

## Travel to School in Aberdeenshire: Challenging the School Run



### **Approaches to Delivery and Putting Policy into Practice**

Aberdeenshire Council's Local Transport Strategy contains policies and initiatives to encourage overall travel behaviour change, and acknowledges the need to reduce the environmental impact of transport.

The School Travel Planning initiative is an example of where our approach to behaviour change has been highly successful since its introduction in 2003, with 87% of our Schools now engaged in the process. This is complemented by an annual programme of projects funded by Council Capital and Scottish Government CWSS funds, further linked to the Part-Time 20mph at Schools project started as a pilot in Aberdeenshire in 1995.

Aberdeenshire Council has a target that all schools be involved in School Travel Planning. Through promotional activities such as walking and cycling events, competitions and partnership working, 151 schools were involved by May 2008.

Key to reaching this level of involvement has been excellent communication with pupils, parents and staff in our schools, notably through the production of a highly effective School Travel Plan (STP) Guide, supported by a dedicated web page <http://www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/schooltravelplan> featuring downloadable resources on all aspects of school travel planning. Partnership working has also ensured that STP are promoted within related initiatives, such as through the Grampian Health Promoting Schools Accreditation.

## Innovation

Aberdeenshire Council's Active Travel Working Group (ATWG), a partnership of our Active Schools, Health Promoting Schools, Eco Schools and School Travel Planning teams with Grampian Police's Road Safety Unit, coordinates the creation and delivery of a range of innovative active travel projects.

## Walk the World

In October 2006, the ATWG developed "Walk the World" to deliver a more inclusive Walk to School Week (WTSW) for schools with high bus use and special schools.

The project links active travel (walking, cycling and "Park and Stride") with virtual world travel: participants sum their daily active travel, matching totals to exciting locations and fun facts on a game map. Pupils and staff unable to travel actively to school participate by walking during break times. The more they walk or cycle, the more places they can visit.

As a result of Walk the World, 67 schools joined in WTSW, including 1 special school and 16 schools that had never previously participated; 7 of the 16 "new" schools continued holding WTSW the following year. The Scottish Government's "Tackling the School Run" has now funded a game pack for all Aberdeenshire schools.

## Go For It

Monitoring the impact of WTSW revealed that behaviour changes were sometimes short-lived; lack of incentives seemed to reduce parent and pupil enthusiasm for active travel, especially in schools with acute transport problems.

To redress this, the ATWG redesigned Go For It, Highland Council's original year-round active travel incentive scheme and expanded it to be fully inclusive to cyclists, school transport and special needs pupils.



In Go For It ([www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/goforit](http://www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/goforit)) pupils earn free physical activity sessions by collecting points for active travel on their school journey; those unable to travel actively participate in playground walking activities run by Junior Road Safety Officers (JRSO) or, at special schools, organised playground sports.



In its first year Go For It has substantially increased active travel, from 50% before to 66% a year on, while car use is down from 33% to 19%. In the best school, active travel increased from 23% to 80%.

Following a successful pilot in 20 schools, Go For It is being rolled out: in 2008, with “Tackling the School Run” funding, another 18 schools joined the scheme. 24 of the 38 Go For It schools have now started or completed their STP.

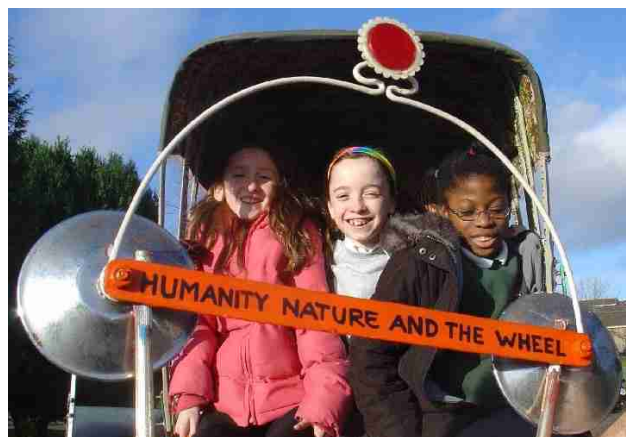
### Road Safety Magic Shows

The early development of road safety skills ensures that parents and pupils have the confidence to walk or cycle to school. Since 2006, groups of P1-3 pupils have received road safety magic shows focusing on safe walking and cycling. In the last 2 years, active travel in the 24 recipient schools increased from 55% to 64%, while car use decreased from 33% to 25%; 17 of the schools are now involved in school travel planning.



### Awareness Raising Activities

Novel means of raising awareness of local and global transport issues include the development of art projects linking school travel plans to the curriculum.



One such project, Song of the Rickshaw, led by Aberdeenshire Council with Scottish artist Kenny Munro, involved 10 schools investigating transport through one of three curricular links: Science and Technology; Citizenship; and People and Place. Pupils then built model rickshaws tailored to address issues identified in their workshop strand. In the subsequent year active travel increased from 49% to 57%, while car use dropped from 39% to 34% in the recipient schools, 7 of which are now involved in school travel planning.

Pupils are also encouraged to take ownership of projects. In the last two years, design competitions for the Aberdeenshire STP Mascot and Deeside Way – a multi-user path connecting Aberdeen to Ballater – logo have helped to raise the profile of transport issues and travel planning in schools and the wider community.



**DEESIDE WAY**  
*A2B2C the Dee*

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## Measurement of Results

Monitoring of modal shift linked to STP activities is done on a school-by-school basis. To gain a comprehensive view of modal shift, we developed a yearly Aberdeenshire-wide “hands-up” survey that started in 2006; in both years to date, we achieved participation levels of around 95%, surveying the transport habits of around 30,000 pupils each time. Since then, our approach has been adopted nationally for the “Hands-Up Scotland” survey, due for launch in September 2008.



## Evidence of Progress

In 2006, in Aberdeenshire, car-based school travel accounted for 25% of trips, active travel for 47% and school transport 29%. These figures compared favourably with national levels for rural areas but could still be improved.

2007 figures show active travel up to 50%, bus travel remaining steady and car-based school travel down to 21% - already exceeding our Local Transport Strategy target to reduce car use to 21.5% by 2009/2010.

We now have 87% of our schools in the STP process, 30,000 pupils surveyed annually, 67 schools “Walking the World”, 38 schools “Going for It!” and 24 schools seeing car use “Magically” reduce.