

# North Lanarkshire Council Report

## Infrastructure Committee

Agenda item 5  approval  noting      Ref      Date 2/5/18

## Safe Walked Routes to School - Review

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### Executive Summary

This report provides the results of the review of the walked routes to school in accordance with the Council motion made on the 14 December 2017. Education, Youth and Communities Service officers have been consulted as part of the review.

Current assessments of a walked route were based on national guidance contained within the Local Authority Road Safety Officers Association "Identification of Hazards and the Assessment of Risk of Walked Routes to School".

The review recommends using the 2014 guidance produced by the West of Scotland Road Safety Forum which is in common use amongst neighbouring local authorities. The report includes revised principles and procedures which include improvements to the current process, specifically in undertaking gap analysis to determine the opportunity to cross a road and also analysis of pedestrian accident history.

Adopting this revised approach to the assessment of a walked route to school is an improvement to current arrangements and addresses the Council motion.

### Recommendations

That committee adopt the revised approach to Walked Routes to School

### Supporting Documents

**Council business plan to 2020**      Improve relationships with communities and the third sector  
Provide a safe and attractive environment that supports the wellbeing of communities  
Targeting resources to those areas most in need contributes to the key priority of Improving the health and care of our communities.

**Appendix 1**      The Assessment of Walked Routes to School Process

## **1. Background**

- 1.1 On the 14 December 2017 the Council delegated the task of submitting a revised and more comprehensive safe walking routes to school policy to the Infrastructure committee in February 2018 for approval to the Assistant Chief Executive (Infrastructure).
- 1.2 The council agreed a composite motion which stated:

“This Council agrees that the health and safety of the children and young people of North Lanarkshire is paramount; Notes that the ‘Walking Routes to School’ criteria currently being used as part of the consultations into school transport provision does not give consideration to the safety of the children and agrees that an updated policy be developed and introduced, which places child safety as the number one priority.

That the Council expresses its concern about the adequacy of the current safe walking route criteria for primary and secondary school pupils; notes that many concerned parents and other individuals in North Lanarkshire have offered the view that the criteria does not appropriately recognise the vital importance of keeping our children safe at the recent public meetings that have taken place as part of the school transport provision consultation; responds to these serious concerns by giving a commitment to amend the safe walking route criteria so that it will include a statement at the beginning of the document making clear that the ‘safety of the children’ is the guiding principle for determining whether or not a route is deemed safe or unsafe; further commits to undertaking a wide ranging review of the criteria to examine potentially additional core factors for assessing the safety of a walking route including volume of traffic, speed of motor vehicles, air pollution and revisiting whether it is appropriate to base the criteria on the assumption that a child will be accompanied by a parent to school; acknowledges that this list is not exhaustive and other considerations must also form part of this review, which will ultimately lead to a revised and more comprehensive safe walking routes to school policy. The updated policy and criteria will be presented to Infrastructure Committee in February 2018 for approval.”

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## **2. Report**

- 2.1 Section 51 of the Education (Scotland) 1980 Act requires education authorities to make such arrangements as they consider necessary for pupils’ conveyance without charge for the whole part of the journey to and from school, for making suitable means of transport available, or paying the whole or part of their reasonable travelling expense. The act establishes the maximum distance that pupils can be expected to walk to school. This is two miles for pupils up to eight years of age and three miles for all other pupils. For practical and planning reasons North Lanarkshire Council interprets the limits as one mile for primary pupils and two miles for secondary pupils.
- 2.2 North Lanarkshire Council currently operate a distance criteria which is more generous than the legal requirements. Free school transport is provided to mainstream pupils in the following categories:

- i) Primary pupils who reside more than one mile (1609m) from their catchment school and secondary school pupils who reside more than two miles (3218m) from their catchment school.
  - ii) Pupils who have been recommended for transport on health grounds by a designated medical officer.
  - iii) Pupils who would require to walk a route assessed as unacceptable for children. The Council's criteria for assessing acceptable walking routes is based on the child being accompanied by a responsible adult.
- 2.3 The current arrangements maintain a parent/guardian or carer's responsibility to get their child to primary school where they live less than one mile from their school. The only exception to this would be where a walking route was deemed to be unacceptable in accordance with the Council's assessment criteria for walked routes to school. Walked routes are assessed by an officer in the Roads and Transportation service in line with the current approved process.
- 2.4 Two of the five strategic priorities, as outlined in North Lanarkshire Business Plan are directly relevant to walked routes these are:
- Supporting all children to realise their full potential; and
  - Improving the health and wellbeing and care of communities.

Recognised within the programme of work set out in the Business Plan to support these priorities are a number of delivery priorities established to ensure that the Education, Youth and Communities Service maintains a clear focus on those most in need and implement action to raise attainment, close the poverty related attainment gap and improve wellbeing. These delivery priorities include for example:

- School transport which ensures pupils arrive at school ready to learn; and
  - Key life skills to all children to build their resilience (e.g. outdoor learning, road safety awareness, walk or cycle to school, money and consumer advice).
- 2.5 Education, Youth and Communities Service and the school travel coordinators are developing school travel plans with each primary school which includes designated walked routes as appropriate.
- 2.6 The Council has a policy on the provision of free transport and where provision is denied under this policy, parents/guardians or carers may appeal on the ground of road safety, if they consider the route to school is unacceptable to walk.
- 2.7 In considering any appeal the Education, Youth and Communities Service arrange for a walked route assessment to be carried out by the Roads and Transportation Service. Education, Youth and Communities Service specify the route to be assessed and the assessment considers the road safety risks resulting from pedestrian and vehicle conflict or safety hazards resulting from defects within the road such as tripping points.

- 2.8 The assessment is based on the need for the parent/guardian or carer to have arranged for the child to be accompanied as necessary by a responsible person.
- 2.9 The current assessment process was based on the national guidance contained within the Local Authority Road Safety Officers Association "Identification of Hazards and the Assessment of Risk of Walked Routes to School". A review of the current assessment process has identified the option of refreshing our approach using the 2014 guidance produced by the West of Scotland Road Safety Forum. This is the guidance in common use amongst neighbouring local authorities.
- 2.10 The guidance assumes that parents/guardians or carers have arranged for children to be accompanied as necessary by a responsible adult and that all persons' will exercise reasonable caution and adhere to basic road safety rules. This motion asks that this matter be revisited and having reviewed the overall approach it is considered that this is an essential principle upon which an assessment process can operate. It is recognised that each child is an individual and will develop the ability to make a journey to school at different ages. Given this fact and the impracticability of the council to assess each individual child the council sets out a process of assessing a walked route on the basis that the parent/guardian or carer determines at what age their child can make a journey on their own. It is recognised that a parent/guardian or carer are best placed to make this judgement. An assessment can only be based on normal conditions and, therefore, parents/guardians or carers require to decide on appropriate alternatives where extreme events or extremities of weather are experienced.
- 2.11 The current assessment process follows this guidance except with regard to the following aspects:
- Opportunity to cross a road – suitability of the crossing point will be assessed by undertaking a gap analysis. Where a central island exists this will be carried out in two phases with each carriageway being assessed separately.
  - Analysis of pedestrian accident history - a history of pedestrian accidents on any route would not automatically conclude that the route is unacceptable. Any data will be analysed to determine the type, nature and relevance of incidents to the route assessment. Most weighting will be given to incidents recorded within the term time, involving children of school age during peak times.
- 2.12 It is proposed that gap time should be measured and pedestrian accident history analysis over a three year period be included in the new assessment process.
- 2.13 The Council has a statutory duty to report on air quality within the council area under a process known as Local Air Quality Management. As part of this process air quality monitoring is carried out at areas of most relevant exposure to air pollution sources and levels are compared with the statutory objectives. An annual air quality progress report containing all relevant information on air quality is produced by the Council and is submitted to the Scottish Government and SEPA for approval. This report is available on the Council website. In addition to this, some of our air quality monitoring information can be viewed online at

[www.scottishairquality.co.uk](http://www.scottishairquality.co.uk). This approach is considered to adequately address concerns about air pollution as it affects a walked route to school.

- 2.14 Appendix 1 sets out the principles and risk assessment process recommended to be adopted. Appendix 2 and 3 contain the relevant assessment forms.
- 2.15 The Council provide controlled crossings and requests for assessments to be undertaken can be requested at any time. Controlled crossings may take the form of
- Crossing facilities e.g. zebra, pelican, puffin, toucan etc.
  - Pedestrian phase at traffic lights
  - School crossing patrols

The need for these facilities is based on the number of pedestrians (P) and vehicles (V) using the road. A mathematical formula ( $PV^2$ ) is used to establish the opportunity for a pedestrian to cross the road.

- 2.16 It is proposed that this revised process is used for any new assessments deemed necessary by the Education, Youth and Communities Service.
- 2.17 This policy will be reviewed if the guidance from the West of Scotland Road Safety Forum or other relevant body is amended.

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### **3. Implications**

#### **3.1 Financial Impact**

It is difficult to assess if any impact will result since it is unclear if additional bus services would be required until an assessment is made

#### **3.2 HR/Policy/Legislative Impact**

There is no impact.

#### **3.3 Environmental Impact**

There is no impact.

#### **3.4 Risk Impact**

There is no impact.

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### **4. Measures of success**

- 4.1 The revised approach to assessing walked routes to school is in line with current guidance and other local authority arrangements.
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**Kenneth Forbes**  
**Head of Environmental Assets**

## **Appendix 1**

### **The Assessment of Walked Routes to School Process**

#### **1.0 Principles**

- 1.1 The safety of children is the guiding principle for determining whether or not a walked route is deemed safe. Safety is necessarily a relative concept. There is no such thing as complete safety, and the degree of risk acceptable is achieved in making a determination with due regard given to the following further principles upon which the assessment process is based.

#### **Route**

- 1.2 The route to be assessed will be determined by Education, Youth and Community Service. The assessment will be from the home address to the nearest available school gate with pedestrian access. It is the prescribed route which is being considered during the assessment, not the child.
- 1.3 The route to school assessment considers the road safety risks resulting from potential pedestrian and vehicle conflict or safety hazards resulting from the physical condition of the route. Tripping hazards should be identified and be rectified as soon as practicable.
- 1.4 Route assessments will be conducted on the basis that the children will be accompanied as necessary by a responsible adult. As such, personal safety issues are not addressed by the route to school assessment.
- 1.5 It is recognised that a route to school can be affected by construction works but developers and contractors will take appropriate measures to ensure pedestrian access remains unhindered. Where an alternative route is required the need for a reassessment of that part of the route to school will be considered. In general, the planning process will capture such works. However, any service or parent/carer or guardian can raise such concern to the Education, Youth and Communities Service who will consider what intervention is required.
- 1.6 Consideration will be given to the location of emergency service vehicle depots such as accident and emergency points at hospitals and fire stations given the likelihood of changes in driver behaviour resulting from emergency vehicles when on blue lights journeys as well as the emergency vehicle driver behaviour. Any increased vehicles movements will be considered as part of any road crossing assessment.

#### **Time of Assessment**

- 1.7 The route will be assessed during the school term and, where practicable, at a time when the child would be expected to make the journey. Normally route assessments will be conducted in the morning unless it can be evidenced that the afternoon journey would be more problematic.

- 1.8 The assessment can only be based upon normal conditions and not extremities. Parents/guardians or carers will be required to decide on appropriate alternatives where extreme events or extremities of weather are experienced.

### **Accompaniment of Children**

- 1.9 When carrying out a walked route to school assessment, the assessor will assume that parents/guardians or carers have arranged for children to be accompanied as necessary by a responsible adult. It is also presumed that all persons' will exercise reasonable caution and adhere to basic road safety rules

### **Accident Data**

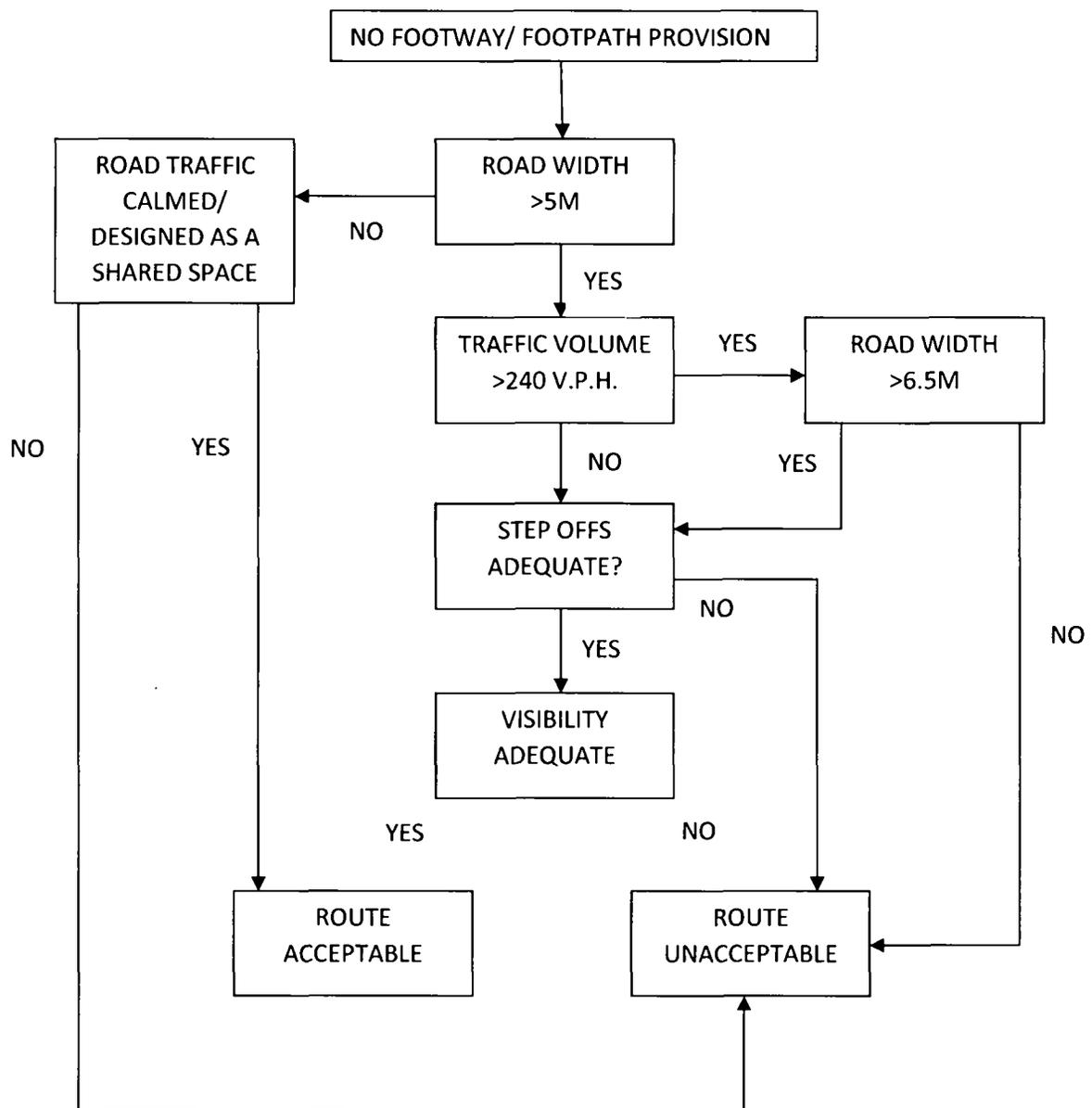
- 1.10 A history of pedestrian accidents on any route would not automatically conclude that the route is unacceptable. Any data will be analysed to determine the type, nature and relevance of pedestrian accidents to the route assessment. Most weighting will be given to incidents recorded within term times, involving children of school age during travel times to school.

## **2.0 Risk Assessment Procedure**

- 2.1 These guidelines cannot cover every eventuality and situation as there are many subtle variations in features of routes. Each route will be considered on its individual merits.
- 2.2 A map of the route to be assessed should be attached to the written record of the assessment.
- 2.3 The pedestrian accident record for the route over a minimum period of three years will be taken into consideration.
- 2.4 In carrying out the assessment, it will be presumed that parents/guardians or carers have arranged for the child to be accompanied as necessary by a responsible adult.
- 2.5 In carrying out the assessment, it will also be presumed that all persons will exercise due care and adhere to basic road safety rules.
- 2.6 The route will be assessed on a school day and, where practicable, at a time when the child would be expected to make the journey.
- 2.7 The route will be assessed against the identified criteria and any points of concern out with the criteria will be noted for consideration by the Education, Youth and Communities Service.
- 2.8 The identified route will consist of a footway/ footpath/ roadside verge or shared space/ surface of a reasonable width and condition.
- 2.9 An adequate footway/footpath is defined as one 'At least one metre wide, even in surface and without ruts and potholes – suitable for walking on'. The footway/footpath should be continuous – excluding gaps of up to 20m – or be an acceptable level equivalent e.g. dedicated part of road sectioned by white lining.

- 2.10 Judgement will be used to assess the suitability of shared surface streets. Streets with shared vehicular and pedestrian space tend to have low traffic flows and speeds due to their urban nature and specific street design. Similar principles will also be applied within older towns and villages that have no dedicated footways or demarcated pedestrian provision.
- 2.11 On a road with light traffic flows (less than 400 vehicles per hour), a verge that can be stepped on by a child and accompanying adult when traffic is passing can normally be assumed to provide an available route. This is known as a "step off". This would not include roads (shared surface/ spaces) where the function of the design is to have pedestrians and vehicles using the same area.
- 2.12 Where roads need to be crossed, the availability of controlled crossing facilities such as pedestrian crossings or traffic signals will be taken into consideration. In the event that no crossing facilities are available, sufficient and suitable opportunities for pedestrians to cross will be assessed. Consideration will be given to particular circumstances such as regular routes used by emergency vehicles.
- 2.13 Some routes may lie along roads that do not have a footway. On such roads, consideration will be given to the width of the carriageway, traffic volume and to both pedestrian and driver visibility, i.e. sharp bends with high hedgerows or other obstructions to visibility. The term 'Visibility' means the distance of unobstructed vision from the driver to pedestrian when measured from the eye point of a driver (usually taken as being 1.05 metres above the road surface).
- 2.14 The flow chart below will be used to determine the acceptability of a route where there is no footway or footpath:

ASSESSMENT OF  
WALKED ROUTES TO SCHOOL



**Road Crossing Assessment**

3.1 Where the following facilities are provided, it will be assumed that these provide an acceptable crossing opportunity for pedestrians:

- Crossing facilities e.g. zebra, pelican, puffin crossing etc.
- Pedestrian phase at traffic signals
- School Crossing Patrols

- 3.2 Where no crossing facility exists a suitable location should be identified and an assessment of the risk generated by crossing the road should be made. This risk will consider the speed and volume of traffic and in so doing determine the gaps in traffic flow through measurement to ensure that the pedestrians have frequent and sufficient opportunities to cross the carriageway. On roads that have central pedestrian refuge islands this will be assessed in two parts with each carriageway being assessed separately. The assessment procedure is detailed below.

### **Crossing Assessment**

- 3.3 Should a crossing assessment be required, this will be carried out when traffic flow is at its heaviest. For most routes, this will be during the morning journey unless evidence exists to provide this would be best done in the afternoon. The crossing should be walked in both directions to ensure adequate visibility from both sides of the road.
- 3.4 There is no need to classify vehicles, as pedestrians do not consider vehicle classification when determining whether to cross or not.

### **Crossing Time and Visible Gap Time**

- 3.5 The crossing time required for a child pedestrian to safely cross the carriageway should be calculated as

Crossing time (seconds) = Thinking time + Carriageway width/walking speed

(this is based on one second thinking time and an average walking speed of 0.9m per second e.g.  $1 + 7.3/09 = 9.22$  seconds).

- 3.6 The visible gap time in traffic is the time between approaching vehicles in either direction to reach the crossing point. At sites where the visibility is restricted, a measure of time should be taken from when a vehicle comes into view until it reaches the crossing point and that should exceed the time required for the pedestrians to cross the road.
- 3.7 For a crossing to be considered acceptable, four visible gap times greater than the minimum crossing time should be recorded in five minute intervals. There may be more than one five minute interval assessment undertaken if the situation requires it. Longer gaps could be classified as multiple gaps rather than one gap but this must be carefully judged by the assessor.
- 3.8 If a crossing point fails the assessment consideration will be given to identifying what controlled crossing measures could be installed to mitigate the need for additional bus travel.
- 3.9 Two assessment forms will be used as shown in appendix 2 and 3:
- ROUTE INSPECTION FORM
  - GAP ANALYSIS (if required)

#### **4.0 Assessment Reporting**

- 4.1 Completed walked routes to school assessments will be reported to Education, Youth and Communities Service stating whether or not the route is acceptable.

**Kenneth Forbes**  
**Head of Environmental Assets**

**Appendix 2**

**ASSESSMENT OF WALKED ROUTE TO SCHOOL  
ROUTE INSPECTION FORM**

Assessing Officer:

Date of assessment:

Start time:

Start address:

End address:

**ROUTE WALKED**

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**ROUTE FINDINGS**

Acceptable		Unacceptable	
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**COMMENTS IF UNACCEPTABLE**

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Signed .....

Position.....

Date.....

### Appendix 3

#### ASSESSMENT OF WALKED ROUTE TO SCHOOL

#### GAP ANALYSIS

Assessing Officer:

Date of assessment:

Start time:

Location:

#### VISIBLE GAP TIMES

Crossing time (sec) = Thinking time + Carriageway width/ Waking speed (0.9m/sec)

1 + \_\_\_\_\_ / 0.9 = \_\_\_\_\_

Minimum gap required \_\_\_\_\_

4 or more visible gap times greater than the crossing time is required in a 5 minute period

Time (5 min period)	Measured gaps	Total number of acceptable gaps
08:00 – 08:05		
08:05 – 08:10		
08:15 – 08:20		
08:20 – 08:25		
08:25 – 08:30		
08:30 – 08:35		
08:35 – 08:40		
08:40 - 08:45		
08:45 – 08:50		
08:50 – 08:55		
08:55 – 09:00		