

Stirling named Healthy City

Healthy urban planning is a focus for Stirling under its new World Health Organisation (WHO) Healthy City status, building strong links between planning, transport and health.

Less than three years after being granted city status by the Queen to mark her Golden Jubilee in 2002, Stirling is the second city in Scotland to become a WHO Healthy City. Backed by the Council's community planning partners, Stirling joins Glasgow as a member of the 70-strong network of European cities granted WHO healthy city status for the next four years.

Provost Colin O'Brien said: "Becoming a WHO Healthy City is about changing the ways in which we think about, understand and make decisions on health. It is about placing health at the heart of all our decision-making as community planning partners."

A Healthy Cities Steering Group will now develop a programme of health improvement that will include delivering on key themes 'Healthy Urban Planning' and 'Healthy Ageing'. The Steering Group will include representatives from Stirling Council, Forth Valley NHS, Scottish Enterprise Forth Valley, Central Scotland Police, other public agencies and local communities. All statutory partners will share the costs associated with the work. A number of initiatives already in place will be enhanced and built upon as a result of Healthy City designation and the increased awareness of health and its determinants.

The application had strong backing from the Council's politicians, and their support is helping to shift the political culture towards health as an outcome of a wide range of policy areas.

Head of Planning Mick Stewart said,

"It is vital that we continue to raise the explicit link between our responsibility as planners and the impact this has on health. Without this knowledge then the drive to create living spaces that facilitate safe and enjoyable activities such as walking & cycling will be significantly reduced. That is why in May 2005 Healthy Urban Planning will feature as a key theme at the Scottish Society of Directors of Planning Annual Conference in May 2005."

Part of the focus of the Steering Group will be on developing the use of health impact assessment (HIA) to ensure that potential health impacts are fully taken into account in the development of new city plans, policies and services. A short life working group will be looking at developing a strategy for HIA, either as a stand-alone assessment or as part of a new integrated assessment tool incorporating transport, environmental and sustainability impact assessment.

Stirling's Joint Health Improvement Plan sets out a special focus programme for increasing physical activity in the city under the lead community planning

responsibility of the Health and Well-being Functional Group. The programme makes explicit the links between physical activity and transport and these are recognised in Stirling's new Local Transport Strategy, which was approved by the Council in December 2004.

The Local Transport Strategy aims to increase levels of daily walking and cycling, and recognises that this can only be achieved by making the environment safe and attractive for pedestrians and cyclists. Planned measures to promote uptake of physically active travel modes include extending the current pedestrianised areas and increasing signage and cycle parking.

'We need to work harder at both developing alternatives to the car and changing attitudes to inappropriate car use - especially in the City Area. We are also exploring new ways of managing traffic and parking in Stirling City by providing sustainable alternatives to manage congestion. This will include the provision of better public transport, walking and cycling and more park and ride facilities.' *Extract from the Roads and Transport Section of the Stirling Council Corporate Plan*

Stirling Council's area extends beyond the city to include rural areas and these areas are also set to benefit from the lessons learned and, where appropriate, the approaches developed.

For more information see <http://www.euro.who.int/healthy-cities>
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