

## Excellence in Walking and Public Realm

### Ellon Integrated Travel Town

#### Introduction

Ellon is one of Aberdeenshire's main market towns with a population of just over 10,000. August 2015 saw the opening of the new Ellon Academy

Community Campus, a £36 million state of the art building housing the secondary school along with sports and community facilities. This has presented an ideal opportunity to encourage

a change in travel behaviour, and Aberdeenshire Council has harnessed this by combining a number of measures in order to encourage a shift towards more active and sustainable travel.

#### The fifteen minute zone

plan it!

check it!

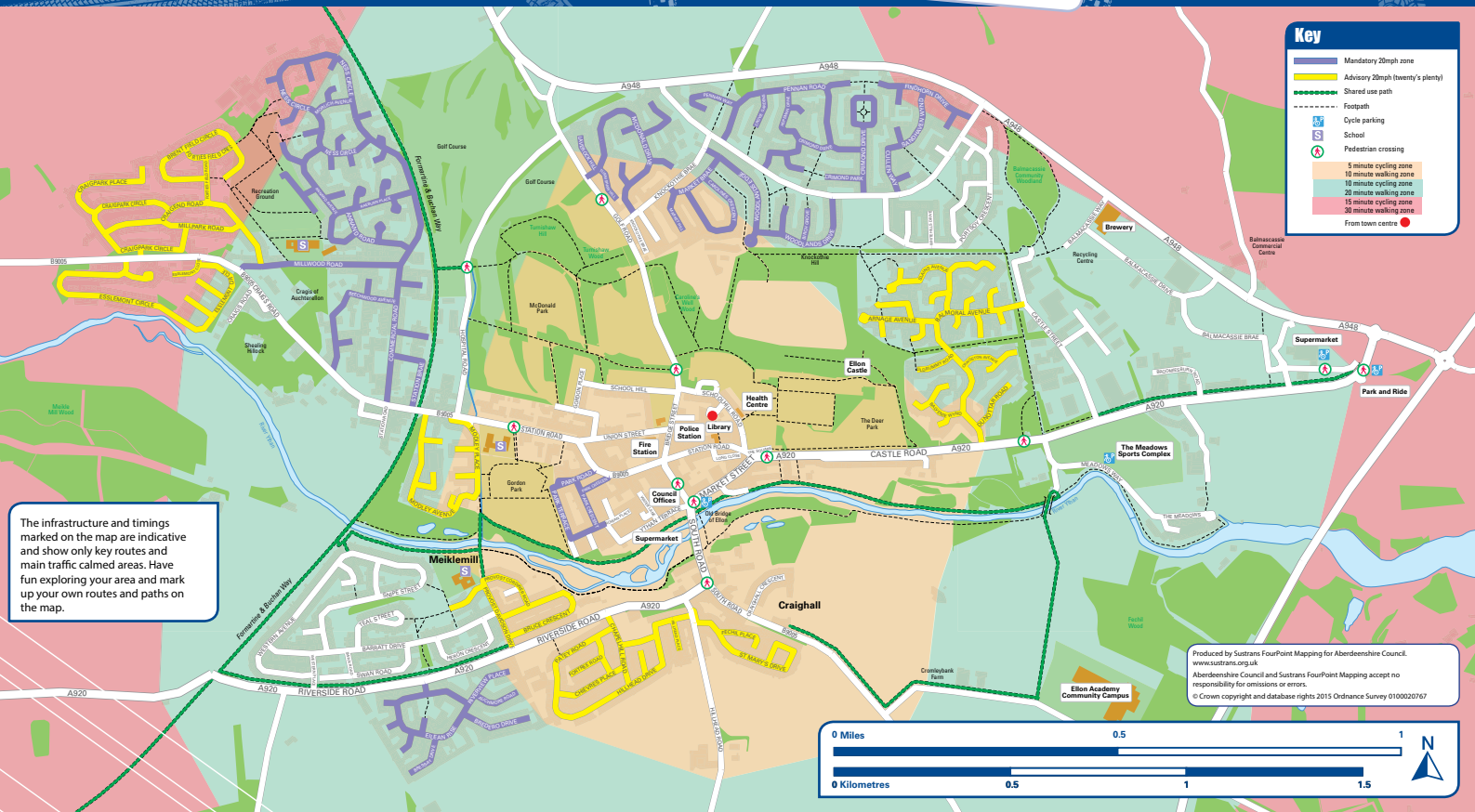
enjoy it!

share it!

Walk it

Bike it

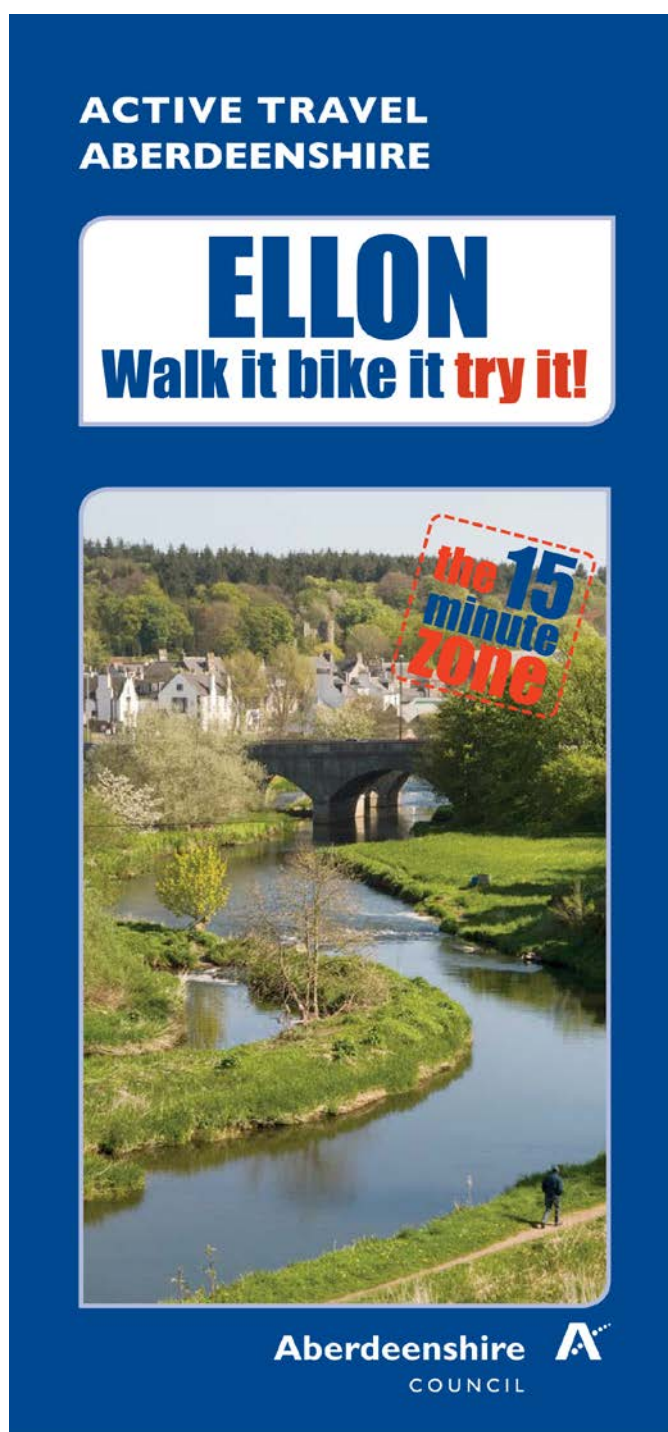
Try it!



## Integrated Travel Towns

Ellon is one of Aberdeenshire's Integrated Travel Towns (ITT), along with Fraserburgh, Huntly, Inverurie and Portlethen. This ambitious project combines *hard* measures (*i.e.* infrastructure improvements) with *soft or smarter* measures (*i.e.* interventions aimed at influencing behaviour, in this case away from single occupancy car use).

Infrastructure measures have been match funded through Sustrans' Community Links, while the smarter measures have been match funded through



Paths For All's Smarter Choices Smarter Places scheme. The rest of the funding to match the grants has come from Aberdeenshire Council and Nestrans (the Regional Transport Partnership for the North East of Scotland).

Through site audits and community engagement, proposals were developed to support more active and sustainable travel. Community engagement took place through locally held events and through the use of the Online Placecheck tool. This innovative piece of software allows residents to view a map of the town online as it currently exists, and then tag sections and add comments. These research and engagement methods have been applied in all 5 ITTs and have helped to inform the development of Master Plans for all towns.

This idea builds on the success of the Peterhead Cycle Demonstration Town.

### Infrastructure Improvements

When the new Ellon Academy Community Campus was constructed, multiple Council departments worked in partnership to ensure enhanced access to the site. This included the Transport Strategy Unit, Public Transport Unit, Education and Childrens' Services, Property and Facilities Management and Roads teams all working together to develop:

- A new pedestrian and cycle bridge across the River Ythan
- Upgraded shared use path with sealed surface and LED lighting along the north bank of the river
- A new signalised crossing on Castle Road

The above measures have resulted in the construction of a high quality link between the new Community Campus and the town centre.

Through consultation with the community we have also identified other key destinations and attractions within the town. This has then informed a strategy to develop a series of walking and cycling signs, which direct users to these destinations from throughout the town via the safest and most convenient routes.

Through Transport Scotland's ChargePlace Scotland, which is grant funded by the UK Office for Low Emission Vehicles (OLEV), a 22kW charger was commissioned in the Station Road car park in November 2015. With further grants awarded in September 2015, 50kW and 22kW charger units are also due to be commissioned at Ellon Park & Ride by the end of February 2016.

Another recently introduced infrastructure improvement is that of the Real Time Passenger Information (RTPI) system. This has been rolled out across Aberdeenshire, and uses tracking technology on buses to allow passengers to tell when the bus is due to arrive at each stop.

Helping to lock in these benefits is Aberdeenshire's existing programme of infrastructure measures for implementing safer routes to schools. These include improved cycle and scooter parking, traffic calming and demand management schemes to reassure parents that their children can travel to school safely and sustainably.

## Smarter Measures

Smarter measures complement and support the infrastructure improvements.

By identifying key customer segments, measures are directed according to where they will have the greatest effect, linking people, place and purpose. This has informed an integrated campaign to ensure engagement with local communities throughout and beyond the project. The campaign includes:

- Meeting with PTA groups from the feeder primary schools (Auchterellon, Ellon and Meiklemill) prior to the opening of the new Community Campus to promote the idea of walking and cycling to school and addressing their concerns.
- Council Officers working in partnership with Cycling Scotland as part of the Give Me Cycle Space campaign to run transition cycle ride from the above primary schools to the new Academy site. This also involved training up cycle leaders to accompany the primary 7 pupils. These rides provided pupils with an opportunity to explore the new walking and

cycling routes to the new site, plus some extra training to build on the Bikeability programme they undertook the previous year. It is intended that this will become an annual activity.

- Completion of School Travel Plans for the new Academy and all of the above primary schools and researching of support for walking buses.
- Developing a sustainable travel workshop for primary schools, in partnership with Education and Childrens' Services, to create a classroom resource and activities for a whole school year based on Curriculum of Excellence.
- Creation of walking and cycling maps, informed through consultation with community groups, to be launched in March 2016.
- Electric Vehicle road show. In October 2015 Council Officers displayed a range of EVs in the town centre, allowing members of the community to learn more about sustainable alternatives to the internal combustion engine motor vehicle.
- Ellon Pedal Car Race. This was a community led event, under the stewardship of the local Rotary club. Support was on hand from Council Officers in the form of running a bike roadshow (where attendees could try out a range of different bicycles) and providing information about travelling more sustainably.

These measures, combined with the infrastructure improvements, are already starting to have a positive effect. Since the move to the new site, the Hands Up Survey results for Ellon Academy show a rise in cycling to school, up from 0% in 2014 to 5% in 2015. The primary schools have also shown a rise in cycling over the same period, with Auchterellon up from 5% to 7%, Ellon Primary 4% to 10%, and Meiklemill 5% to 8%.

Automated cycle and pedestrian counters were installed in 2014. On key routes to schools we have observed increases of pedestrian and cycle activity of between 6% and 16% on last year's observations.



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## Conclusion

The Ellon Integrated Travel Town project is already starting to show fruition in an increase in the number of pupils cycling to all three primary schools and the new Academy. As further improvements to infrastructure and smarter measures come into effect, the aim is to deliver long-term gains in terms of shifting modal share towards walking, cycling and public transport use across the entire town's population.

