.

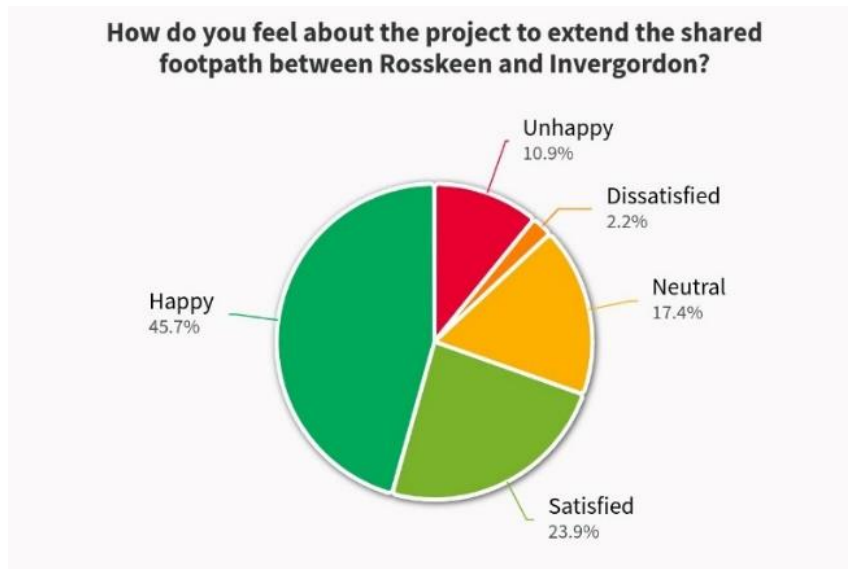


Figure 1 - Showing community feelings towards project

Support for the project

One respondent reinforced the findings that the route is currently used, but unsafe to walk or cycle.

“Delighted with the proposal. I walk regularly between the Donkey Bridge and Rosskeen and find it dangerous meeting other walkers, cyclists and pram users, no room to pass safely.”

Another respondent who was keen on the project advocated for *“More publicity, opportunities to join rides, walks etc...”* Maintenance concerns

There was some concern about ongoing maintenance of the paths, which may render them unusable:

“I would cycle a lot in the summer but not when branches are knocking you into oncoming traffic..... who will make sure its maintained because if its not, its an absolute waste of money.”

Share use path concerns

While some raise concerns that may relate to a worry about speed of confident cyclists alongside other path users:

“Think it should be primarily a walking route and leisure cycling route for families and children , not a commuter cycling route.”

Prioritisation of which cycling routes for investment

Responses that did not support the proposal primarily focussed on prioritisation and other areas that may be in greater need of similar measures rather than against any cycling infrastructure at all:

"There is already a cycle path/pedestrian path from Invergordon to Alness. Please consider the positive impact you could make by connecting Milton, Polnicol, Barbaraville, Pollo, Ballintrad to Salt burn so there is safe pedestrian and cyclist access to Invergordon. There are currently children in these villages with no safe pedestrian or cyclist access to their catchment secondary school. Older people in these villages are also cut off with no option other than bus/car travel. There are now also cyclist tours during the summer from Invergordon to Barbaraville (tours of 20 or so cyclists) in a 60 mile and hour bendy road without any safe cycle path."

The request for connections eastwards to Milton and beyond were also echoed in the secondary school engagement session. The young people were supportive of improving the proposed and other routes for cycling but some considered eastward connections more useful.

Road safety

Road safety was a recurring theme, both in reasons to support the proposals, and to assert that they did not go far enough in addressing all necessary road crossings to reach the proposed cycle path.

"This road is dangerous as there are times when young people are walking on it to access Invergordon with no lighting and no safe pathway"

Similarly, during a drop in at Invergordon Church and both library sessions, despite overarching positive reactions to the proposed route, concerns were raised about crossing from Rosskeen to the path, as well as the challenges high traffic speeds where cars often exceed the speed limit.

"The crossing is the difference between whether I'd let my children cycle it or not."

Concerns around speeding traffic were reinforced during a site-walk through by the engagement team.

During the primary school engagement, many of the preferences identified in engagement with adults were echoed by children. Key requests by young people were that the path were wider and smoother and is clearly segregated (e.g., with a fence).

Even with the proposed new path, children and young people said that cars travel too fast and there needs to be a zebra crossing.

Placemaking and other route features

This question related to additional features on the route to improve usability and the feel of the route to make it as safe, welcoming and accessible as possible.

Practical features such as lighting, bins and resting places received most support among both young people and adults.

In terms of more aesthetic elements, respondents indicated preference for elements reflecting local heritage to more general artwork or planters.

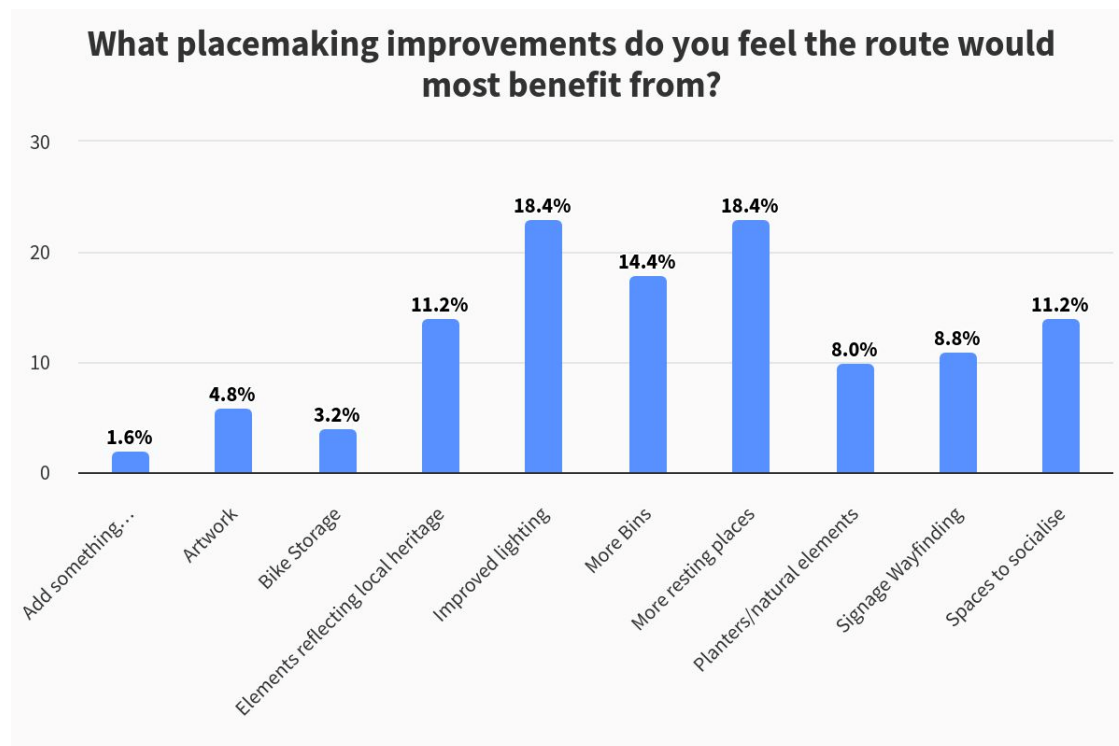


Figure 2 - Placemaking improvements.

Concern over maintenance was a recurring theme; both in terms of path usability and in any additional placemaking interventions. It is for this reason, some respondents voiced concern over planters or some forms of artwork.

If elements reflecting local heritage were taken forward Invergordon Development Trust, who look after the local murals, would be a natural project partner.

Conclusions

The engagement programme provided diverse opportunities to respond to the proposals. As a result, the responses capture views from a range of demographics perspectives. The engagement team actively sought to engage with children and young people, older people, families with young children, keen cyclists as well as those who would not currently choose to walk, wheel or cycle along the route at present.

Proposals for the proposed route were generally supported across all engagement, with 70% of online respondents positive to the proposals. There did not appear to be a particular demographic that a positive or negative perspective was stronger than the other.

Many residents already actively travel for short journeys. There was strong support for enhancing active travel options in the area, but some feelings that routes to the east should be higher priority. Engagement suggested that providing better active travel infrastructure would result in more people walking and cycling along the route.

Traffic safety was identified as the most important consideration for route activation. The majority of respondents felt the route was not safe or accessible for children or those with access needs. Recurrent concerns across all ages and engagement settings included:

- Safety of crossing points to access and continue on the route.
- Traffic speeds along the route

Route safety is the primary barrier to travelling actively between the towns. Many respondents asserted that this needs to be address to enable high levels of use and greater independence on the route for more people, including young people.

There was recurring support for more bins, lighting, and more resting places along the route. Litter and dog waste were mentioned as key issues that would need addressed to make the area feel welcoming to walk and cycle.

Artwork, with a focus on local heritage features, was preferred over plants due to maintenance concerns.

Design considerations in relation to protection of bird populations and coastal erosion were raised. Participants were keen to hear how these would be addressed so should feature in future communications as the design develops.

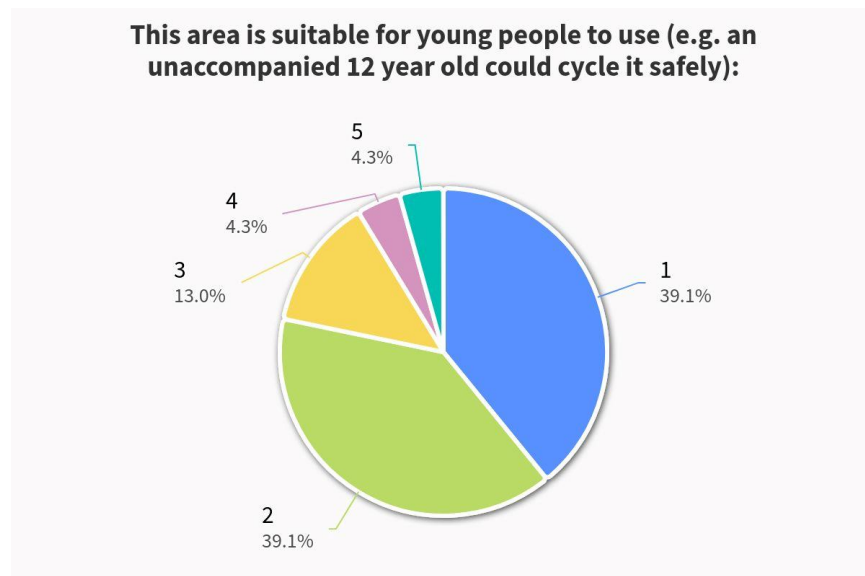
The engagement outcomes demonstrated clear support for this project and active travel projects more broadly, whilst maintenance, road safety, social safety, accessibility and environmental considerations were key concerns.

Appendices

1) Data from online engagement

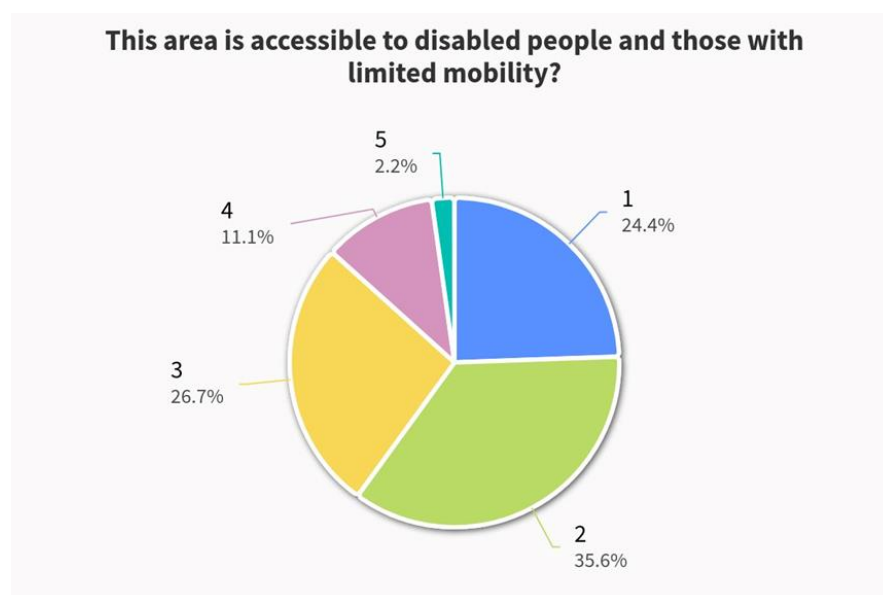
Current usability of route.

1 'Strongly Disagree' - 5 'Strongly Agree'.



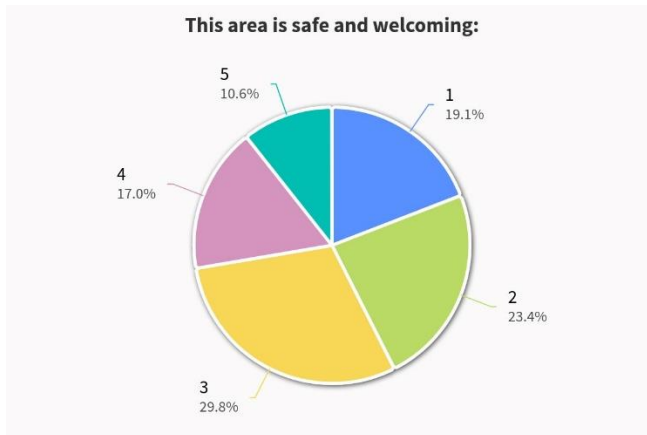
Accessibility of current infrastructure

1 'Strongly Disagree' - 5 'Strongly Agree'.



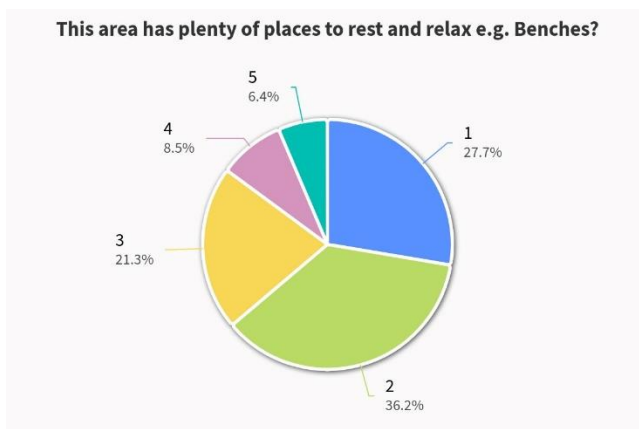
Current area is safe and welcoming

1 'Strongly Disagree' - 5 'Strongly Agree'



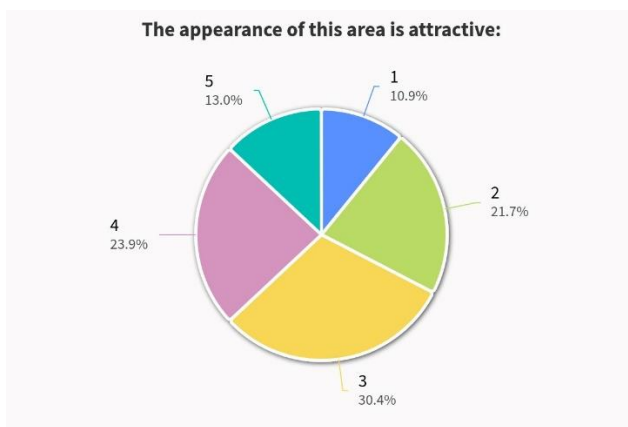
Current state of resting places

1 'Strongly Disagree' - 5 'Strongly Agree'



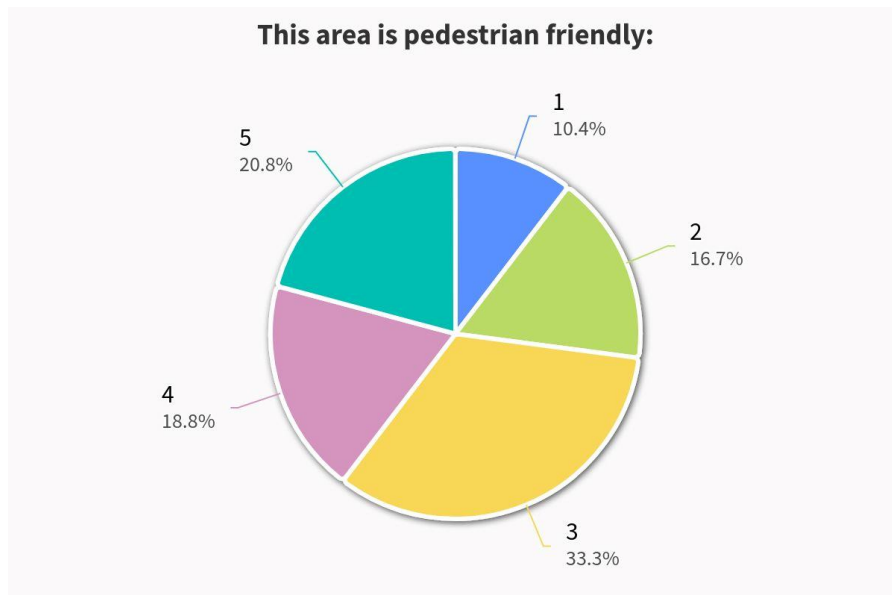
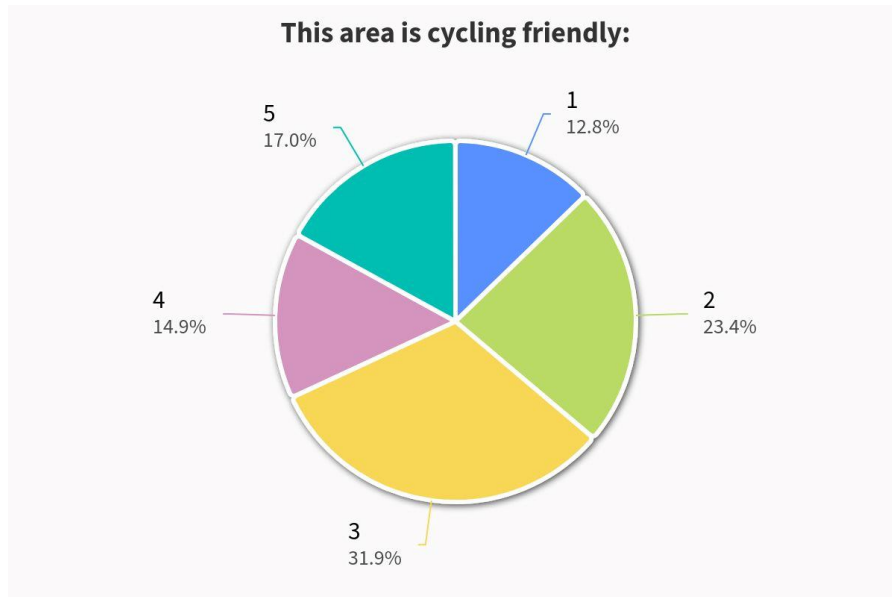
Appearance of the area is attractive

1 'Strongly Disagree' - 5 'Strongly Agree'



The area is cycling friendly / The area is pedestrian friendly

1 'Strongly Disagree' - 5 'Strongly Agree'



Barriers to active travel

It was identified in both in person and online engagement sessions that there are certain things stopping people from currently actively travelling along the route. The improvements suggested would improve some of the barriers for people. But some consideration for route maintenance and traffic safety would need to be addressed to address all barriers. See more information below:

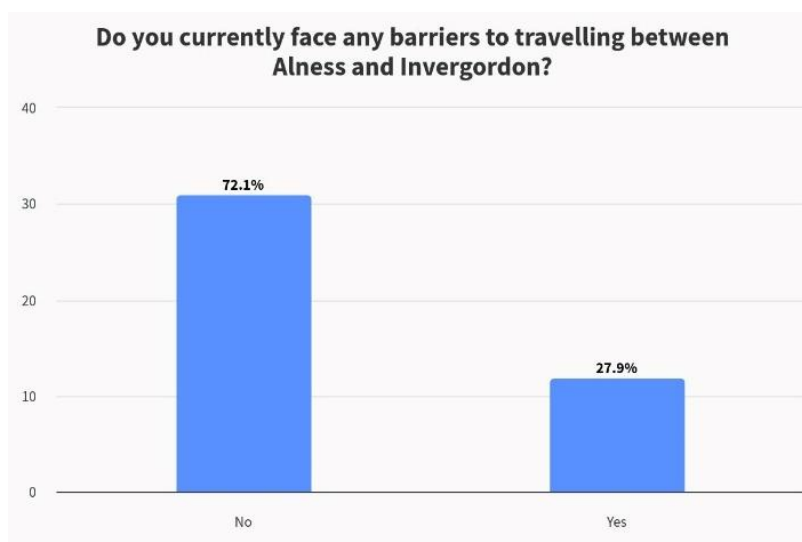


Figure 3 - 27.9% of respondents currently face barriers travelling between the town

Preferred mode of transport and Cycling confidence.

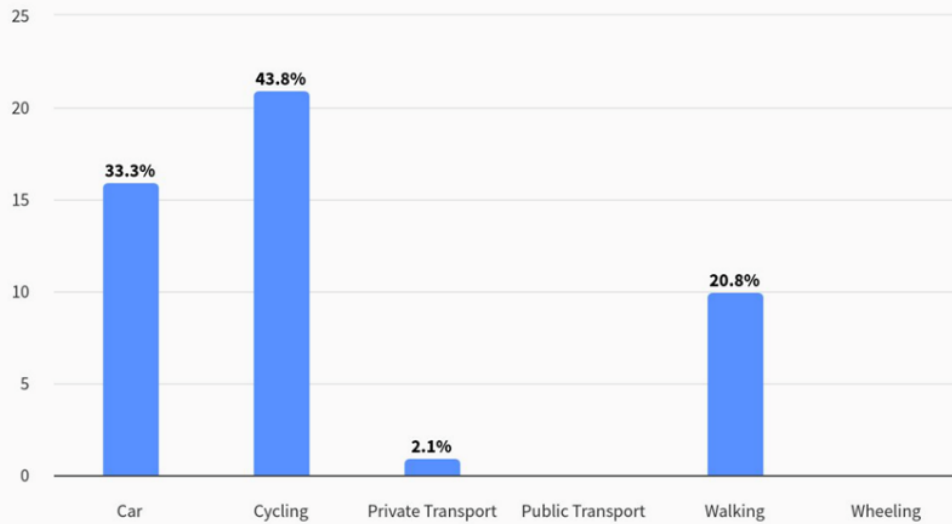
Scotland-wide, only 18% of people cycle at least once per week ([Sustrans Walking and Cycling Index.](#)) in contrast, 44% of respondents stated that cycling was their preferred choice to travel between the towns, indicating that connecting the two towns will be well received and lead to proportionately good levels of uptake for the respective populations.

Notably, the percentage of those who would like to cycle is higher than those that currently feel confidence to do so, demonstrating a clear benefit to improving the route.

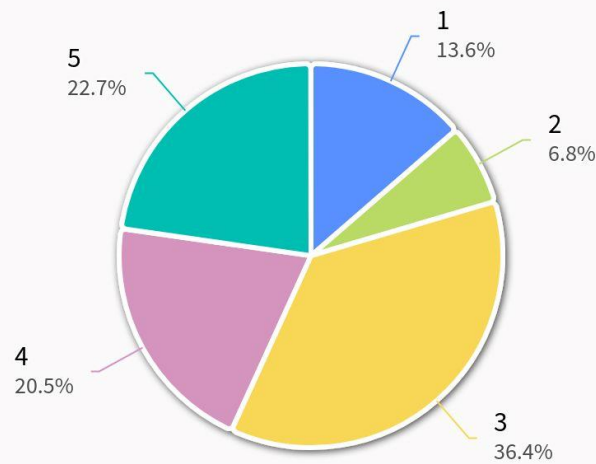
Some comments from those whose preferred method of transport is cycling who identified as low confidence in cycling the route in its current state:

- *“It’s very tricky trying to right turn into the Rosskeen part when on a bicycle with cars coming from behind. When I was about to manoeuvre one day, white van man almost clipped my elbow when he decided he was overtaking.”*
- *“Pavement at Invergordon end is very narrow, dangerous when you have children with you cycling or walking”.*
- *“Dangerous fast road between Invergordon and Rosskeen”*

If travelling between the towns, what would be your preferred mode of transport?



On a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is Not at all confident, and 5 is Very confident: How confident would you feel cycling between the towns?



2) Insights from In-person Engagement

This section provides an overview of the engagement outcomes and insights from the In-person Engagement events. Between 2 and 5 December, various engagement activities—including face-to-face discussions, Schools Engagement, Stakeholder meetings and two open public events.

In-person Engagement activity

- Invergordon Academy/Park Primary School Engagement (37 Students Engaged with across the 2 schools + 2 Staff Members)
- Invergordon Parish Church Grotto Engagement (18 Community Members Engaged)
- Alness Library Drop- In Session (5 Community Members Engaged)
- Mums and Toddlers Group (3 Parents Engaged)
- Alness Library Public Event (11 Community Members Engaged)
- Invergordon Library Public Event (14 Community Members Engaged)
- 90 Community Members Engaged Over-all

Invergordon Academy Schools Engagement

14 Secondary School Students S1-6. 9 male, 3 female.

Session Plan: **See Appendix 3**

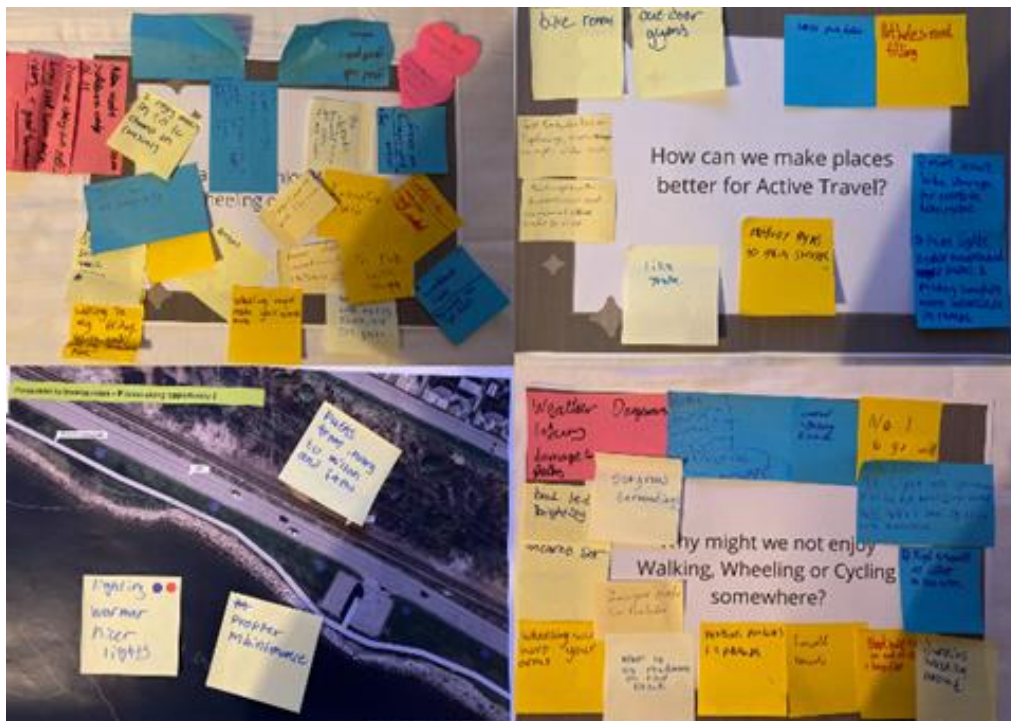


Figure 4 - for more in-depth views of charts please contact Ruth Morrison

Question	Responses
What made students chose to Actively Travel somewhere?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Places close to their houses • Fun, Calming, Relaxing • Good walk length • Good Paths • Nature • Shops • Not Busy • Nice Views • Good Terrain • Good Exercise • Good to walk my dog
What would stop you from Active Traveling?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bad Weather • Bad Lighting (too bright LED) • Dangerous Surroundings • Potholes • No one to go with • Obstructions • Incline • Wires and sticking out • High amounts of litter in an area • Unsociable/Criminal Walking
How can we improve these issues?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outdoor Gym Equipment to help with people's strength and stamina to move more • Bike rentals • Potholes need filling • Smoother surface • Wider paths • Better lighting • Smoother Surfaces • More Bins
Why do you currently use the route B817?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Car, for shopping. • Running for exercise • Car for gymnastics • Car for football • Walk for nature • Car for the football • Bike for exercise

Additional information

All students used the route in some capacity. The students at Invergordon school were a mixture of student council, and general interested students. The students seemed to understand the general premise of active travel, and how places can be improved to make it better.

Students were keen for the route to be improved – and some notable insights were:

Female Safety: There were 3 girls present at this workshop. In contrast to the boys, they felt scared when its dark. They suggested more lighting and creating a more open and public facing space. They fed back that they currently enjoy walking on the high street – which is highly public and well lit.

Sports: Students stated they regularly travel the route to access sporting/activities in Alness. Some said that they may consider cycling to the sessions if they felt safer to do so.

Lighting: Lighting has recently been replaced in Invergordon and the group felt strongly it was too bright and didn't fit the style of the street. They agreed on needing more lighting, but a warmer more traditional style of lighting was preferred. This is usually something brought up by an older engagement session crowd and I was pleased to hear it in this setting.

Park Primary Schools Engagement

23 P6 students and 1 staff member

Session Plan: **See Appendix 4**

A group of 23 P6 students participated in an icebreaker session, revealing that they all enjoyed walking and cycling, and appreciated spending time outdoors. During the discussion, Saltburn Woods emerged as the most popular location for active travel, with play parks, football fields, and lochs also mentioned as preferred spots. When asked about the concept of active travel, the students demonstrated a strong understanding of the necessary elements to make areas more suitable for active travel, showing insightful ideas on how to improve spaces for outdoor activities.

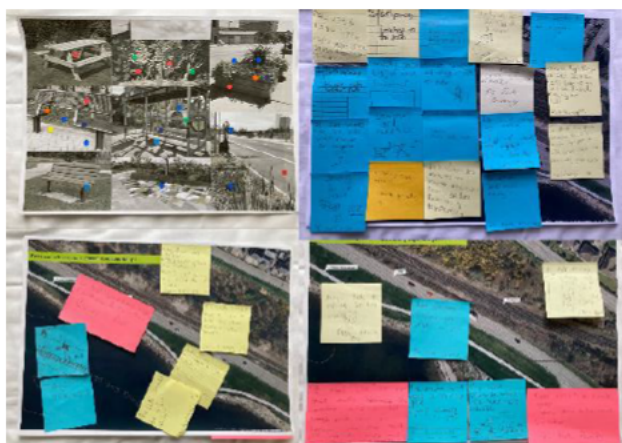


Figure 5 - for more detailed viewing contact Ruth Morrison

Question	Findings
How/When/Why do you use the route?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All students were familiar with the route • All students have been on the route before • 50% of students have walked the route before • 25% of students had cycled the route • 1 student used the route daily living in Alness • 12 students used the route weekly • 9 students used the route monthly
How could the route be improved?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make a speed limit lower • Benches on the path • Smoother path • Bigger path • Railing for 'older blind' people • Path needs to be bigger • More lighting, more space, less bumps, railing on path

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Less steep and narrow • 'I think the path should be a bit bigger for people with disabilities in case they get hurt' • 'get a fence so you don't fall on the road' • 'benches for old people' • Lighting • Not as overgrown • 'Cars not going as fast for safety' • More bins to stop littering • Add a zebra crossing • "The route could have a gate. The road is currently too close to the path ' I feel like it's not that safe as the corners are rough and cars can slip onto"
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Route Safety

When initially asked whether they were safe cycling or walking on the route the room split 50/50. However, one student then discussed how the route had a high incidence rate of car crashes, traffic speeds and lack of lighting. By the end of the session, 22/23 students agreed the route did not feel safe.

Place Making Selections

Each student was asked to mark their three favourite ideas below are the votes.

- Picnic Bench - 13
- Accessible Bench - 10
- Standard Bench -1
- Murals - 10
- Bus stop Art - 5
- Ground Art -3
- Planters - 6
- Rain Garden/Plants along the side of the path – 14

Class Feedback Email

"Thank you so much for coming to Park Primary School today. Our class really enjoyed your visit. They made the following comments:

I liked the activities that we did. It was good to think about how to be active.

I liked it because we got to learn more about travel and what to do to make it more active.

It convinced me to try to stop using cars and take care of the environment.

I like that she made active travel seem fun and that Ruth took our suggestions.

We got to share our ideas as how to make the path better.

It is exciting that their views will help to influence / shape what the future look of the Shore Road will look like. (P6Class Teacher)"

Invergordon Parish Church – Santa’s Grotto Wrapping Session

Overall positive response to the idea of improving the route, if nature, grass, and plants are well-maintained. It was also suggested that more bins be added, particularly for dog waste, as the current parking area is frequently used by dog walkers. Although the path is heavily used by walkers, many prefer to walk on the grass due to safety concerns about the path itself. Additionally, the benches along the route need updating.

Concerns were raised about crossing from Rosskeen to the path, as well as the challenges of actively traveling in a high-traffic, high-speed area where cars often exceed the speed limit.

Route Walk – 3.15pm

During my walk, traffic speeds were consistently well above the 50-mph limit, which felt dangerous, especially when lorries passed by. In bad weather, grit sprayed onto the path and onto me as lorries passed, making it uncomfortable. Walking on the current path also felt unsafe due to the size of the lorries. The grass area was littered with dog waste, and there were no bins available to dispose of it. I observed that the parking area was only being used by one person. During my walk at 3:15 pm, in bad weather, I only encountered one dog walker and one parked car over a 35-minute period.



Mums and Toddlers Drop In – Invergordon Parish Church

Leaflets were distributed, and I spoke with three mums who raised concerns about the erosion of the path near the port side of the route. They expressed uncertainty about whether they felt safe using the shoreline with a buggy due to the integrity of the grass.

Alness Library Event

Our team engaged with 11 people during the event. Overall, while the response to the path was positive, similar issues were highlighted that need attention and improvement.

- Crossing to the route near Rosskeen, with traffic safety being a significant concern. Cyclists expressed worries about losing their right of way when using the shared footpath near the High Street, rather than the road, which could cause problems when they need to rejoin the carriageway. We noted that behavior change, and education would be crucial in helping cyclists feel more confident sharing the path with pedestrians.
- Clear signage to communicate expectations for cyclists and others.
- Easy to clean and maintain benches.
- Sightlines to be checked for safety.
- Traffic exceeding the speed limit in the area.



Invergordon Library Event

During the event, we engaged with 14 people, including a representative from the Port Authority. As at previous sessions, the primary concern raised was the crossing, as while the public supports the route, its usability depends on being able to access it safely.

Concerns raised echoed some of what had arisen in other sessions. The impact of proposed rock armour on the local bird population and protected environment. Coastal erosion, traffic safety, and dog waste, with requests for more bins. Some suggested the need for more police presence or speed cameras in the area.

Ability to maintain the route properly and manage the litter and fly-tipping issues along the route were raised.

A P6 student from Park Primary suggested narrowing a junction near the main street and highlighted the need for increased safety at a particular corner.



4) Demographic data and additional online survey data

Demographic Data from 28 respondents who agreed to share:

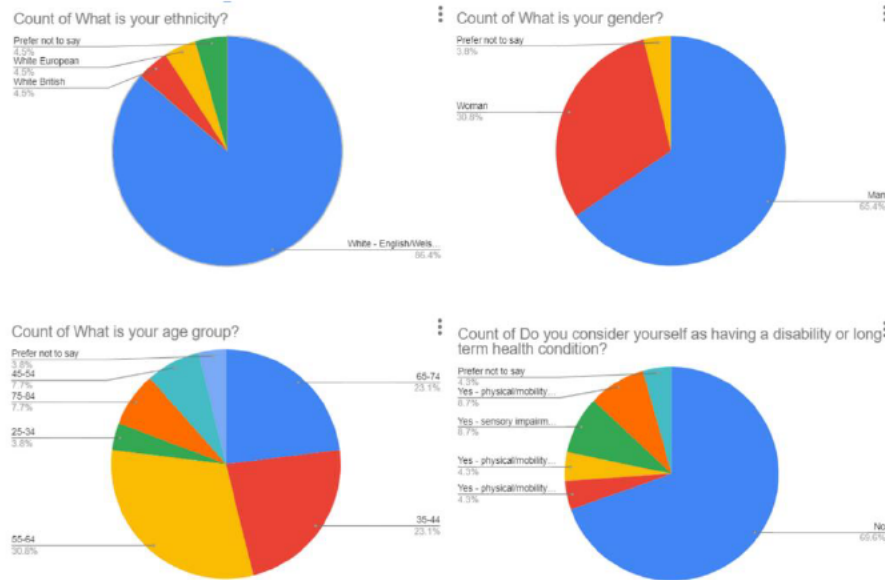


Figure 6 - **Low ethnic diversity reflective of local population

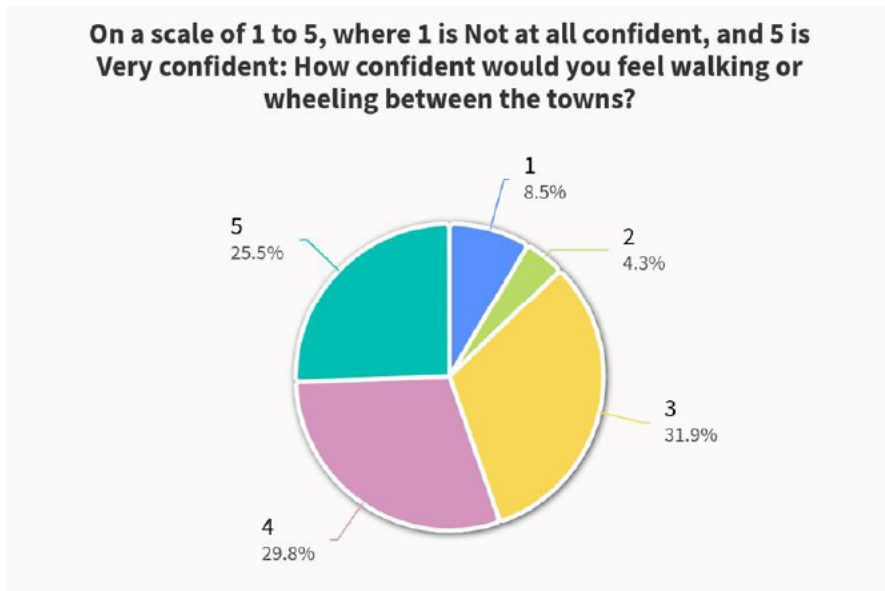
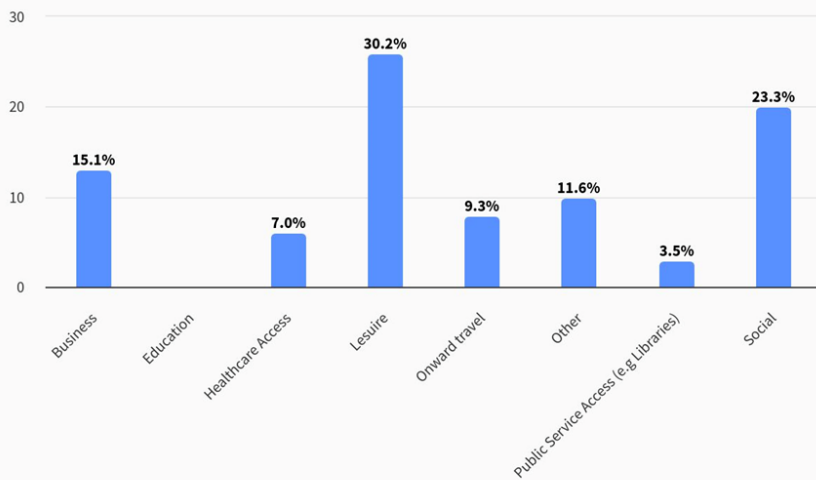
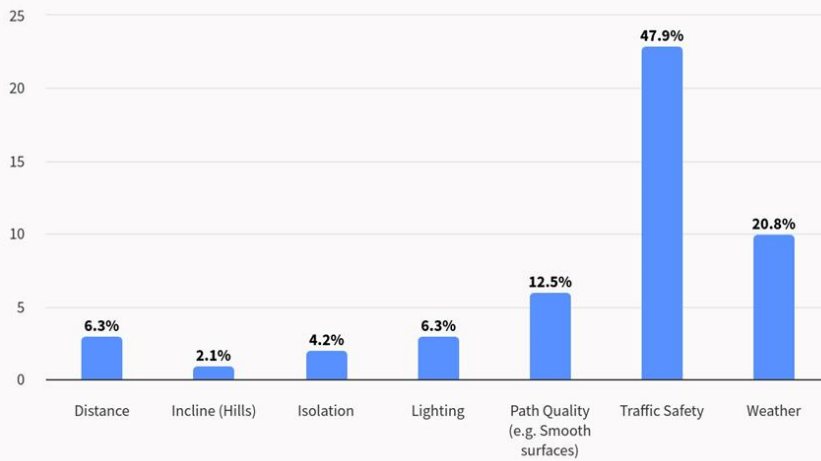


Figure 7 - referring to route in its current state

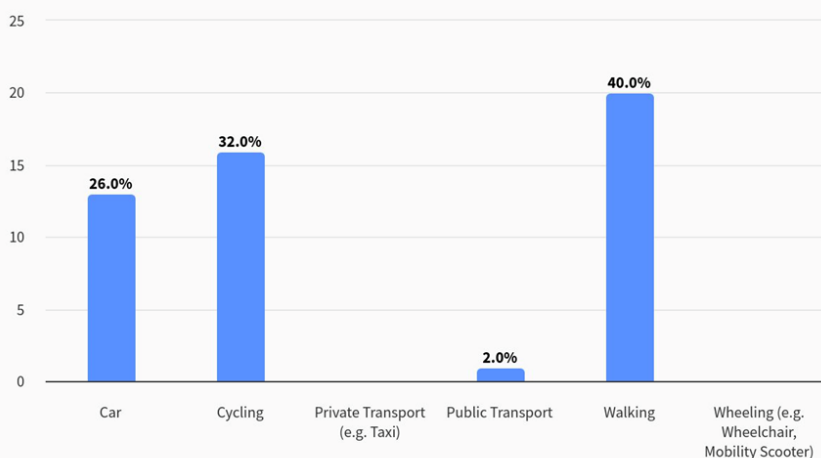
What is your main reason for travelling between the towns?



What is most important to you when choosing to walk, wheel or cycle a route?



How do you usually travel for short journeys (less than 2 miles)?



5) School engagement session plans

Invergordon Academy

Attendance – 10/12 Children Mixed Secondary Age. 1 hour session

Activity	Explanation/Purpose	Time/Resources Needed
Session/Project Introduction.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Introduce yourself to students and give a brief introduction as to why you're here. - Go round and ask students to introduce themselves and their favourite subject 	5 Minutes. Vocal
Icebreaker	Sit Down/Stand Up If (<i>Assess Accessibility, can be raise arm/lower arm. Or shout up/whisper if</i>) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Stand up if you've been outside today - Sit down if you've been inside today 	5 Minutes. Vocal
Favourite Places Brainstorming	Introduce the phrase Active Travel Can you think of a place you enjoy walking/wheeling/cycling in? Why? Round Table Feedback with Post it Notes (can break into groups if needed)	15 Minutes A3 Bubble and Post it notes Pens
Reverse Brainstorming	What makes a place not enjoyable to active travel in? What are solutions?	10 Minutes A3 Bubble and Post it notes Pens

Activity	Explanation/Purpose	Time/Resources Needed
Session/Project Introduction.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Introduce yourself to students and give a brief introduction as to why you're here. - Go round and ask students to introduce themselves and how they got to school today 	5 Minutes. Vocal
Icebreaker	<p>Sit Down/Stand Up If (<i>Assess Accessibility, can be raise arm/lower arm. Or shout up/whisper if</i>)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Stand up if you've been outside today - Sit down if you've been inside today 	5 Minutes. Vocal
Favourite Places Brainstorming	<p>Can you think of a place you enjoy walking/wheeling/cycling in? Draw it, and write three words to describe why?</p> <p>Pick 3-4 Students to Feedback</p>	15 Minutes (10 to draw, 5 to feedback) A3 Bubble and Post it notes Pens
Route Intro	<p>Explanation and Introduction of the Route</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Do they currently use it? - How? - Why? - How often? <p>Movement Questions – One side of the room is Yes, the other is No.</p>	10 Minutes Map
Getting from A-B	<p>An activity around route improvement.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What makes a route safer? - How can we be encouraged to use the route? - Placemaking Sticker Activity 	15 Minutes