

Travel Information and Marketing

the **no excuse zone**

Are you in the zone?

Based upon a series of time tested cycle rides across **Westhill**, the no excuse zone illustrates the distance that a healthy person can cycle in less than **12 minutes**. If you live within the zone, build cycling into your routine a few days a week and enjoy the benefits.



No Excuse Zones

Background

Aberdeenshire Council's Local Transport Strategy contains policies and initiatives designed to encourage an overall behaviour change in the way we travel and acknowledges the need to reduce the environmental impact of transport. These aims are developed further within a daughter document to the LTS, the Aberdeenshire Walking and Cycling Action Plan.

Within this Plan, Council officers have identified a need to promote the relative ease with which many short utility trips could be undertaken by bicycle. In line with a desire to be innovative, an eye catching and thought-provoking marketing approach was considered key. With this, Aberdeenshire's first No Excuse Zones were borne.

A No Excuse Zone is a simple idea based on a series of test bike rides mapped within an area easily cycled by a healthy person within a modest amount of time. Permission was given to

use the format developed by transport consultants AECOM in cities such as Berlin, Copenhagen and Brisbane.

Two specific towns in Aberdeenshire were chosen for initial zoning. Westhill was chosen due to its growing business park and associated traffic growth. Peterhead was chosen as it has already been identified as a potential Cycle Demonstration Town (CDT) within the Council's Walking and Cycling Action Plan, and will continue to see significant investment in cycle infrastructure in the coming years.

No Excuse Zones

Aberdeenshire Council recognise there is a significant opportunity to increase levels of cycling within the population. However the ability to do so is often hindered by factors including poor awareness of available routes and time involved, as well as perceptions of safety.

The key aims of the No Excuse Zones are to help reduce car congestion and pollution within the towns by encouraging communities to be healthier and more active. The concept centres on the promotion of the short journey times by bike to employment centres, schools and services within the towns covered. Easy to follow maps are used to illustrate safe routes to key destinations within the town, alongside information on the health, financial and environmental benefits associated with replacing short car journeys with cycling.

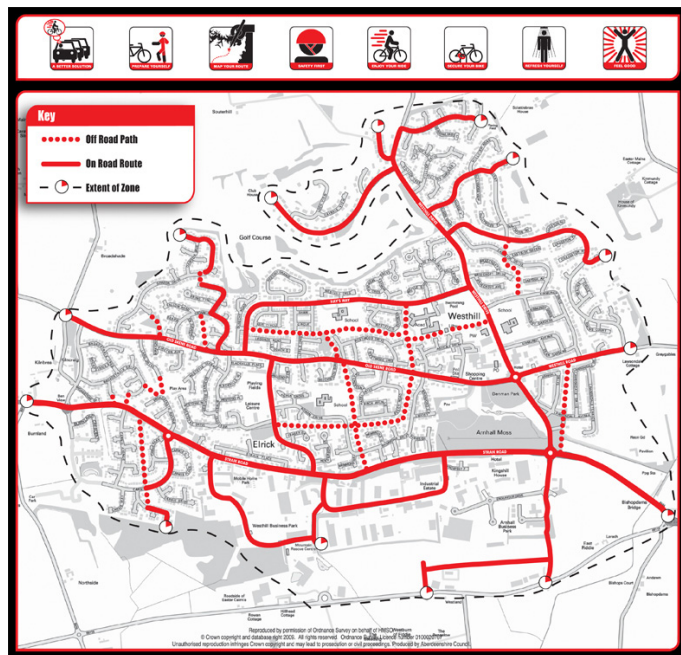
More than simply a map of routes, the marketing philosophy is deliberately eye catching, informative and thought provoking. The philosophy is intended to act as a challenge to residents to inform the Council of where improvements can be



made, new routes developed and cycle parking installed; while importantly creating a sense of community ownership for each Zone.

Westhill and Peterhead No Excuse Zones

Considerable background research and relationship building went into the identification and subsequent development of Westhill and Peterhead as Aberdeenshire's pilot No Excuse Zones, which were launched in May 2010. Identifying that 30% and 50% of the working and travelling population of Westhill and Peterhead respectively travel less than 2km to their place of work, the challenge is to ensure that a number of these journeys could be made by bike. The No Excuse Zone is seen to provide an opportunity to influence the behaviour change required.



In response to concerns about peak time traffic congestion and car parking, the Council sought to engage businesses in Westhill through a Travel Planning event titled, 'Westhill – The Future in Your Hands'. This, and subsequent meetings between local Business Park employers and bus companies, gave the opportunity to show that the No Excuse Zone map of Westhill provided a tool to employers to assist in their developing Travel Plans and reduce congestion and parking problems. The test rides identified the typical cross town cycle journey times of 12 minutes, highlighting the excellent off-road cycle paths and on-road cycle lanes throughout the town.



Peterhead, the largest town in Aberdeenshire, has seen significant investment in new off-road shared use paths. Identified as a developing Cycle Demonstration Town, the promotion of a No Excuse Zone map to residents was the perfect opportunity to promote this investment. The time tested rides demonstrated that all key facilities in this town could be cycled within 15 minutes and illustrated the high level of connectivity by bike across the town.

The launch of the No Excuse Zones was marked with day long events in each town. Recognising the value of the concept in Westhill, a local business offered the use of a car park within the Business Park for the launch event. Local businesses promoted the associated Commuter Challenge, Try Cycling Roadshow, free bike maintenance check and local school pupils visited the site to take part. At lunch time, office staff participated in the Try Cycling Roadshow.



In Peterhead, the launch took place at the town's secondary school with pupils taking part in the Try Cycling Roadshow throughout the day.

Recognising the value of brand recognition, a range of carefully selected marketing products were also produced which would be both functional and

raise the profile of the No Excuse Zone. Those entering the Commuter Challenge were encouraged to 'Bring a Buddy on a Bike' with the chance for a pair of cyclists to win MP3 players while those expressing an interest in cycling the zone were provided with a map, branded bike lights, a puncture repair kit and a high visibility rucksack cover.

A teaser style campaign was launched in advance of the events using posters and flyers to promote the brand and the concept. These were distributed around both town centres, within Business Parks, schools and community facilities, while the local press ran full page advertisements promoting the Zone. Short films showing the development of the Zones and their associated launches have been posted on the Council's Travel Planning YouTube Channel, www.youtube.com/AberdeenshireTP, as part of the viral marketing campaign.

Along with printed copies, printable versions of the No Excuse Zone maps are available on the Council's website, www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/noexcuse.

Key to the promotion of the maps and, more generally, the No Excuse Zone concept has been the engagement of local employers, the participation of partners such as NHS Grampian and the involvement of local schools.

Evidence of Progress

As the Zones were launched in May 2010 evaluation is in the early stages. Manual cycle counts in both towns took place prior to the launch and will be followed up at regular intervals over the coming months. Any modal shift within schools and local businesses will be measured through the businesses' travel surveys and the annual schools 'Hands Up' survey.



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While modal shift results are not yet available, initial feedback has been extremely positive. The willingness of local businesses to promote the maps as part of their Healthy Working Lives initiatives and Travel Planning process has been particularly encouraging. Indeed, it is strongly felt that a good indicator of the No Excuse Zone's progress has been the increased engagement of local businesses in the wider Travel Planning process and secondary schools in the School Travel Planning process.

The development of the Westhill and Peterhead No Excuse Zones will provide a template for the development of future No Excuse Zones across Aberdeenshire.

Future Developments

Aberdeenshire Council will maintain a high profile campaign within the two towns with information stands at the offices of local employers and through links with local schools.

We are also currently auditing cycling parking at key locations with a view to continuing our commitment to provide first class cycle facilities in line with the No Excuse Zone philosophy and the aims of the Council's Local Transport Strategy.



the zone explained

This map has been prepared based upon a series of timed cycle rides across Westhill. The map illustrates the distance that a healthy person can cycle within a modest amount of time.

The routes identified on the map are either on road cycle lanes, off road paths, quiet or traffic calmed roads.

If you live within the zone use the map to explore your own routes, test them out on a weekend first if you're thinking about commuting. Try cycling for a few days a week and enjoy the benefits of building an active lifestyle into your daily routine.



change your habit

The no excuse zone is not anti-car. Private car use is an important part of modern life. But its worth considering a few facts when making your travel choices.

- **Did you know?** 34% of the working and travelling population of Westhill live within 2km of their place of work.
- **Did you know?** 44% of commuters consider rush hour traffic to be the most stressful part of their working day.
- **Did you know?** 70% of adults do not achieve the minimum level of activity to be of benefit to their health.
- **Did you know?** Transport currently accounts for 24% of all CO2 emissions.

Cycling to work for one day a week can make a huge difference. Small changes can have a big impact.

enjoy your ride

Start your active lifestyle gently. Use our guide below and the map overleaf to help you. Consult a doctor before beginning exercise.

- **Get used to your bike.** Test your brakes, gears and tyre pressure. Build your confidence by going for short traffic free cycle rides.
- **Plan your route and test.** Check out our time tested routes one evening or during the weekend.
- **Make it easy on yourself.** Don't rush, the 12 minute zone is tested at a moderate pace.
- **Share your positive experiences.** Encourage others to join you. It can be fun cycling as a group.

Be Safe: check your bike regularly, plan your route and join others. Enjoy your ride and share your experiences.

you'll feel great

Cycling is a sustainable form of travel, good for your health and the environment. It can also save you money.

- **Reduce the risk of illness.** Cycling can reduce the incidence of Heart Disease, Stroke, Cancers, Stress and Osteoporosis.
- **Give yourself a boost.** Cycling can improve your self-esteem, mental well-being, motivation, concentration and your physical fitness.
- **Don't waste money.** Save money on gym membership; build exercise into your daily routine. Use the money saved on fuel for something special.

Use your bike for short trips to benefit your health and fitness, finances, local community and the environment.