Economic Development and Infrastructure Services Committee

Tuesday, 18 June 2024

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that a Meeting of the **Economic Development and Infrastructure Services Committee** is to be held at **Council Chambers**, **Council Office, High Street, Elgin, IV30 1BX** on **Tuesday, 18 June 2024** at **09:30.**

BUSINESS

Information Reports - Not for Discussion at this Meeting

Any member wishing to call in a noting or information report from one meeting shall give notice to Committee Services at least 48 hours before the meeting for which the report is published. The Notice shall be countersigned by one other elected member and shall explain the reason for call in including any action sought.

Information Report - List of Property Transactions Concluded Under Delegated Powers

Report by Depute Chief Executive (Economy, Environment and Finance)

Summary of Economic Development and Infrastructure Services Committee functions:

Roads Authority; Lighting Authority, Reservoirs Act 1975, Public Passenger Transport; Flood Prevention; Twinning; Piers and Harbours and Coast Protection; Industrial and Commercial Development; Environmental Protection; Burial Grounds; Assistance to Industry or Commerce; Public Conveniences; Council Transportation; Catering & Cleaning; Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003; Countryside Amenities; Tourism, monitoring funding from European Programmes, youth training and employment creation scheme and provide Architectural, Quantity Surveying, Maintenance and Allied Property Services.

Watching the Meeting

You can watch the webcast live by going to:

http://www.moray.gov.uk/moray_standard/page_43661.html

Webcasts are available to view for 1 year following the meeting.

You can also attend the meeting in person, if you wish to do so, please come to the High Street entrance door and a member of staff will be let into the building.

GUIDANCE NOTES

*   **Declaration of Group Decisions and Members Interests -** The Chair of the meeting shall seek declarations from any individual or political group at the beginning of a meeting whether any prior decision has been reached on how the individual or members of the group will vote on any item(s) of business on the Agenda, and if so on which item(s). A prior decision shall be one that the individual or the group deems to be mandatory on the individual or the group members such that the individual or the group members will be subject to sanctions should they not vote in accordance with the prior decision. Any such prior decisions will be recorded in the Minute of the meeting.

**   **Written Questions** - Any Member can put one written question about any relevant and competent business within the specified remits not already on the agenda, to the Chair provided it is received by the Proper Officer or Committee Services by 12 noon two working days prior to the day of the meeting. A copy of any written answer provided by the Chair will be tabled at the start of the relevant section of the meeting. The Member who has put the question may, after the answer has been given, ask one supplementary question directly related to the subject matter, but no discussion will be allowed.

No supplementary question can be put or answered more than 10 minutes after the Council has started on the relevant item of business, except with the consent of the Chair. If a Member does not have the opportunity to put a supplementary question because no time remains, then he or she can submit it in writing to the Proper Officer who will arrange for a written answer to be provided within 7 working days.

MORAY COUNCIL

Economic Development and Infrastructure Services Committee

<u>SEDERUNT</u>

Councillor Marc Macrae (Chair)
Councillor Amber Dunbar (Depute Chair)

Councillor Peter Bloomfield (Member)
Councillor John Cowe (Member)
Councillor John Divers (Member)
Councillor Jérémie Fernandes (Member)
Councillor David Gordon (Member)
Councillor Juli Harris (Member)
Councillor Sandy Keith (Member)
Councillor Graham Leadbitter (Member)
Councillor Paul McBain (Member)
Councillor Shona Morrison (Member)
Councillor John Stuart (Member)
Councillor Draeyk van der Horn (Member)
Councillor Sonya Warren (Member)

Clerk Name:	Lissa Rowan
Clerk Telephone:	07765 741754
Clerk Email:	committee.services@moray.gov.uk

Minute of Meeting of the Economic Development and Infrastructure Services Committee

Tuesday, 30 April 2024

Council Chambers, Council Office, High Street, Elgin, IV30 1BX

PRESENT

Councillor Peter Bloomfield, Councillor John Cowe, Councillor John Divers, Councillor Amber Dunbar, Councillor David Gordon, Councillor Juli Harris, Councillor Sandy Keith, Councillor Graham Leadbitter, Councillor Marc Macrae, Councillor Paul McBain, Councillor Shona Morrison, Councillor John Stuart, Councillor Draeyk van der Horn, Councillor Sonya Warren

IN ATTENDANCE

Depute Chief Executive (Economy, Environment and Finance), Head of Environmental and Commercial Services, Acting Head of Economic Growth and Development, Head of Housing and Property Services, Environmental Protection Service Manager, Strategic Transport Services Manager, Consultancy Manager, Strategic Planning and Development Manager, Vehicle Services and Compliance Manager, Harbour Development Operations Manager, Mr R Adam, Network Asset Engineer (Roads Maintenance), Mr W Burnish, Senior Engineer (Flood Risk Management), Ms C English, Senior Project Manager, Property Asset Manager, Ms K Conti, Development Officer (Economic Growth and Regeneration), Ms S Creswell, Community Wealth Building Officer, Legal Services Manager and Mrs L Rowan, Committee Services Officer as Clerk to the Committee.

1   Chair

Councillor Macrae, being Chair of the Economic Development and Infrastructure Services Committee, chaired the meeting.

2   Declaration of Group Decisions and Members Interests

In terms of Standing Orders 21 and 23 of the Councillors' Code of Conduct, there were no declarations from Group Leaders or Spokespersons in regard to any prior decisions taken on how Members will vote on any item on the agenda or any declarations of Member's interests in respect of any item on the agenda.

3   Minutes

The Minutes of the special meeting of the Economic Development and Infrastructure Services (EDIS) Committee dated 12 December 2023 and the meeting of the EDIS Committee dated 6 February 2024, were submitted and approved.

4   Written Questions

The Committee noted that no written questions had been submitted.

5   Environmental Protection Revenue and Capital Budgets 2024-25

The meeting had before it a report by the Depute Chief Executive (Economy, Environment and Finance) informing the Committee of the plans to deliver the capital and revenue programme in Environmental Protection in 2024/25.

Following consideration, the Committee unanimously agreed to:

i.   approve the plans to deliver the capital programme for 2024/25 as set out in the report;

ii.   grant delegated authority to the Service Manager (Open Space, Waste Management, Catering & Facilities) to proceed with necessary maintenance works and prioritise the works in accordance with any budgetary restrictions;

iii.   approve the proposed use of the cemetery capital funds for increased cemetery provision in Moray as set out in section 5 of the report; and

iv.   delegate authority to the Head of Environmental and Commercial Services to apply for grants in support of the areas of work identified in sections 4 and 5 of the report.

6   Roads Maintenance Revenue and Capital Budget 2024-2025

The meeting had before it a report by the Depute Chief Executive (Economy, Environment and Finance) which requested that the interim outturn position for 2023/24 be noted and that the detailed expenditure plans for the funds allocated from the Revenue Budget 2024/25 for Roads Maintenance and the Capital Budget 2024/25, including resurfacing/reconstruction, surface dressing, footpaths, drainage, replacement of lighting columns, and lighting enhancements, be approved.

Following consideration, the Committee unanimously agreed to:

i.   approve the detailed allocation of funds, from the Revenue and Capital Budget 2024/25, to Roads Maintenance activities, as outlined in Section 5 of the report;

ii.   grant delegated authority to the Roads Maintenance Manager to proceed with necessary roads maintenance works whilst noting that the Roads Maintenance Manager will, as soon as possible, publish a main list of schemes, which can be funded from the budget provision recommended in this report, and a reserve list of desirable schemes, which cannot presently be funded, along with a list of projects to be funded from the Capital allocation; and

iii.   note that the list of schemes will be drawn up in accordance with the principles and objectives detailed in this report, in the Roads Asset Management Plan and in the Capital Plan.

7 Transportation Capital and Revenue Budgets 2024-2025

The meeting had before it a report by the Depute Chief Executive (Economy, Environment and Finance) informing the Committee of plans to deliver the capital and revenue programme in Transportation for 2024/25.

Following consideration, the Committee unanimously agreed to:

i.   approve the plans to deliver the capital and revenue programme for 2024/25 as set out in the report;

ii. delegate authority to the Head of Environmental and Commercial Services to apply for grants for the funding areas set out in the report at paras 5.16 and 7.14; and

iii. approve the plans for expenditure of the Cycling Walking and Safer Routes funding as set out in paras 7.11 and 7.12 of the report.

8 Roads Asset Management Planning

The meeting had before it a report by the Depute Chief Executive (Economy, Environment and Finance) presenting the latest information on the road network's condition.

Following consideration, the Committee unanimously agreed:

i.   to note the latest Road Condition Indicator (RCI) results for Moray Council;

ii. that the RCI results continue to be monitored and reported back on an annual basis to this committee; and

iii. to note the clear commitment to the use of Road Asset Management Planning in Moray Council.

9 Coastal Adaptation Plans

Under reference to paragraph 8 of the Minute of the meeting of this Committee dated 8 February 2022, a report by the Depute Chief Executive (Economy, Environment and Finance) informed the Committee of Moray Coastal adaptation plans.

The Committee joined the Chair in commending the Service for bringing forward this significant piece of work and thereafter unanimously agreed to:

i.   adopt the Costal Adaptation Plan for managing coastline falling within the Moray Council area; and

ii. progress the case studies set out in section 6.2-6.4 of the report.

Councillor Bloomfield left the meeting at this juncture.

10   Long-Term Town Fund

The meeting had before it a report by the Depute Chief Executive (Economy, Environment and Finance) which requested that the Committee delegate authority regarding funding opportunities through the Elgin Town Board.

The Committee joined the Chair in welcoming Mrs Beverly Smith to her first Committee meeting in her new role as Acting Head of Economic Growth and Development.

Following consideration, the Committee unanimously agreed to approve delegation to the Head of Economic Growth and Development in consultation with the Chief Financial Officer and the Strategic Leadership Forum (SLF - extended for this purpose as set out in the report) to develop and submit to the Elgin Town Board priority packages relating to the themes of Community Safety and Security, High Streets Heritage and Regeneration and Transport and Connectivity.

11   Tourism Business Improvement District - Renewal Ballot

The meeting had before it a report by the Depute Chief Executive (Economy, Environment and Finance) seeking the Committee's approval to support the renewal ballot for the Tourism Business Improvement District (BID).

Following consideration, the Committee unanimously agreed:

i.   for Economic Growth and Regeneration to continue to support the Tourism BID through the undertaking of the renewal ballot; and

ii.   to note that a further report will be presented to Committee with full business proposal and supporting five-year business plan, including levy details and any potential future financial implications for the Council, and the assessment of the Council's right of veto.

12   Cultural Quarter - Delivery Plan and Mapping

Councillor Bloomfield re-joined the meeting during discussion of this item.

The meeting had before it a report by the Depute Chief Executive (Economy, Environment and Finance) which presented the Committee with two reports outlined in Appendix 1 and Appendix 2. These were commissioned as part of the Cultural Quarter Full Business Case to support the strategic, commercial and financial case for the Cultural Quarter Project. They also offered solutions for the implementation of the project in the context of wider cultural regeneration in Elgin and Moray. Additionally, the report requested delegated authority in relation to funding opportunities.

Following consideration, the Committee unanimously agreed to:

i.   note the content of both reports as providing valuable supporting information for the strategic case and proposed implementation of the Cultural Quarter project as part of the Moray Growth Deal; and

ii.   delegate authority to the Head of Economic Growth and Development to submit priority packages of connecting routes and public realm from the Cultural Quarter Delivery Plan as shown in Appendix 1 to external funding opportunities as they become available and, in the event match funding is required, existing approved project funding will be utilised.

13   Moray Community Wealth Building Strategy and Action Plan

Under reference to paragraph 11 of the Minute of the meeting of this Committee dated 20 June 2023, a report by the Depute Chief Executive (Economy, Environment and Finance) presented the Committee with the Moray Community Wealth Building Strategy (CWB) for approval, as set out in Appendix 1 of the report.

During discussion, Councillor Leadbitter recognised that this strategy was significant in terms of economic development in Moray and expressed a wish to highlight this new strategy to the UK and Scottish Governments. He moved that that the Committee agree an additional recommendation for the Chair to write to the Regional Economic Partnership and the Moray Economic Partnership informing of the Council's recent adoption of the Moray Community Wealth Building Strategy. This was unanimously agreed.

Thereafter, the Committee unanimously agreed:

i.   to note the consultation that has taken place with Stakeholders;

ii.   to approve the Moray Community Wealth Building Strategy and Action Plan as set out in Appendix 1 of the report; and

iii.   that the Chair write to the Regional Economic Partnership and the Moray Economic Partnership informing of the Council's recent adoption of the Moray Community Wealth Building Strategy.

14   Suspension of Standing Orders

The Chair sought the agreement of the Committee to suspend Standing Order 77 to allow the meeting to continue beyond 12:45 pm. This was unanimously agreed.

15   Zero Emission Fleet Replacement Strategy

Under reference to paragraph 10 of the Minute of the meeting of this Committee dated 7 February 2023, a report by the Depute Chief Executive (Economy, Environment and Finance) provided the Committee with a strategic overview to decarbonise the Council's fleet and meet the agreed net zero targets.

Following consideration, the Committee unanimously agreed:

i.   to note the EV strategy proposed by Fleet Services to ensure the Council is well placed to meet its ambitious net zero targets;

ii.   to note the council's progress made to date in reducing fleet carbon emissions;

iii. to note that options put forward within the strategy will require varying levels of capital investment, and endorses the preferred option 2, which will be subject to consideration as part of the standard financial planning process going forward;

iv. to note that the transition to a zero-emission fleet cannot progress at scale until suitable charging infrastructure is in place following the depot review and smarter working projects;

v. that proposals for Ashgrove depot are developed as the council's centralised green depot with alternative infrastructure in place to allow development of net zero alternatives;

vi. to the Council exploring external funding opportunities for future hydrogen and biogas pilots.

16   Resumption of Meeting

PRESENT

Councillor Peter Bloomfield, Councillor John Cowe, Councillor John Divers, Councillor Amber Dunbar, Councillor David Gordon, Councillor Juli Harris, Councillor Sandy Keith, Councillor Graham Leadbitter, Councillor Marc Macrae, Councillor Paul McBain, Councillor John Stuart, Councillor Draeyk van der Horn, Councillor Sonya Warren

APOLOGIES

Councillor Shona Morrison

IN ATTENDANCE

Depute Chief Executive (Economy, Environment and Finance), Head of Environmental and Commercial Services, Acting Head of Economic Growth and Development, Head of Housing and Property Services, Strategic Transport Services Manager, Consultancy Manager, Harbour Development Operations Manager, Mr W Burnish, Senior Engineer (Flood Risk Management), Property Asset Manager, Legal Services Manager and Mrs L Rowan, Committee Services Officer as Clerk to the Committee.

17   Flood Risk Management and Bridges Capital and Revenue Budgets 2024-25

The meeting had before it a report by the Depute Chief Executive (Economy, Environment and Finance) informing the Committee of the Flood Risk Management Schedule of Clearance and Repair for 2024/25.

Following consideration, the Committee unanimously agreed:

i.   the Flood Risk Management Schedule of Clearance and Repair for 2024/25;

ii. the proposed Schedules of Road Bridge Revenue and Capital Maintenance Works and Non-network Bridge Capital Maintenance Works to be undertaken for 2024/25; and

iii. to delegate authority to the Head of Environmental and Commercial Services to apply for grant funding as set out in paragraph 3.23 of the report.

18 Marine Safety and Operational Summary of 2023-24 and Q3-4 2023-24 Updates

The meeting had before it a report by the Depute Chief Executive (Economy, Environment and Finance) informing the Committee on matters of Marine Safety and compliance with the Port Marine Safety Code (PMSC) for the year 2023/24 including details of Q3 and Q4 2023/24.

During his introduction, the Chair pointed out that, although the recommendation in the report asked that a 3 yearly statement of compliance letter be written to the Maritime and Coastguard Agency (MCA), this was no longer required as the MCA had advised that they were deferring the 3 yearly compliance exercise. This was noted.

During discussion, several health and safety concerns were highlighted in relation to the harbours in Moray as a result of the incidents detailed within the report and it was queried what measures were being taken to address these issues.

In response, the Head of Environmental and Commercial Services reiterated the Council's commitment to the safety of harbour users and staff. She noted that the reported number of incidents is not unusually high compared to other similar services within her remit, however acknowledged the need to review the report's wording with her team to avoid causing unnecessary concern in the future.

During further discussion surrounding the Weighbridge in Buckie, it was acknowledged that the bridge is fully operational, yet there were questions raised regarding its lack of use. Additionally, it was observed that debris from previous roadworks remained at the exit of the weighbridge and it was asked if this could be cleared.

In response, the Head of Environmental and Commercial Services advised that the Strategic Transport Services Manager and the Harbour Development Operations Manager would look into why the weighbridge is underutilised and ensure the debris at the exit is cleared.

Following consideration, the Committee unanimously agreed to note:

i. the safety performance, fulfilling their function as Duty Holder under the Port Marine Safety Code (PMSC);

ii. that the Head of Environmental and Commercial Services would review the manner in which harbour incidents are reported;

iii. that the Strategic Transport Services Manager and the Harbour Development Operations Manager look into why the weighbridge is underutilised and ensure the debris at the exit is cleared.

19   Depot and Store Review

Under reference to paragraph 13 of the meeting of this Committee dated 20 June 2023, a report by the Depute Chief Executive (Economy, Environment and Finance) provided an update on the Depot and Store review progress and sought approval for the outline business case and resource request.

Following consideration, the Committee unanimously agreed:

i.   to approve the Outline Business Case for the Depot and Store Review;

ii.   to fund a project resource of a temporary Senior Project Officer at grade 11 for an initial period of 1 year from the initial savings generated (£64,700) and the balance from reserves (£11,300); and

iii. to note that a further update on progress will be provided once the full business case is developed.

REPORT TO: **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND INFRASTRUCTURE SERVICES COMMITTEE ON 18 JUNE 2024**

SUBJECT: **ECONOMY, ENVIRONMENT AND FINANCE (EEF) SERVICE PLANS 2024-25**

BY: **DEPUTE CHIEF EXECUTIVE (ECONOMY, ENVIRONMENT AND FINANCE)**

1. REASON FOR REPORT

1.1 To invite the Committee to consider the Economy, Environment and Finance Service Plans for 2024-25, noting that the Service Plan for Financial Services will be considered at Corporate Committee on 11 June 2024, the Housing and Property Services Plan at the Housing and Community Safety Committee on 25 June 2024 and the Economic Growth and Development Services Plan will also be considered at the Housing and Community Safety Committee on 25 June 2024 and Planning and Regulatory Services Committee on 13 August 2024 and each in terms of their respective remits.

1.2 This report is submitted to Committee in terms of Section III (B) (50) of the Council's Administrative Scheme relating to ensuring that the organisation, administrative and management processes of the Council are designed to make the most effective contribution to achieving the Council's objectives and to keep these procedures under review.

2. RECOMMENDATION

2.1 **In terms of the remit of this Committee, and subject to later scrutiny and approval as set out in paragraph 1.1 above where required, it is recommended that Committee consider and approve the Service Plans for Economic Growth and Development, Housing and Property Services and Environmental and Commercial Services.**

3. BACKGROUND

3.1 Service planning is a key aspect of the Council's Performance Management Framework and is undertaken annually to set out the strategic direction for services over the coming months.

3.2   It should be noted that actions from the Best Value Action Plan agreed by the Corporate Committee on 23 April 2024 (item 5a of the Agenda refers) will be monitored and reported out with the Service Plan process.

3.3   The service planning process focuses on forward planning for medium-term activities supporting delivery of the Local Outcomes Improvement Plan (LOIP) and Corporate Plan.   The Council planning process also includes team plans that focus on short term tactical and operational activities supporting delivery of the service plan and strategies and Employee Review and Development Plans (ERDP) provide individual planning for employees' activities and development.

3.4   As well as identifying service developments and improvement, the Service Plan Framework requires an assessment of the output and outcome requirements for the services based on the Council's priorities, statutory and regulatory requirements and other relevant factors such as Public Sector Improvement Framework (PSIF) or other equivalent service improvement tool and matching of resources to these priorities.   Priority outcomes are those included in the Council's Corporate Plan that directly relate to the service or are influenced by the service and should be clearly identified.

3.5   Setting clear measurable outcomes and defining key indicators by which progress will be assessed is a recognised area for development within the Council and these Service Plans are part of the improvement journey to implement the Performance Management Framework.   For some actions it can be difficult to identify a measurable outcome (e.g. a change in legislation that must be implemented or updating a policy framework).   It can also be challenging where there is currently no clear baseline or benchmarking from which informed targets and reasonable steps forward these can be developed.   Therefore, as far as possible efforts have been made to set measurable outcomes for service plan actions but in some cases outputs or milestones have been used so that it is still possible to measure whether the action has been progressed as intended.   In other areas, further work will be required to refine outcomes in future.   So, for example, in some actions, strategic and delivery planning is not yet concluded and so performance indicators are not yet agreed.   Where possible in such cases milestones are provided.

3.6   A summary of progress is given below based on the annual reviews carried out for each of the service areas and in so far as the activity is relevant for the remit of this committee. Elements that are directly relevant for other committee remits are shown in italics.

3.7   Reference is also made to the report to Moray Council on 28 February 2024 when the Council agreed the Corporate Plan for 2024-2029 and that the approach to delivery and performance management through service and strategic plans, which contain specific actions that support the delivery of priority areas in the new council corporate plan. This plan focusses on the period from April 2024 to April 2025.

2023/24 Updates

3.8 <u>**Economic Growth and Development**</u>

3.8.1 **Progress on planned work (success)**

- Public Bodies Climate Change Report approved
- Total £896K secured from external funds to improve town centres, £317K of which target out with Elgin helping business start-ups, bringing vacant/derelict property back into use, heritage programmes and environmental improvements, plus funding for a Town Centre Officer post
- Full Business Case achieved for Moray Growth Deal Housing Mix delivery
- Achieved 84% on-target Route Map Net Zero actions
- Launched Moray Climate Action Network
- Forty-four staff and six elected members have been trained and gained certification as Carbon Literate
- *Planning Performance Framework achieved 14 green and 1 amber key markers in feedback report from Scottish Government*

3.8.2 **Progress on planned work (areas for development/not delivered)**

- Focus on engagement with schools to increase Route Map net Zero actions on target

3.8.3 **Planned focus in new plan (reflecting above and challenges to come)**

- Implementation and conclusion of Moray Growth Deal Housing Mix delivery phase
- Climate Change Plan and Routemap to Net Zero
- *Community Safety Action Plan*
- Proposals for Future Just Transition Bids
- *Review of Developer Obligations*
- *Review of Planning Performance Framework*
- *Prepare guidance document for Policy 11 c) in National Planning Framework 4*
- Community Wealth Building Strategy Action Plan

3.9 <u>**Housing and Property Services**</u>

3.9.1 **Progress on planned work (success)**

- Smarter Working project rollout complete with fully operational hybrid meeting rooms
- *Repair feedback from handheld devices increased*
- *Reduction in complaints related to Repairs, Capital and Maintenance*
- *Revised Rent Setting Policy approved after extensive consultation with tenants*
- *Delivery of revised Housing Need and Demand Assessment and accreditation as 'robust and credible' by Scottish Government*

- *Significant improvement in the management of void properties, with reduced turnaround time and loss of rental income*
- Response to emergent issues with Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete (RAAC), with assessments of corporate buildings and remedial programme required for Forres Academy
- Assumed responsibility for Refugee Resettlement activities, significant community work with asylum seekers and integrating Afghan and Ukrainian households

3.9.2 Progress on planned work (areas for development/not delivered)

- Stores and depots review - OBC has been delayed due to capacity issues but approved in April
- *Improvement of housing stock, progress made and accelerated programme developed for monitoring*

3.9.3 Planned focus in new plan (reflecting above and challenges to come)

- *Continued reduction in complaints related to repairs*
- *Tenant Survey undertaken for 2024*
- *Development of the Strategic Commissioning Plan with IJB*
- *Review of Gas Servicing ICT systems*

3.10 <u>Environmental and Commercial Services</u>

3.10.1 Progress on planned work (success)

- Planned increase in EV charging points and EV Strategy complete
- Successful migration to web-based system for Road Maintenance with improved service efficiencies identified
- Joint Energy from Waste Project complete and site fully operational
- Active Travel projects delivered through Participatory Budgeting
- Core Paths Action Plan in place with recruitment of Core Path Ranger complete
- Recycling rate of 57.79% confirmed with Moray ranked highest amongst all Scottish Local Authorities
- Planned self-assessment work using the Public Service Improvement Framework (PSIF) complete

3.10.2 Progress on planned work (areas for development/not delivered)

- Implementation of public use charging infrastructure remains ongoing with funding to be confirmed for the Pathfinder project
- Work continues on the Road Safety Plan with a final version expected quarter 1 2024/25
- Development of Buckie Harbour Masterplan remains ongoing due to inclusion of Just Transition work

3.10.3 **Planned focus in new plan (reflecting above and challenges to come)**

- Continue to deliver on actions in line with Climate Change strategy
- Continue to engage with communities through Participatory Budgeting
- Deliver planned infrastructure projects linked to Moray West Wind Farm and Buckie Harbour
- Key themes as follows:
  - o Decarbonise transport / develop sustainable travel
  - o Flood Risk Management
  - o Promote Buckie Harbour for growth and development
  - o Improve open space management
  - o Improve infrastructure asset management
  - o Procure efficient and effective school transport
  - o Deliver efficient waste and recycling management

Service Plans for 2024/25

3.11 Given the pressures across all services and the need to prioritise resources to the Council's priorities, services are focussing on essential service delivery and developments and taking account of the planned review of the Corporate Plan when undertaking service planning.   The three Service Plans are attached to this report as follows:

Appendix 1:	Economic Growth and Development
Appendix 2:	Housing & Property
Appendix 3:	Environmental and Commercial

4. **SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS**

a) **Corporate Plan and 10 Year Plan (Local Outcomes Improvement Plan (LOIP)**
The Service Plans were informed by the LOIP and the Council's Corporate Plan.

b) **Policy and Legal**
Statutory requirements and Council policies are considered by managers when preparing service plans for the year ahead.

c) **Financial implications**
No additional financial resources beyond those previously reported to service committees are required to support the Service Plans.

d) **Risk Implications**
Up to date risk registers are maintained and considered as part of the service planning process.

e) **Staffing Implications**
Service Plans are integral to good management practice including workforce planning and assisting with communication about work plans for staff, identifying priorities and matching staff time to the Council's priorities.

However, there are a number of areas for development that have been identified where there are concerns about the availability of resources to deliver the required outcomes within an acceptable period of time. It may be necessary to report back to committee to consider resources or re-prioritisation of work to ensure adequate progress on these key priorities.

Workforce Planning takes place with service management teams and includes review of workforce data such as turnover and absence, identification of key posts for planning, recruitment issues and plans, training and development requirements in the context of council and service priorities. It is also of note that the services are carefully prioritising work to reflect the restricted capacity of their teams. This is exacerbated by hard to fill vacancies, absence, and pressing operational work that cannot be re-prioritised.

f) Property
There are no property implications arising from this report.

g) Equalities
Managers consider equalities issues for staff and service users when assessing current service delivery arrangements and future requirements.

h) Climate Change and Biodiversity Impacts
There are no climate change and biodiversity impacts from this report.

i) Consultations
Heads of Service have worked with their management teams to prepare the Service Plans attached as **Appendices 1-3** and have contributed to the updates in this report.

5.   CONCLUSION

5.1   The Service Plan has been prepared identifying the service priorities targeted for 2024/25. In preparing the plan, managers have taken account of risk, performance data (including inspections and Best Value), the LOIP, the Corporate Plan and other relevant factors such as audit and inspection outcomes. The Service Plan identifies the resources allocated to each service and how these will be utilised to deliver core service requirements and improvements.

Author of Report:	Rhona Gunn, Beverly Smith, Edward Thomas, Nicola Moss
Background Papers:	
Ref:	SPMAN-1108985784-929 / SPMAN-1108985784-943
	SPMAN-1108985784-944 / SPMAN-1108985784-932

1. Service Definition:	**Economic Growth and Development Service delivers key regulatory services associated with Planning, Building Standards, Environmental Health and Trading Standards and leads on Economic Development, Regeneration, Climate Change and Moray Growth Deal**: - **Environmental Health and Trading Standards** deliver regulatory services for food safety, health and safety, animal health, private water supply, public health, private water supplies, housing, landlord registration, community safety, consumer advice, trading standards, safety of goods, petrol licensing, illicit goods, consumer advice and tobacco sales. **Development Management and Building Standards** is responsible for planning and building standards applications/warrants, compliance with planning conditions, enforcement of breaches of planning control and dangerous buildings, both services aim to be self-financing attracting significant income through statutory and discretionary fee income. **Economic Growth and Regeneration** delivers Business Gateway Service and Community Wealth Building, external funding and manage allocations including UKSPF, town centre regeneration activities, Business Improvement District, transfer of Museum service, skills and Employability. **Strategic Planning and Development** is responsible for the Local Development Plan/Supporting guidance, preparation of masterplans, Climate Change/Routemap and Just Transition Conservation Area and Grants, Town Centre regeneration Moray Growth Deal Housing Mix Delivery projects, Levelling up Funding, Elgin Long Term Town Plan and Developer Obligations.
2. Service Resources:	96 FTE **Annual Budget 2024/25**: Net Revenue £3.8 million

3. What have we identified for improvement in 2024/25	**What evidence did we use to identify this improvement? Please add benchmark information wherever available and relevant to the improvement.**
Develop proposals for future Just Transition Bids	Climate Change Strategy 2020-30
Prepare updated community safety response plan incorporating recommendations from agreed Annual Community Safety report.	Community Safety Strategic Group – Anti-social Behaviour Task Force

Prepare guidance document for Policy 11 c) in National Planning Framework 4 to maximise socioeconomic benefit associated with energy developments and address community wealth building.	National Planning Framework 4
Review and prepare Planning Performance Framework (PPF) to align with the template set out by the National Planning Improvement Team	National Planning Improvement Framework
Review of Developer Obligations Supplementary Guidance, publish and consult on revised guidance including review of methodologies.	National Planning Framework 4, Developer Obligations Supplementary Guidance Moray Local Development Plan 2020 Guidance

Note: Progress against BV Actions will be monitored and reporting out with Service Plan process

4. Strategic Outcome or Priority	Action	Planned Outcome	Outcome measures	Completion target	Lead	Priority Rating (1 high 3 low and 4 for ongoing, 5 for on hold)
(L) Developing a diverse, inclusive & sustainable economy. (CP) Building Stronger Greener Vibrant Economy	Progress Moray Growth Deal: Bring the remaining Moray Growth Deal projects into delivery:	By the end of the Deal (2031): MGD outcomes relating to GVA uplift, tourism numbers, affordable homes built, job creation and skills uplift to be achieved.	By the end of March 2025: Ability to track outputs and their impact on outcomes through the completion of a benefits realisation and monitoring plan. Bi-annual review of project monitoring plans at MGD Board meetings (May and November).	March 2026 Interim target of March 2025 for 7 of the 8 projects to be in delivery	Head of Economic Growth & Development Services	1

(L) Developing a diverse, inclusive & sustainable economy. (CP) Building Stronger Greener Vibrant Economy	Delivery of the Community Wealth Building Strategy and Action Plan	Ensure wealth stays within the hands of our local communities	Average gross weekly earnings (full-time employees) (SLAED)	March 2025	Head of Economic Growth & Development Services	1
(L) Developing a diverse, inclusive & sustainable economy. (CP) Building Stronger Greener Vibrant Economy	Enable more people to work by supporting access to affordable childcare	Minimise barriers to people working such as childcare	Gender Pay Gap

Number of Parents assisted through Employability partnership

Number of Wrap around places available | March 2025 | Head of Economic Growth & Development Services | 1 |
| (L) Empowering & connecting communities. (CP) Building Thriving, Resilient, Empowered Communities | Delivery of the Levelling Up Fund elements of the Elgin City Centre Masterplan | Elgin City Centre is a prosperous, attractive and health place | No of empty properties and vacant/derelict sites in the city centre

No of additional residential properties in Elgin city centre | March 2026 | Strategic Planning and Development Manager | 1 |
| (L) Empowering & connecting communities. (CP) Building Thriving, | Delivery of Town centre Improvement Plan & Annual Report | Developing a diverse, inclusive and | Town Vacancy Rates SLAED annual report indicators – town centre vacancy rates | March 2025 | Strategic Planning and Development Manager | 1 |

Resilient, Empowered Communities		sustainable economy: By the year 2030 Moray will have a sustainable and inclusive economy which generates improved opportunities for everyone, including more skilled and higher paid jobs				

5. Service Level Outcomes or Priorities	Action	Planned Outcome	Outcome Measures	Completion Target	Lead	Priority rating
Economic Growth & Regeneration	Establishing Elgin Town Board and supporting engagement to prepare Investment Plan for submission to UK Government	Elgin City is a prosperous, attractive and healthy place	No of empty properties and vacant/derelict sites in the city centre No of additional residential properties in Elgin city centre Crime statistics	August 2024	Strategic Planning & Development Manager	1
Legislative/Regulatory	Preparation and submission of LDP Evidence Report to Gatecheck	Evidence to support Proposed Local Development Plan to deliver homes, employment, prosperity, town centre regeneration, active travel, healthy living, infrastructure, carbon reduction, climate adaptation and biodiversity enhancement.	Outcome measures to be developed as part of preparation of LDP 2027	1 June 2024 for submission of Evidence Report to Gatecheck Timelines as set out in approved Development Plan Scheme December 2023	Strategic Planning and Development Manager	1

Climate Change and Biodiversity Route Map to Net Zero	Building heat and Electricity - Scoping and research into increased renewable energy generation from Council buildings and land.	Achievement of targets, indicators and outcomes identified in Climate Change Action Plan to achieve Carbon Neutral by 2030.	LGBF, % RMNZ amber/red Heat and Electricity CO2 emissions areas wide per capita – (LGBF CLIM1) CO2 emissions within scope of LA per capita – (LGBF CLIM2)	March 2025	Principal Climate Change Strategy Officer	1
Climate Change and Biodiversity Route Map to Net Zero	Operating Emissions – Governance & Climate Change Awareness Training (Re-branded) Adaptation benchmarking Design and develop online Climate Change awareness Training Support the development of carbon knowledge and skills to promote innovation and effective carbon management	Achievement of targets, indicators and outcomes identified in Climate Change Action Plan to achieve Carbon Neutral by 2030.	LGBF % RMNZ amber/red	August 2025 for all actions	Principal Climate Change Strategy Officer	1

Climate Change and Biodiversity Route Map to Net Zero	Nature and Biodiversity Development of Carbon Offsetting Plan and ensuring management of council land holdings is planned to maximise carbon sequestration	Achievement of targets, indicators and outcomes identified in Climate Change Action Plan to achieve Carbon Neutral by 2030.	LGBF % RMNZ amber/red	March 2025	Principal Climate Change Strategy Officer	1
Climate Change and Biodiversity Route Map to Net Zero	Prepare Climate Change Routemap Review 2030 net zero target Update Climate Change Strategy Consult, raise awareness, communicate and engage with staff, residents, businesses an organisation across Moray about climate change. Promote relevant campaigns. Join support networks to assist the progress of climate change work	Achievement of targets, indicators and outcomes identified in Climate Change Action Plan to achieve Carbon Neutral by 2030.	LGBF % RMNZ amber/red	August 2024 January 2025 June 2025 and publish 2025 March 2025 March 2025	Principal Climate Change Strategy Officer	1

Workforce Planning	Identify route for succession of professional officers across the service	Reduced risk of statutory failures impacting on public health and safety	Number of services at risk of insufficient staffing levels in next 5 years to deliver statutory duties for Environmental Health, Trading Standards & Building Standards	March 2025	Head of Economic Growth and Development	1
Community Safety	Prepare community safety response plan incorporating recommendations from agreed Annual Community Safety report	Reduce the number of anti-social behaviour referrals	Outcome measures set out in community safety response plan	March 2025	Environmental Health & Trading Standards Manager	1
Legislative/Regulatory	Guidance for Policy 11c) in NPF4 to maximise socio-economic benefit associated with energy developments	Production of guidance document and associated plans to maximise economic impact and address community wealth building	Ensure compliance with Policy 11 c) in NPF4	Draft approved April 2024, consultation for 12 weeks to commence by 1 August 2024 and final document by January 2025	Strategic Planning & Development Manager	2
Legislative/Regulatory	Review and prepare Planning Performance Framework (PPF)	Improved performance in line with pillars set out in the template with local case studies	PPF submitted to National Performance team in line with agreed deadline	December 2024	Development Management & Building Standards Manger	1

		and performance data				
Legislative/Regulatory	Review of Developer Obligations Supplementary Guidance	Ensure Developer Obligations Guidance is robust	Collection and spending of Developer Obligations	December 2025	Strategic Planning & Development Manager	3
Develop proposals for Just Transition Bids	Prepare a framework for Just Transition Bids	Target investment to create good, green jobs through the transition to net zero	Framework for bids prepared	March 2025	Strategic Planning and Development Manager	2
Health & Wellbeing	Ensure revised operational implementation of absence management procedures are applied by managers	Absence is managed effectively and levels of absence are reduced efficiently and timeously	Reduction in number of days absence per employee	March 2025	Head of Economic Growth & Development	2

HOUSING AND PROPERTY SERVICE PLAN

1. Service Definition:	Management and maintenance of Council housing stock, local strategic housing function, statutory duties in relation to homelessness and fuel poverty, development and delivery of the Moray Affordable Housing Supply Programme (AHSP), maintenance of the Council's corporate buildings, management of the Council's corporate property portfolio and the industrial estate, Building Service DLO, Property Design, Asset Management and Estates function.
2. Service Resources:	**344 FTE employees** **Annual Budget 2024/25**: £50.6m comprised of Housing Revenue Account (HRA) £26.2m, Building Services £12.5m, General Services Housing & Property £11.9m

3. What have we identified for improvement in 2024/25	**What evidence did we use to identify this improvement? Please add benchmark information wherever available and relevant to the improvement.**
Systemic Review of Quality and Customer Service for Housing Repairs	Informed by volume of tenant and elected member representations and complaints. Comprehensive review of data including complaints to inform a systemic action plan for improvement in terms of quality, value for money and customer satisfaction
Tenant Survey 2024	Survey is undertaken on a three-yearly basis and was included in previous Best Value action plan – this will be undertaken by a specialist market research consultancy
Review of gas servicing scheduling systems	Existing ICT is unsupported. Potential to replace it with a more robust, supported and integrated system, which will schedule works and satisfy statutory reporting requirements
Local Housing Strategy 2025-30 & HRA Business Plan review	Alignment with IJB with development of the Strategic Commissioning Plan which must include a Housing Contribution Statement. The statement will be informed by the HNDA undertaken in 2023/24

Improve attainment of EESSH (Energy Efficiency Standard for Social Housing) and SHQS (Scottish Housing Quality Standard)	Scottish Housing Regulator and benchmarking data – Moray Council is below local authority averages

Note: Progress against BV Actions will be monitored and reporting out with Service Plan process

4. Strategic Outcome or Priority	Action	Planned Outcome	Outcome measures	Completion target	Lead	Priority Rating (1 high 3 low and 4 for ongoing, 5 for on hold)
(L) Empowering & connecting communities. (CP) Building Thriving, Resilient, Empowered Communities	Delivery of the Housing. Investment and Affordable Housing Supply programmes	Increase in affordable housing available in Moray	No of new supply social housing for rent: 32 completions 119 site starts	 31 March 2025 31 March 2025	Housing Strategy & Development Manager	1

5. Service Level Outcomes or Priorities	Action	Planned Outcome	Outcome Measures	Completion Target	Lead	Priority rating
Systemic Review of Housing Repairs	Systemic Review of Housing Repairs	Increased customer satisfaction	Implementation of improvement plan	31 March 2025	Building Services Manager	2

			Digital self-service tool available to book repair appointments	31 March 2025		
			Level of complaints decreased by 10%	31 March 2025		
			Increase in number of repairs completed Right First Time	31 March 2025		
		Value for money assurance	Response repair expenditure reduced by 10%	31 March 2026		
	Revise the Housing Contribution Statement with Health & Social Care Moray	Assess and respond to the housing needs of older people, in partnership with IJB	Over a 3-year programme an average of 30% of new affordable homes at accessible standard are delivered	31 March 2025	Housing Strategy & Development Manager	2
			Achieve strategic alignment of allocations, operations and development between the	31 December 2025		

			Council and IJB			
	Continue to reduce the carbon impact arising from Housing & Property Services	Phased improvement of energy efficiency within corporate buildings and housing stock.	Carbon Neutral by 2030

In relation to the corporate estate a reduction in Scope 1 (direct emissions arising from energy consumption of 10% against 21/22 baseline of 5,615 tonnes of CO2

% of houses which meet EESSH increased to be in line with local authority benchmark of circa 90% | 2030

31 March 2025

31 March 2025 | Property Asset Manager | 2 |
| HRA Business Plan review | Undertake review of financial position of the HRA over the long term | Assurance of sound financial governance for the long term

Improved statutory compliance | Completion of review | Milestones:

Procurement of consultancy 31 May 2024

Completion 30 November 2024 | Housing Strategy & Development Manager | 1 |

Tenants Survey 2024	Undertake a three-yearly, large scale, independent survey of tenant satisfaction	Statutory compliance Assurance of good quality service delivery and tenant satisfaction Opportunities to direct investment	Increase satisfaction with property condition for new tenants by 5% Achieve parity with benchmarked peers in relation to overall tenant satisfaction (83.4% as of 2022/23)	Milestones: Procurement of consultancy 31 May 2024 Completion 30 November 2024	Housing Strategy & Development Manager	1
Review of gas servicing scheduling systems	Review existing gas servicing systems Complete option appraisal for improvements	Provision of a robust, supported and integrated system, which will schedule works efficiently and satisfy statutory reporting requirements	Statutory compliance	Milestones: Complete option appraisal 31 Oct 2024 Agreed Action Plan 31 March 2025	Building Services Manager/ Housing Strategy & Development Manager	2
Multiyear rent increase strategy	Complete options appraisal for future rent increases, in conjunction with HRA Business Plan review	Assurance of sound financial governance for the long term Improved statutory compliance	Approval of multi- year rent strategy Improve/maintain tenant satisfaction	Milestones: Complete option appraisal 30 Sep 2024 Tenant consultation 15 Dec 2024 Implementation 1 April 2025	Head of Service	2

Review of Housing & Property teams	Identify opportunities for efficiency across teams, optimising cost recovery and incorporating emergent work within structures	Efficiency of service delivery £75k saving	Review of interdependencies and changes to be incorporated Consultation and Approvals Implementation	31 October 2024 31 January 2025 31 March 2025	Head of Housing & Property	2
Health & Wellbeing	Ensure revised operational implementation of absence management procedures are applied by managers	Absence is managed effectively and levels of absence are reduced efficiently and timeously	Reduction in number of days absence per employee	March 2025	Head of Housing & Property	2

ENVIRONMENTAL AND COMMERCIAL SERVICES SERVICE PLAN

1. Service Definition:	**Environmental and Commercial Services is a diverse service with twenty-one discrete functions delivered by four services**: - **Roads Maintenance** deliver management and maintenance of public roads, winter maintenance, street lighting, fleet services. **Environmental Protection** manage and maintain all parks, open spaces, core paths, countryside ranger service, amenity areas and burial grounds waste/recycling collection, waste disposal, street cleaning, school meal service, building cleaning and janitorial service for council buildings. **Transportation** has responsibility for the management of all traffic and road safety functions, street works co-ordination, active and sustainable travel, transport planning and strategies, off street car parks, public transport unit PTU, and includes maintenance and operation of 6 harbours including a dredger. **Consultancy** provides civil engineering construction related services including bridge management, road design, contract management and flood risk.
2. Service Resources:	Roads Maintenance 137FTE/ Environmental Protection 408.57FTE/Transportation 76.83FTE Consultancy 13FTE = **Total 635.5 FTE** **Annual Budget 2023/24 Capital £16,859,000 Revenue £27,535,693**

3. What have we identified for improvement in 2024/25	**What evidence did we use to identify this improvement?** **Please add benchmark information wherever available and relevant to the improvement.**
Decarbonise the council fleet	Corporate Plan 2024-29, Climate Change Strategy 2020-2030, Fleet EV Strategy 2024
Provide additional publicly accessible EV charging infrastructure	Corporate Plan 2024-29, Climate Change Strategy 2020-2030, Electric Vehicle Strategy 2023
Flood Risk Management	Statutory requirements on Surface Water Management Plans and Coastal Adaptation
Further promote and develop sustainable travel	Active Travel Strategy 2022-2027, Climate Change Strategy 2020-2030, National Transport Strategy 2
Promote Buckie Harbour for further growth and development	Just Transition programme, Buckie Harbour Masterplan (draft)
Improve burials operations and infrastructure	Cemetery capacity, complaints, service inefficiencies, opportunities from full cost recovery policy position

ENVIRONMENTAL AND COMMERCIAL SERVICES SERVICE PLAN

4. Strategic Outcome or Priority	Action	Planned Outcome	Outcome measures	Completion target	Lead	Priority Rating (1 high 3 low and 4 for ongoing, 5 for on hold)
(L) Developing a diverse, inclusive & sustainable economy. (CP) Building Stronger Greener Vibrant Economy	Progress the Bus Revolution m:connect project as part of the Moray Growth Deal	In line with corporate plan outcomes of retain and attract young people, minimise barriers to working, adapt to changing climate and acts sustainably	Increase public transport passenger journeys on m.connect by 4,286p.a.	March 2025	HOS/Strategic Transport Services Manager	4
			To reduce the environmental impact of transport in the area by 4.3t CO2e p.a.	March 2025		
			Reduced barriers to employment	March 2025 (indicator in development)		
	Milestones: Q1/2 2024/25 – Charging infrastructure locations agreed, consultant appointed, group booking function released and vehicle orders for Phase 2 placed. Committee reports on new service route/Phase 1a and Phase 2 service plan.			September 2024		

	Marketing campaign planning to begin.					
	Q2 2024/25 – DAR submitted for staff increase.			September 2024		
	Q3 2024/25 – VMF submitted. Marketing campaign approved by board. Charging units commissioned			December 2024		
	Q1 2025/26 – Vehicles delivered/in service and driver training complete, service registrations submitted and listed, marketing campaign launched, operational systems deployed			April 2025		
	Q1 2025 Phase 2 launch date			June 2025		

Note: Progress against BV Actions will be monitored and reporting out with Service Plan process

5. Service Level Outcomes or Priorities	Action	Planned Outcome	Outcome Measures	Completion Target	Lead	Priority rating(1 high 3 low and 4 for ongoing, 5 for on hold)
Infrastructure Delivery	Lead the transport element of the Town Centre Improvement Plan	Developing a diverse, inclusive and	Transport interventions on track for delivery as	March 2025	Strategic Transport	1

		sustainable economy: By the year 2030 Moray will have a sustainable and inclusive economy which generates improved opportunities for everyone, including more skilled and higher paid jobs	per programme (to be confirmed when final programme agreed)		Services Manager	
Infrastructure Delivery	Lead the infrastructure elements of the Levelling Up Fund in line with Elgin City Masterplan	Elgin City Centre is a prosperous, attractive and healthy place	Number of infrastructure schemes on target for planned delivery (programme still TBC – indicators to be revised following confirmation)	March 2026	Consultancy Manager	1
Decarbonise Transport & Develop Sustainable Travel	Deliver Fleet EV Strategy	Increased Electric Vehicle provision to meet Moray Council Climate Change targets for 2040 - Moray Council electric fleet to increase to 20% and ensure suitable EV charging infrastructure in place.	No and % of small electric vehicles within the Council's fleet to increase in line with Fleet EV Strategy – 18 additional ZEV introduced to fleet in 24/25 Increase the current number of Fleet EV charging points by 20%.	March 2025	Roads Maintenance Manager	2

			Identify possible renewable energy source options for Ashgrove depot and develop implementation plan.			
Decarbonise Transport & Develop Sustainable Travel	Implement strategy for public use of on and off street (car parks) charging infrastructure via Pathfinder Project Milestone 1: Tender process to appoint partner complete Milestone 2: Contract Award Milestone 3: Implement strategy	Community Wealth Building, Community Benefits and Economic Social Governance including training and the development of local supply chains for repairs and servicing.	Continue the Pathfinder Project with Aberdeenshire, Aberdeen City and Highland Councils to seek private investment for the expansion and operation of the publicly available Electric Vehicle Charging Infrastructure in Moray.	December 2024 April 2025 March 2026	Strategic Transport Services Manager	2
Decarbonise Transport & Develop Sustainable Travel	Delivery of Active Travel Strategy - Promote and develop active and green travel in schools	Increased awareness and participation in active and green travel in schools	95% of all primary schools will deliver Level 2 Bikeability by 2027 60% of all journeys to school to be walked, wheeled or cycled by 2027 Milestone 1: 65% of all schools will have delivered L2 Bikeability Milestone 2: 52-54% of all journeys	March 2027 December 2024 June 2025	Strategic Transport Services Manager	4

			to school to be walked, wheeled or cycled			
Flood Risk Management	We will develop Surface Water Management Plans (SWMP) - Draft SWMP for Forres and Findhorn by end 2024/25	Implementing surface water infrastructure improvements in vulnerable flood risk areas: Reducing the risk of surface water flooding to properties in vulnerable areas	Draft SWMP for Forres & Findhorn Implementing surface water infrastructure improvements in vulnerable flood risk areas: (levels of risk and areas to be identified in surface water management plans) New schemes prioritised in Local Flood Risk Management Plans for 2022 – 2028 will reduce risk to approximately 100 properties in Moray)	March 2025 Tbc following completion of plans	Consultancy Manager	2
Flood Risk Management	Deliver Coastal Adaption Plan	A plan to manage Moray's coastline that is adaptable to climate change.	Supporting management of Moray's Coastline in a sustainable way.	July 2024	Consultancy Manager	2
Promote Buckie Harbour for further Growth and Development	Publish Harbour Masterplan	Promote development opportunities to potential partners and attract inward investment	Publication of Masterplan and feasibility studies	September 2024	Strategic Transport Services Manager	2

Improve Open Space Management	Create a burials administration service which supports the needs of the burial service and the requirements of the Burial and Cremation (Scotland) Act	Improved service delivery and compliance with regulatory measures	Meet the requirements of the Burial and Cremation (Scotland) Act	March 2025	Environmental Protection Manager	2
			Milestone 1: Current service health check and knowledge based documents prepared by Registrars	July 2024		
			Milestone 2: Understanding implications, once available, of the Burial and Cremation Act on burial administrative functions	September 2024		
			Milestone 3: Review and recommend appropriate system for management of burials	November 2024		
Improve Open Space Management	Develop a Tree Strategy which will direct how the Council manages its living assets in Parks and Open Spaces. Commence risk-based tree condition surveys at prioritised locations	Improved tree management Improved health and safety on Council owned Parks and Open Spaces	At least two Parks and Open Spaces assessed per year following budget approval.	March 2025	Environmental Protection Manager	2

		Costed process for undertaking tree/surveys works which then require budget approval.				
Improve Open Space Management	Creation of a new cemetery at Linkwood Road, Elgin	Increasing the vacant lair capacity for future use within Moray cemeteries	Availability of additional burial capacity from 2026.	March 2026	Environmental Protection Manager	1
			Milestone 1: Secure planning permission for a new cemetery	July 2024		
			Milestone 2: Produce Tender for the scope of works needed to construct a new cemetery	July 204		
			Milestone 3: Complete land acquisition for the land identified for the new cemetery	August 2024		
			Milestone 4: Appoint successful to contractor to construct the new cemetery	September 2024		

| Improve Open Space Management | Implement a rolling programme of headstone inspections within cemeteries | Improve the health and safety in cemetery sites by inspecting headstones and carrying out appropriate remedial works

Have a planned long-term programme for managing safety in cemeteries | Inspection and make safe repairs undertaken in at least 2 cemeteries per year | March 2025

Ongoing after 2025 | Environmental Protection Manager | 2 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Improve Infrastructure Asset Management | Identify and collate all retaining walls. | A full list of Moray Council's retaining walls with visual inspection of condition and recommendations for action required | Asset management Plan for Moray Council's retaining walls | April 2026 | Consultancy Manager | 2 |
| Improve Infrastructure Asset Management | Develop a prioritisation method for non-network bridges. | Non-network bridge maintenance prioritisation methodology. | Non-network bridge maintenance prioritisation policy | December 2026 | Consultancy Manager | 2 |
| Improve Infrastructure Asset Management | Improve the rate of Principal Inspections undertaken on the Council's network bridges by reassigning this work as a top priority | Principal Inspections rate complies with legislation (each network bridge to be inspected every six years) and Moray improves the inspection rate to a similar standard | 63 Principal Inspections will be undertaken each year. Benchmarked improvement in bridge condition. (Data is currently gathered and reported to SCOTS Society of Chief Officers of | December 2025 with progress to be measured annually. | Consultancy Manager | 2 |

		to other Local Authorities	Transportation Scotland and will be added to performance reports when available)			
Efficient waste and recycling management	Plan the implementation of the deposit return scheme as established by the Scottish Government	Ensure all secondary schools are complying with the deposit return scheme	Funds secured for procuring equipment for roll out of DRS Equipment ordered in preparation for implementation phase. (currently October 2025)	March 2025	Service Manager	2
Efficient waste and recycling management	Compliance with the Waste Upholstered Domestic Seating (WUDS) containing Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs)	Compliance with the regulations and SEPA guidance with regards POPs	Approval by SEPA by meeting the regulations and guidance	March 2025	Service Manager	2
Health and Wellbeing	Ensure revised operational implementation of absence management procedures are applied by managers	Absence is managed effectively and levels of absence are reduced efficiently and timeously	Reduction in number of days absence per employee	March 2025	HOS and Service Managers	2
Workforce Development	Undertake a staff led self- assessment of our service activities and customer results using the PSIF model (Public Service Improvement Framework)	Results from self-assessments will be used to create a targeted action plan for long term improvements to the section	Milestone 1: Harbour PSIF complete by TBC Milestone 2: Action plan complete by TBC	March 2025	HOS and Service Managers	2

REPORT TO: ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND INFRASTRUCTURE SERVICES COMMITTEE ON 18 JUNE 2024

SUBJECT: ENVIRONMENTAL AND COMMERCIAL SERVICES AND ECONOMIC GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT SERVICES (ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT) REVENUE AND CAPITAL BUDGET MONITORING TO 31 MARCH 2024

BY: DEPUTE CHIEF EXECUTIVE (ECONOMY, ENVIRONMENT AND FINANCE)

1. REASON FOR REPORT

1.1 To inform the Committee of the current position regarding Environmental and Commercial Services and Economic Growth and Development Services (Economic Development) Revenue and Capital Budgets.

1.2 This report is submitted to Committee in terms of Section III (A) (2) of the Council's Scheme of Administration relating to the consideration of Revenue and Capital Budgets and long term financial plans.

2. RECOMMENDATION

2.1 It is recommended that Committee considers and notes the budget monitoring report for the period to 31 March 2024 (QTR 4).

3. BACKGROUND

3.1 The Performance Management Framework 2020 (page 27) requires that progress against Capital and Revenue Expenditure and the Capital Plan is reported to the relevant Service Committee every Committee cycle. This service committee level monitoring has not been undertaken for 9 months due to a combination of staff absence and resourcing issues within services, although corporate level monitoring of material variations has continued. Improving financial reporting and forecasting is a key aspect of the Best Value Action Plan and work is ongoing to improve consistency of approach in financial monitoring across service committees and to clarify the interplay between services and service accountancy support in preparing monitoring reports for service committees.

3.2 The information in this report was correct at the time of writing but may be subject to minor amendments and variation as the year end figures are

finalised. The final information is being prepared for the meeting of Full Council on 26 June 2024.

4. **ENVIRONMENTAL AND COMMERCIAL SERVICES REVENUE BUDGET**

4.1 The revenue budget for 2023/24 was approved by Moray Council on 1 March 2023 (paragraph 5 of the minute refers).

Annual Budget	Actual	Variance
£30,017k	£30,252k	-£235k (0.78%)

Environmental Protection

Service Area	Budget	Actual	Variance
Waste Management	£8585k	£8226k	£359k
Open Spaces	£1851k	£1758k	£93k
Building Cleaning & Catering	£7643k	£7467k	£176k

4.3 The key variances to the budgets within Environmental Protection are as follows: With regards Waste Management a number of budget lines were underspent such as leachate extraction (£146k), ground water monitoring (£21K), advertising (£20K) and waste deposition costs (£24K). A number of income lines over achieved the predicted budget, including the income from gas extraction at Dallachy landfill (£24K), recycling materials (£29K), bulky waste (£24K) and the sale of wheeled bins (£23K).

A number of budget lines were overspent including £91K on internal fleet charges, £61k under achievement in garden waste income (permit sales numbers) and £82K in trade waste income. Investigations are being undertaken to understand the reason for the under achievement in trade waste income and what can be done to address this.

4.4 An additional £24K income in tipping charges at Dallachy and the unanticipated income (£118K) from the use of Dallachy Landfill, as a contingency facility for Energy from Waste, significantly contributed in achieving an overall underspend in 2023/24.

4.5 In relation to Building Cleaning and Catering the main contributing factor to achieving an underspend was reduced food costs of £52K (due to withdrawal from Food for Life) and increased income from food sales (£100k). This is positive and reflects the good work done by the Catering Team to increase uptake within secondary schools. There was also of £34K underspend on replacement equipment. There was overspend with the budget lines relating to increase in transport cost (£4K), due to in part to increased taxi charges for transportation of meals from production kitchens to serveries, and a £12K overspend on the HQ/Annexe tea service. The possibility of a budget pressure if sales did not reach pre covid levels was flagged when a decision was made to reintroduce the service with a view to this covering costs. The viability of tea service is currently being reviewed to determine the long term future of this service.

4.6   Although Open Spaces achieved an overall underspend of £93k, a number of budget lines were overspent, as well as under spent. Under achievement in income (£66k) from the sale of lairs was predicted, following cessation of pre-purchasing of lairs. Some of the underspends were due to the planned work activities not being carried out due to resource pressures. Consequently, carry forwards will be requested (£67k for Tree Inspections and £10k for headstone inspections) to support service delivery in 2024/25.

4.7   Other underspends in Open Spaces include a £39K Dornell contribution (Core Path Ranger service) and £30K Rothes Way Grant.   These amounts will be moved to earmarked reserves for use in 2024/25. There was also a combined underspend of £52K on tools, horticultural supplies and materials. There was an overspend of £56K in transport and plant costs (contributed significantly by unavoidable vehicle hire charges following accident damage to vehicles) and a £14K overspend in the maintenance of war memorials.

Roads Maintenance

Service Area	Budget	Actual	Variance
Roads Maintenance	£5,627k	£6,187k	£560k
Fleet Services	-£1,840k	-£1,545k	-£295k

4.8   The overall overspend of £560k principally relates to a £569k overspend on winter maintenance as the budget for winter maintenance is based on a mild winter, and the costs for each year vary on the prevailing weather conditions.

4.9   The general maintenance budget was underspent by £375k. There were other overspends on energy costs (£22k), vehicle running costs (£278k), energy costs (£22k) and software licenses (£19k).

4.10   Insurance excess payments were £16k over budget and relate to claims. Traffic signal maintenance was £20k over budget and reflects a growing pressure on this budget with increased numbers of traffic signals to be maintained.

4.11   For Fleet Services, income was £461k greater than forecast due to increased external hires which were recharged to other departments – with the cost being reflected in the service user budgets. Energy costs were under budget by £35k. There were however overspends relating to spares (£255k), running costs (£40k), accident damage (£49k), external vehicle hires (£324k) and supplies and services (£26k), which all reflect the challenging market conditions and increased costs relating to outsourcing and workshop staff shortages.

Transportation

Service Area	Budget	Actual	Variance
Transportation	£6,281k	£6,633	£352k

4.15 Public Transport Unit; Community Bus fund revenue income was underspent by £8K due to the procurement process with the network review report coming in under expected price. The Home to School transport budget was overspent by 1.3% (£58k), largely on account of requiring an additional contract to Lossiemouth High School due to pupil numbers, and unanticipated additional support needs, pupil movements between various schools. m.connect was over budget by £85k, principally relating the longstanding position where a specific employer opportunity was forecast but not materialised. Work is ongoing to address this shortfall before the next phase of the project is rolled out. The Liftango app is under budget due to external funding covering costs.

4.16 Traffic underspent £32k on road safety revenue, where work was impacted by staff absences. The Development Plan work is underspent by £4k, however, there is a request to carry this forward into 24/25 for conclusion of the traffic modelling work. There was an income shortfall of £99k relating to reduction in Roads Construction Consent inspections, due to long term sickness. EV charging was overspent by £18k relating to energy price increases and issues with non-payments, not being collected as debts, from current back-office provider. EV Tariffs were increased in January 2024 to better reflect the operational costs. The way the council and other neighbouring local authorities run EV chargers is likely to change with the upcoming EV charger tender and procurement process, so this is unlikely to be an issue in the future.

4.17 There was a £51k shortfall in car park income, this directly relates to transfer of car park income across to beneficiary trusts, but reflects the longer-term recovery from Covid in terms of overall town centre and seasonal use, with the uplift in car park charges from January 2024 tracking as budgeted.

4.18 Harbour Income is better than budget by £88k particular in relation to Pilotage Fees and Cargo Movements. The dredger maintenance costs were £35k less than budget. Staffing overspend of £26k relates to long-term sickness cover to enable the harbour office to remain open 24 hours per day. The occupation of Pier 3 by Ocean Winds commenced in July 2023, rather than April 2023 as originally budgeted, meaning the full budget was not realised for the year in this regard.

Service Area	Budget	Actual	Variance
Consultancy	£983k	£835k	£148k

4.20 There is no significant under or overspend on the Bridges Revenue budget. There was a small net overspend of £10k on the Flood Risk Management Revenue Budget, which was due to the significant cost of clearing up after a flood event at Aberlour. The bulk of the underspend relates to the SSEN grant which will be spent during 24/25 principally on generators for resilience. There has been a longer lead in time on these works than originally anticipated. This will be requested as a carry forward as it relates to ring-fenced grant funding.

5. **ENVIRONMENTAL AND COMMERCIAL SERVICES CAPITAL BUDGET**

5.1   The Capital Plan for 2023/24 was approved by a meeting of Moray Council on 1 March 2023 (paragraph 5 the minute refers). The approved 2023/24 Capital Plan for Environmental and Commercial services is £30,005,000.

5.2   <u>Facilities Management</u>

Budget: £15k, Actual; £2k, variance £13k.

This budget relates to the provision and repairing of cleaning equipment in support of the cleaning functions across the Councils estate, including schools. Unfortunately there has been limited spend (£2K) on this budget in 2023/24 due to the post which uses this budget being vacant. A new post holder is now in place and it is anticipated that an increased number of repairs/replacements will be experienced in 2024/25 following the inspection process being restarted.

5.3   <u>Dallachy Landfill</u>

Budget: £468k, Actual £19k, variance £449k.

This budget primarily relates to the capping of Dallachy Landfill site. Dallachy has been operational in 2023/24 and has been used as a short term contingency site for the disposal of the Council's mixed municipal waste when the Energy from Waste Facility has been on shutdown. There has been limited spend in 2023/24 (19K on the capital budget. Due to ongoing use of the site, it is anticipated that final capping will take place in 2024/25 so the remaining budget of £449K will be requested as a carry forward for 2024/25.

5.4   <u>Waste Management</u>

Budget: £143k; Actual: £128k; Variance: £15k.

The budgeted spend relates to provision of domestic and trade waste bins, replacement of containers at recycling centres and the provision of gull proof bins. The trial of an alternative supplier for wheeled bins delivered an underspend of £15k.

5.5   <u>Cemetery Infrastructure</u>

Budget: £2,280k; Actual: £151k, Variance: £2,116k.

The bulk of this budget relates to the provision of the new cemetery at Elgin. There is a significant underspend on the budget but progress is being made. The legal negotiation on the land purchase have been more complex than anticipated thus delaying progress. It is anticipated that the land acquisition and build will commence in 2024/25 so the remaining £2,116K will be requested to be carried forward into 2024/25. The budget area also includes modest provision for planned and emerging infrastructure issues – primarily safety related works at cemeteries.

5.6   Parks and Open Space Infrastructure

Budget: £388K Actual: £285k, Variance £103k

This budget includes the funding from the Scottish Government for the renewal of play parks There was a committed underspend of £80K which is requested to be carry forward into 2024/25 for upgrades to the play areas at Netherha and Tomnavoulin (which were earmarked for upgrades in 2023/24). Typically, the upgrade to new play areas can take 18 months to complete due to the need to undertake consultations as part of the participatory budget process and lead times for procuring and installing equipment. There is also a modest budget which is used to ensure any emerging infrastructure issues, which present a health and safety concern, can be addressed. The funds are used to undertake both planned and emergency works. The projects identified for 2023/24 were concluded..

5.7   Roads Maintenance and Fleet

Budget (Roads Maintenance) £5,648k Actual: £5,234k; Variance: £414k
Budget (Fleet) £5,798k Actual: £4,807k; Variance £991k.

Within the overall roads maintenance capital there was an overspend on planned carriageway resurfacing and surface dressing works, because of a combination of inflationary increases on planned works, and also some additional works that were added to the programme mid-year. However, this was offset by underspends in drainage, footways, kerb replacement and other works which were underspent due to ongoing staff resource issues
The underspend in fleet replacement reflects the impact of resourcing issues, and market conditions in terms of targeting best value purchases.

5.8   Consultancy – Bridges and Flood Risk Management

Budget (Bridges): £1,778k; Actual: £1,135k; Variance: £643k
Budget (FRM): £679k; Actual: £660k; Variance: £19k

The majority of the capital programme for Flood Risk Management, which consisted of significant maintenance to flood schemes, is complete. Due to adverse weather conditions some of the work to the Elgin Flood Scheme was delayed and a carry forward of £130,000 will be requested to cover the cost of the remaining work under this contract. There is unplanned cost of £365k relating to the compensation for Forres flood scheme which has now been settled. Work to Viewmill Bridge did not begin until May 2024, due to delays in completing the design, as such a carry forward of £270,000 will be requested to construct these works. The feasibility study for Arthurs Bridge was not completed until May 2024, therefore a carry forward of £40,000 will be requested to cover the cost of this work. The Business Case for Cloddach Bridge was completed with £120,000 funded by Heldon Community Council and £67,000 funded by Moray Council. The Business Case was submitted to Department for Transport in April 2024. Carry forward of £38,000 will be requested for Lea Bridge in Forres, to allow for a structural assessment, this work was delayed due to the need for site investigation works to inform the

assessment. A £29,000 carry forward will be requested for Bridge of Slateford, to undertake remedial works to repair erosion that occurred due to very heavy rainfall immediately after construction.

5.9   Transportation – Road Safety and Sustainable Travel

Budget: £1,152k; Actual: £1,086k; Variance: £66k.

Half of this budget relates to the Scottish Government Cycling Walking and Safer Routes Grant, the remainder being road safety, traffic signs / markings and monitoring equipment. There was a net underspend principally relating to road safety and the CWSR grant.

5.10   Transportation - Harbours

Budget: £2,112k; Actual £2,416k, Variance £304k.

This budget breaks down across dredging (including rock-cutting dredging partially carried out in 23/24) expenditure of £866k, Substation Power Upgrade expenditure of £723k, Harbour Infrastructure works of £662k, and the Weighbridge replacement spend along with other subsidiary capital costs of specialist advice and legal fees of £161k. Although there is a net overspend of £304k there is also a contribution of £300k due relating to the substation upgrade at Buckie harbour which will be received in 24/25.

6.   **ECONOMIC GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT SERVICES (ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT) REVENUE BUDGET**

Element	Service	Budget	Actual	Variance
PL540	**Economic Development**	**£1,216**	**£1,068**	**£148**

6.1   Business Gateway – the Business Gateway annual budget of £32k was increased in 23/24 with £59k carried forward from the Economic Recovery Fund. This has resulted in underspend of £57k in 23/24 which can be returned as a saving. This is an exceptional one year underspend due to increased budget. The full Business Gateway Budget of £32k is required annually to provide specialist services and workshops (already procured for 24/25).

6.2   Growth Deal – £30k was available for specialist services related to the development of the Moray Growth Deal. Services were to be procured for the development of an economic benefit realisation plan however market response was less than ideal requiring a second procurement and successful appointed in early Q1 24/25. There will be a request for the full budget to be carried forward to the next financial year.

6.3   Moray Gift Card (initiative started by Scotland Loves Local)_-£45K budget over 2 years returned from the Business Loan Scheme to continue administration of the Moray Gift Card into 2023-2024 and 2024-2025 (£26k) and to use the balance to develop further promotional incentives. Funds can only be spent as intended and must be carried forward until spent in full. Administration fee due November 24 and November 25.

6.4   Maintenance of projects – £9k budget for match funding as required and ongoing maintenance costs associated with projects including Castle to Cathedral to Cashmere and Discover Moray's Great Places. Actual was £1k with £8k underspend in 23/24 due to limited project activity – will request to carry forward underspend but no commitment yet. Full £9k budget for 24/25 is already committed to activity in relation to Forres Town Centre Improvement.

6.5   Supplies and services - £12k budget for fees, charges and subs (SLAED, HIREP, SDP) and general office costs etc. Actual was £4k with £8k underspend in 23/24 (Business Gateway funded SDP for one year only) – no request to carry forward underspend. It is anticipated that the full £12k budget for 24/25 will be required.

7.   SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS

(a)   Corporate Plan and 10 Year Plan, (Local Outcomes Improvement Plan (LOIP))
Effective budget management is an essential component of delivery of Council priorities on a sustainable basis.

The capital plan is one of the vehicles through which the Council's priorities can be delivered. The approved capital plan for 2024/25 and the outline ten year plan incorporates measures designed to address the LOIP priorities of building a better future for our children and young people, empowering and connecting communities and developing a diverse, inclusive and sustainable economy.

(b)   Policy and Legal
There are no policy or legal implications arising directly from this report.

(c)   Financial implications
The financial implications are highlighted within the report

(d)   Risk Implications
Budget managers are aware of their responsibilities for managing budget allocations and approval for variance will be sought from Committee in line with the Financial Regulations.

(e)   Staffing Implications
There are no staffing implications arising from this report.

(f)   Property
There are no Property implications arising from this report.

(g) **Equalities/Socio Economic Impact**

There are no equalities implications arising from this report because the report informs the Committee on budget monitoring.

(h) **Climate Change and Biodiversity Impacts**

There are no climate change or Biodiversity impacts arising from this report. Achieving net zero will have significant implications for future planned capital expenditure.

(i) **Consultations**

This report has been prepared in consultation with Depute Chief Executive (Economy, Environment & Finance), Head of Environmental and Commercial Services, Head of Economic Growth and Development Services, Chief Financial Officer, Legal Services Manager, Committee Services Officer (L Rowan) and Environmental and Commercial Services Management Team and Budget Managers. Any comments have been taken into consideration.

8. CONCLUSION

8.1 This report sets out the budget monitoring position and comments on variances for the Environmental and Commercial Services and Economic Growth and Development Services (Economic Development) Capital and Revenue Budgets for the period to 31 March 2024.

Author of Report:	Nicola Moss, Head of Environmental and Commercial Services & Beverly Smith, Acting Head of Economic Growth & Development
Background Papers:	
Ref:	SPMAN-524642768-1101

REPORT TO: ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND INFRASTRUCTURE SERVICES COMMITTEE ON 18 JUNE 2024

SUBJECT: PERFORMANCE REPORT (ECONOMIC GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT SERVICES) – PERIOD TO MARCH 2024

BY: DEPUTE CHIEF EXECUTIVE (ECONOMY, ENVIRONMENT AND FINANCE)

1.   REASON FOR REPORT

1.1   To inform the Committee of the performance of the service for the period to 31 March 2024.

1.2   This report is submitted to Council in terms of Section III (A) (4) of the Council's Scheme of Administration to monitor performance of the services within the Committee's remit in accordance with the Council's performance management framework.

2.   RECOMMENDATION

2.1   **It is recommended that Committee:**

(i)   **scrutinises performance in the areas of Service Planning, Service Performance and other related data to the end of March 2024;**

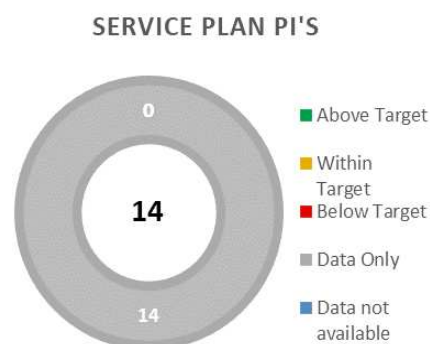(ii)   **notes the actions being taken to improve performance where required.**

3.   BACKGROUND

3.1   On 7 August 2019, the Moray Council, approved a revised Performance Management Framework for services (para 5 of the minute refers).

4. SERVICE PLANNING

4.1 Each service plan sets out the planned strategic and service level priorities and outcomes it intends to deliver in the coming year aligning closely with financial planning, corporate and community planning partnership strategic priorities. This report provides an interim update on progress on the service plan, key outcomes and performance indicators. The Committee is invited to review progress to secure assurance that it is satisfactory and to provide scrutiny and further direction where performance requires attention.

4.2 The narrative included is by exception, links to Service Plan Actions and Performance Indicators can be accessed within the Backing Papers of this report.

4.3 Latest Local Government Benchmarking Framework (LGBF) Indicators covering 2022/23, initially published in February 2024, will be refreshed in June. The full suite can be viewed via the LGBF Dashboard. In total, there were thirteen indicators covering Economic Development published, six of the indicators were ranked highly when compared nationally and eight indicators ranked highly in the top 4 when compared in our family group of 8 local authorities. Overall, results improved to a slightly greater extent than they worsened with results improving across seven indicators. Published indicators for this service have been incorporated within the relevant section of this report depending on whether used to evidence progress against strategic, service plan or service performance priorities. 2023/24 LGBF data will be available early 2025.

4.4 Scottish Local Authorities Development Group (SLAED) publish an annual report under the SLAED Indicators Framework. The report sets out a range of data and information to assist local authorities to evidence and publicise the contribution made through economic development activities, providing a basis for collating consistent data used to better understand impact and identify potential areas for improvement. In previous years, these indicators have been reported to this Committee separately report, however going forward these will be incorporated within backing tables where they evidence progress against strategic, service plan or service performance priorities, or otherwise included as an additional table to report performance over time.

SERVICE PLAN PRIORITIES		RAG
STRATEGIC LEVEL	Moray Growth Deal: Development and delivery of Housing Mix Delivery Project	90%
	Moray Growth Deal: Cultural Quarter Project	47%
	Climate Change and Biodiversity Route Map	75%
SERVICE LEVEL	Identify route for training local Environmental Health Officers and associated budget needs	33%
	Maximise external funding for Council priorities including Town Centre Improvement works and employability.	70%
	Town Centre Improvement Delivery Plan and LDP 2027.	55%
	External funding achieved for delivery of strategic plans associated with Town Centres and LDP	75%
	Service identifies and secures future needs for succession planning	50%
	Service improves the ERDP experience and holds accurate records, including CPD.	75%
OVERALL PLAN PROGRESS		**64%**

SERVICE PLAN PI'S

- Above Target: 0
- Within Target: 14
- Below Target
- Data Only
- Data not available

14

14

Strategic Outcomes - successes

4.5   The Public Sector Report on Compliance with Climate Change Duties 2022/23 was approved by this Committee on 14 November 2023 (para 10 of the Minute refers) and submitted to the Scottish Government within the required timescales. (**ACTION**: EGD24-4.2a)

Strategic Outcomes – challenges and actions to support

4.6   Planned work on actions contributing to the Delivery of Moray Growth Deal is progressing slightly out with original due dates. Delivery of the Housing Mix Delivery Project is nearing completion, the Full Business Case was agreed by the Moray Growth Deal Board and progression of Phase 1 on Dallas Dhu and Elgin site is well advanced with some good public engagement at an exhibition in Forres Community Centre and another similar event planned for builders and architects. The Full Business Case for the Cultural Quarter is anticipated by June 2024 to the Growth Deal Board and Full Council in August 2024, two months adrift of original target schedule, but not impacting on overall project timescales. (**ACTIONS**: EGD24-4.1a & b)

4.7   Although significant progress has been made in this reporting quarter against the Climate Change and Biodiversity Route Map actions, for most work will continue slightly past original due dates of March 2024. A progress update report on the Route Map to Net Zero is anticipated in the next reporting cycle. Online training on Climate Change awareness raising has been developed and will require promotion going forward whilst supporting the development of carbon knowledge and skills was subject to slippage due to competing priorities, this action will carry forward to the 2024/25 Service Plan. The draft Local Heat and Energy Efficiency Strategy (LHEES) focussing on decarbonising heat networks over the next 5 years was submitted to Council on 24 April 2024 (item 4c of the Agenda refers) with publication date expected in August 2024. Moray Climate Action Network is fully operating and collaborations continue as external influence in engagement and promotion of Climate Change. A report on the Natural Capital Enhancement Opportunities was presented to the last meeting of this Committee (item 4d of the Agenda refers) in developing a Carbon Offsetting Plan. (**ACTIONS**: EGD24-4.2b,c,d,e,f,h,i,j,k **INDICATORS**: RMNZ-EGD1)

4.8   LGBF in February 2024 published CO2 emissions indicator results for the period 2021/22, although Moray is ranked in the third quartile for area-wide greenhouse gas emissions it is in the lowest quartile for greenhouse gas emissions within scope of the local authority. It is expected that recent achievements in reducing carbon emissions from council buildings by 8% in 2023 will improve comparator rankings. (**ACTIONS**: EGD24-4.2, **INDICATORS**: CLIM01, CLIM02)

        Service Level Outcomes – successes

4.9   Nothing to report.

   **Service Level Outcomes – challenges and actions to support**

4.10   Budget pressures have meant that just one of the proposed two trainee Environmental Health Officers (EHO) posts can be filled. Further budget constraints have reduced capacity to supervise student EHO's whose complete training takes four years and work continues on ways to address this issue.

4.11   Planned work contributing to maximising external funding for Council priorities has made good progress but will complete out with original target timescales. In 2023/24, the Lossie 2-3 Group transformed the ground floor of a derelict theatre into a bright, spacious venue for childcare and community space. The Moray Coast to Country project began in 2021 with the aim of improving visitor experiences to rural areas in a low-carbon, sustainable manner. Moray was successful in securing funding from the Rural Tourism Infrastructure Fund to improve motorhome facilities, toilets and car parking in tourist hotspots. The project has now reached its conclusion and the final report has been submitted. (**ACTIONS**: EGD24-5.2 **INDICATOR**: SLAED-OC11)

4.12   Progress in delivery of Town Centre Improvement Plans and Local Development Plan 2027 (LDP2027) continues beyond original timescales. An evidence report for LDP2027 was presented to the meeting of Council on 24 April (item 4h of the Agenda refers). Elgin Town Board has been established and widespread engagement was launched inviting ideas around the Levelling Up Fund award. (**ACTIONS**: EGD24-5.3a, 5.3b, **INDICATORS**: ECON09, ECON10)

5.   SERVICE PERFORMANCE

5.1   In line with the Performance Management Framework, operational performance is reviewed quarterly by departmental management. Areas performing well and/or areas subject to a decreasing trend or where benchmarking results show performance significantly below comparators will be reported to this committee for member scrutiny.

5.2   The narrative included in this report is by exception, links to Service Performance Indicators can be accessed within the Background Papers at the end of this report.

SERVICE PERFORMANCE PI'S

- Above Target
- Within Target
- Below Target
- Data Only
- Data not available

37
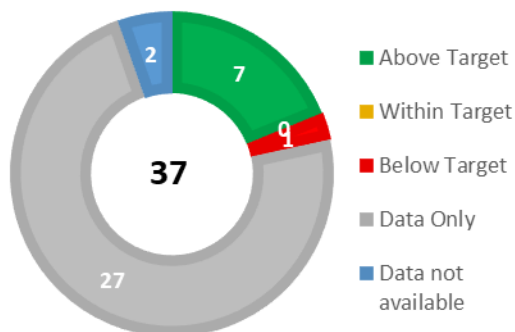
Operational Indicators - successes

5.3   Building Standards indictors continue to exceed target year on year, although well within target, the data does show is an emerging trend of increasing response times. The service is aware and continues to monitor. (**INDICATORS**: ENVDV-BS-KPO1(A), (B) and (C), ENVDV046a, 046b)

Operational Indicators - challenges and actions to support

5.4   The number of business gateway start-ups per 10,000 population fell from 12.4 to 11.1 in 2022/23 (ranked 27th of 32 authorities). There were 107 businesses startups, below the target of 130, There remains uncertainty which has increased the risk of starting a business, labour shortages and disrupted supply chains have increase barriers for business start-ups. It is unlikely that performance will improve in the short term. Moray Economic Strategy, Moray Growth Deal and other programmes are intended to stimulate this area, but any improvement will only become evident in the longer term. Meantime, the service continues to provide support and advice to local business through

events, workshops and seminars. (**INDICATORS**: ECON08, SLAED-A1, A2, A3, OC9)

5.5   Moray retains a higher proportion of properties without access to sufficient broadband speeds (86%) than across Scotland as a whole (95.5%). The Scottish Government's R100 programme is targeted to addressing this issue. However, despite the R100 North Lot contract being awarded to BT in December 2020, there have been no properties served locally through the rollout of the main contract, with many not scheduled to be served until 2028. Even then, several properties will remain without access to superfast broadband as the cost of delivery is deemed too significant but will be eligible to access support via the Scottish Broadband Voucher Scheme. In Moray, a new project has been funded via the UK Shared Prosperity Fund aimed at increasing awareness and uptake of this scheme. (**INDICATOR**: ECON08)

5.6   Vacancy rate of retail floor space has increased over the last three years to 12.65% as at March 2024, below target (10%). The biannual Town Centre Heath Check reported the decline largely within Elgin and Forres. The first annual Town Centre Perception Survey was completed, and significant engagements are ongoing to inform decisions around the Levelling Up Fund. (**INDICATORS**: ENVDV250)

6.   OTHER PERFORMANCE RELATED DATA

Complaints & MP/MSP Enquiries

6.1   In line with the Performance Management Framework, complaints are reviewed quarterly by departmental management in terms of time taken to respond, outcome and learning points. Links to complaints tables can be accessed within the Backing Papers of this report.

6.2   A total of 15 complaints were closed in the half year to March 2024 of which 6 (40%) were frontline stage and 9 (60%) were investigative stage. None were upheld and 60% were closed within target timescales.

6.3   In addition to complaints, a total of 34 MSP/MP complaints were received in the last two quarters, all were resolved. Common issues were planning issues and concerns around utility capacity.

Other Performance (not included within Service Plan)

6.4   Nothing to report.

Case Studies

6.5   Nothing to report.

Consultation and Engagement

6.6   Nothing to report.

7. **SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS**

    (a) **Corporate Plan and 10 Year Plan (Local Outcomes Improvement Plan (LOIP))**
Performance measurement is used to ensure the efficient and sustainable delivery of services to meet the Council's priorities in both the Corporate Plan and the LOIP.

    (b) **Policy and Legal**
The Council has a statutory requirement to publish a range of information that will demonstrate that it is securing best value and assist in comparing performance both over time and between authorities where appropriate.

    (c) **Financial implications**
None.

    (d) **Risk Implications**
None.

    (e) **Staffing Implications**
None

    (f) **Property**
None.

    (g) **Equalities/Socio Economic Impact**
An Equality Impact Assessment is not required as this report is to inform the Committee on performance.

    (h) **Consultations**
The Head of Economic Growth & Development Services, Depute Chief Executive (Economy, Environment & Finance) and Service Managers, have been consulted with any comments received incorporated into this report.

8. **CONCLUSION**

8.1 As of 31st March 2024 the service plan overall is 64% complete. A number of actions, subject to slight slippage in not meeting original due dates will complete within the next reporting quarter.

Author of Report: Christopher Dewhurst, Research & Information Officer
Background Papers: Service Plan Actions
                      Service Plan Performance Indicators
                      Service Performance Indicators
                      Service Complaints
Ref:

REPORT TO: **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND INFRASTRUCTURE SERVICES COMMITTEE ON 18 JUNE 2024**

SUBJECT: **PERFORMANCE REPORT (ENVIRONMENTAL AND COMMERCIAL SERVICES) – PERIOD TO MARCH 2024**

BY: **DEPUTE CHIEF EXECUTIVE (ECONOMY, ENVIRONMENT AND FINANCE)**

1. REASON FOR REPORT

1.1 To inform the Committee of the performance of the service for the period to 31 March 2024.

1.2 This report is submitted to Committee in terms of Section III (A) (4) of the Council's Scheme of Administration to monitor performance in accordance with the Council's Performance Management Framework.

2. RECOMMENDATION

2.1 It is recommended that Committee:

(i) scrutinises performance in the areas of Service Planning, Service Performance and other related data to the end of March 2024;

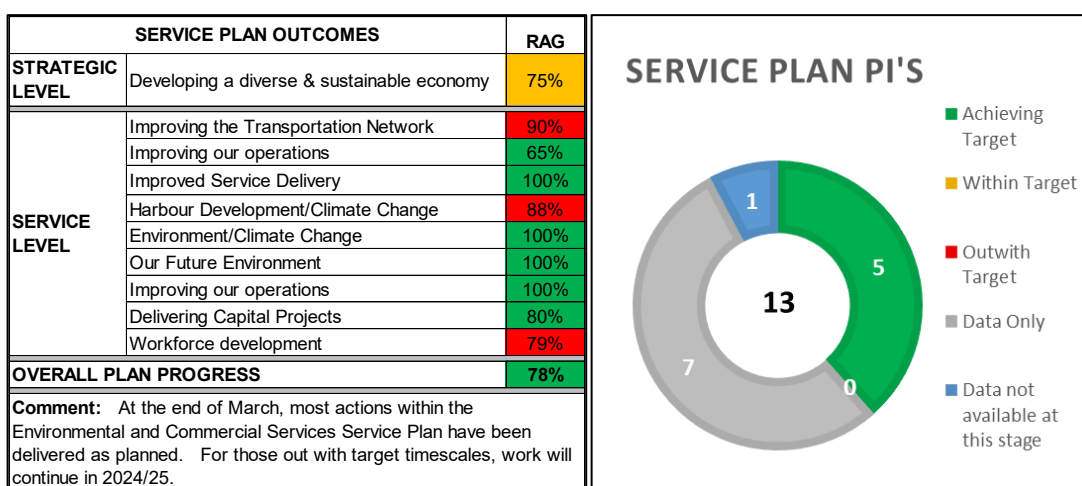**(ii) notes the actions being taken to improve performance where required.**

3. BACKGROUND

3.1 On 7 August 2019, the Moray Council approved a revised Performance Management Framework for services (para 5 of the minute refers).

4. SERVICE PLANNING

4.1 Each service plan sets out the strategic and service level priorities and outcomes it intends to deliver in the coming year aligning closely with financial planning, corporate and community planning partnership strategic priorities. This report provides an interim update on progress on the service plan, key outcomes and performance indicators. Committee is invited to review progress to secure assurance that is satisfactory and to provide scrutiny and further direction where performance requires attention.

4.2 Latest Local Government Benchmarking Framework (LGBF) Indicators covering 2022/23, initially published in February 2024, will be refreshed in June. The full suite can be viewed via the LGBF Dashboard. In total, there were fourteen indicators covering Environmental Services published, eleven indicators ranked in the top 16 local authorities when compared nationally and ten indicators ranked in the top 4 when compared in our family group of 8 local authorities. Four indicators demonstrate that Moray in the top quartile nationally for cost efficient service delivery (cost of parks/open spaces, cost of waste collection, cost of street cleaning and cost of road maintenance). Overall, results improved and worsened from previous year performance equally across seven indicators each. Published indicators for this service have been incorporated within the relevant section of this report depending on whether used to evidence progress against strategic, service plan or service performance priorities. 2023/24 LGBF data will be available early 2025.

4.3 The narrative included is by exception. Links to Service Plan Actions and Performance Indicators can be accessed within the Background Papers section of this report.

SERVICE PLAN OUTCOMES		RAG
STRATEGIC LEVEL	Developing a diverse & sustainable economy	75%
SERVICE LEVEL	Improving the Transportation Network	90%
	Improving our operations	65%
	Improved Service Delivery	100%
	Harbour Development/Climate Change	88%
	Environment/Climate Change	100%
	Our Future Environment	100%
	Improving our operations	100%
	Delivering Capital Projects	80%
	Workforce development	79%
OVERALL PLAN PROGRESS		78%
Comment: At the end of March, most actions within the Environmental and Commercial Services Service Plan have been delivered as planned. For those out with target timescales, work will continue in 2024/25.		

SERVICE PLAN PI'S

- Achieving Target: 5
- Within Target: 1
- Outwith Target: 0
- Data Only: 7
- Data not available at this stage: 1

13

Strategic Outcomes – successes

4.4 Planned improvements in EV infrastructure is complete with 91 plug in sockets now operational for council vehicles. An update on the Zero Emissions Fleet Replacement Strategy, including the options to ensure net zero targets are met, was provided at the meeting of this committee on 30 April 2024 (item 13a of the agenda refers). (Action ECS23-24 Section 4ai)

Strategic Outcomes – challenges and actions to support

4.5 At the end of 2023/24, 67 of the council's 520 vehicles were electric (13%) against a planned target of 15%. As per the Zero Emissions Fleet Replacement Strategy noted above in paragraph 4.4, work to decarbonise the fleet will continue, although the scale of change is reliant on improved infrastructure provision and availability of funding. (Action ECS23-24 Section 4a ii)

4.6   Work to identify private operators for publicly available charging points through the Pathfinder Project continues. Delays around funding led to Tender documents not being issued in the Autumn as originally planned however publication is expected shortly and a revised completion timescale of December 2024 applied. (Action ECS23-24 Section 4b)

**Service Level Outcomes – successes**

4.7   The agreement to outsource Principal Inspection work has assisted in clearing the backlog and ensuring inspections have exceeded target. Outsourcing will continue in 2024, with a second contract recently awarded for a further 18 inspections. (Action ECS23-24 Section 5b, PI ECSCON01)

4.8   Migration of the asset management system to a web-based browser is complete. Although customer satisfaction levels are still to be confirmed through APSE, service efficiency has been achieved with mobile devices removing the need for approximately 9,000 paper orders per annum. (Action ECS23-24 Section 5c, PI ECSRM04)

4.9   The Joint Energy from Waste project is complete with the acceptance certificate issued in December and the site formally opened in April. All non-recyclable waste from Moray is now delivered to the facility with contingency plans in place for Dallachy as per the commercial agreement. Going forward, the connection to the District Heat Network is expected in the next few months and any snagging work at the site will be monitored by the technical representative Ramboll. (Action ECS23-24 Section 5e)

4.10   Bikeability sessions have continued with 630 pupils involved across Moray. Other cycling activities this year included all ability and adapted sessions and various instructor training courses. Cycle parking and repair stations, linked to the delivery of the Active Travel Strategy, have also been installed in both Buckie and Keith. Despite no increase this year in the number of schools taking part in the Travel Tracker Programme, sustainable journeys to school have continued to rise with 359,052 recorded this year, an increase of 13% (40,706 journeys) compared to 2022/23. (Action ECS23-24 Section 5gi and 5gii, PI ECSTTM05)

4.11   Planned work to improve recycling performance and the school meal service is complete for 2023/24 with both only slightly below annual targets. The percentage of recycled household waste improved to 57.8% (against a target of 60%) ranking Moray as highest against all other local authorities. Uptake of free school meals in primaries 1-5 improved during the second half of the year giving an annual rate of 76.22% (against a target of 78%). Promotion and awareness raising of both services will continue with improvements made as required. (Actions ECS23-24 Section 5i and 5j, PIs ENV6 and ECSEPBCC02)

Service Level Outcomes – challenges and actions to support

4.12   Following approval of the draft Road Safety Plan at the meeting of this committee on 14 November 2023 (para 6 of the Minute refers), further consultation was undertaken during quarter 4. Although out with original target timescales, a final version of the Plan is included as an agenda item to this meeting of Committee. (Action ECS23-24 Section 5a)

4.13   Development work at Buckie harbour continues with 80% of construction complete at year end and delivery of a new harbour office expected imminently but delayed due to issues with Openreach. Recommendations from a feasibility study linked to Just Transition work are to be included in the Masterplan with consultation planned for early 2024/25. (Actions ECS23-24 Section 5di and 5dii)

4.14   ERDPs have been undertaken across all sections of Environmental and Commercial Services involving approximately 663 members of staff (77%). With ERDPs an annual process, plans are in place for the 2024/25 cycle. Following the successful completion of the Public Service Improvement Framework (PSIF) self-assessment within Roads Maintenance, an assessment of Open Spaces commenced however due to resourcing issues, this exercise was paused. This will now take place in 2024/25 alongside assessments for Waste and Harbours. (Action ECS23-24 Section 5l i) PI ERDP.ECS3)

5   **SERVICE PERFORMANCE**

5.1   In line with Performance Management Framework, operational performance is monitored quarterly by departmental management. Areas performing well and/or areas subject to a decreasing trend or where benchmarking results show performance below comparators will be reported to this Committee for member scrutiny.

5.2   The narrative included is by exception, links to Service Performance Indicators can be accessed within the Background Papers section of this report.
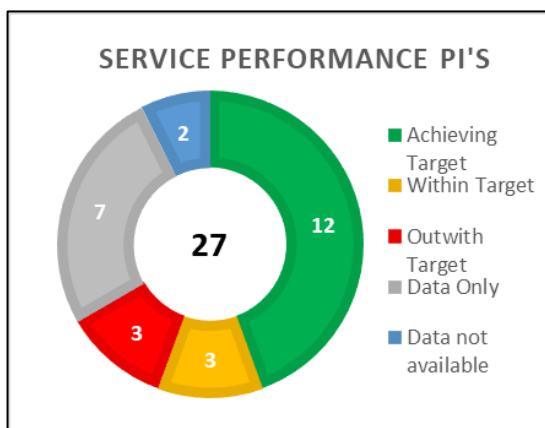
Operational Indicators – successes

5.3   Average occupancy of paid car parks in Elgin fell during quarter 4 however the annual rate has improved for the second consecutive year to 54% against a target of 50%. The Paybyphone app also continues to be popular, now accounting for 38.6% of all payments; up from 29.2% in 2022/23. (PIs ECSTCP01, MPI ECSTCP04)

Operational Indicators – challenges and actions to support

5.4   Despite income from pay and display car parks being the highest in recent years, net income fell below target (£586,000) to £387,589 with high capital maintenance costs of £401,094 incurred due to planned resurfacing of Batchen Lane Multi Storey car park. (PI ECSTCP02)

5.5   Due to slower, more targeted work and an increase in downtime due to maintenance, total tonnage moved from internal harbours by the dredger has declined this year. As noted in the Marine Safety and Operational Summary 2023/24 reported to the 30 April 2024 meeting of this committee (item 13c of the agenda refers), plans are in place to maximise crewed days and work more effectively with maintenance to reduce the time the dredger is out of action. (PI ECSTHAR03)

5.6   Net cost for commercial operations for all harbours significantly increased due to high Capital Maintenance expenses. Work undertaken included power and weighbridge upgrade and north pier works at Buckie Harbour, quay repairs and surveys at Cullen and Hopeman and works relating to a sink hole at Findochty and the Groyne at Burghead. (PI ECSTHAR02)

5.7   Although there has been improvement, passenger costs relating to the enhanced m.connect service continue to be above target. Passenger growth has surpassed original business case expectations and promotional campaigns to continue this trend are ongoing. Plans are also in place to strengthen links with business and tourism partners following support of the recent Spirit of Speyside Whisky Festival. Public consultation and demand analysis work to determine the next phase of the project are complete with reports to this committee and Full Council expected in September. With the continued expansion of the service, the net costs target will also be reviewed. (PI ECSTPT01)

5.8   For the second consecutive year, data relating to cycle journeys on the shared use and national cycle network has been unreliable due to equipment failures and battery issues. Work is ongoing to rectify this for 2024/25. (PI ECSTTM18)

6   OTHER PERFORMANCE RELATED DATA

Complaints & MP/MSP Enquiries

6.1   In line with the Performance Management Framework, complaints are reviewed quarterly by departmental management in terms of time taken to respond, outcome and learning points. Detailed tables can be accessed within the Background Papers section of this report.

6.2   During the reporting period, Environmental and Commercial Services received and closed 167 complaints, an increase on 22/23. 153 (92%) were closed as frontline with 12 (7%) investigative and 2 (1%) escalated. A total 138 complaints (83%) met the target timescale of either 5 or 20 working days.

6.3   Overall, 69 complaints were upheld or partially upheld. 32 (46%) involved Household Collections with missed bins due to crew error the most common issue, an increase in volume on 22/23, but a consistent proportion of complaints. Whilst crews have been reminded of the need to be vigilant and ensure all bins meeting criteria for collection are emptied, the team are also reviewing the missed bins policy to see if any improvements can be made.

6.4   In addition to complaints, 74 MP/MSP enquiries were received during the second half of 2023/24 with 16 relating to issues around Road Maintenance in various areas of Moray.

Other Performance (not included in the Service Plan)

6.5   Nothing to report.

Case Studies

6.6   Nothing to report.

Consultation and Engagement

6.7   A series of public engagement sessions were held in March in relation to Phase 2 of the m.connect expansion. Building on the responses received to the recent online survey, these sessions provided local communities with the opportunity to discuss what can be improved and what they would like to see from the service. Feedback from these sessions will be incorporated into reports noted in paragraph 5.7.

7   SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS

(a)   **Corporate Plan and 10 Year Plan (Local Outcomes Improvement Plan (LOIP))**
        Performance measurement is used to ensure the efficient and sustainable delivery of services to meet the Council's priorities in both the Corporate Plan and the LOIP.

(b) Policy and Legal

The Council has a statutory requirement to publish a range of information that will demonstrate that it is securing best value and assist in comparing performance both over time and between authorities where appropriate.

(c) Financial implications

None.

(d) Risk Implications

None.

(e) Staffing Implications

None.

(f) Property

None.

(g) Equalities/Socio Economic Impact

An Integrated Impact Assessment is not needed because the report is to inform the Committee on performance.

(h) Climate Change and Biodiversity Impacts

None

(i) Consultations

Depute Chief Executive (Economy, Environment and Finance), The Head of Environmental and Commercial Services, Service Managers, Legal Services Manager, the Equal Opportunities Officer and Lissa Rowan, Committee Services Officer have been consulted, with any comments received incorporated into this report.

8. CONCLUSIONS

8.1 At the end of March 2024, the Environmental and Commercial Services Service Plan is 78% complete with most actions delivered as planned. Work against those out with target timescales will continue in 2024/25.

Author of Report: Suzanne Wilson, Research and Information Officer
Background Papers: Service Plan Actions
                       Service Plan Performance Indicators
                       Service Performance Indicators
                       Complaints Monitoring Report

Ref: SPMAN-524642768-1103

REPORT TO: ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND INFRASTRUCTURE SERVICES COMMITTEE ON 18 JUNE 2024

SUBJECT: ROAD SAFETY PLAN TO 2030

BY: DEPUTE CHIEF EXECUTIVE (ECONOMY, ENVIRONMENT AND FINANCE)

1.   REASON FOR REPORT

1.1   To seek Committee approval of the draft Moray Road Safety Plan to 2030 which has been subject to further stakeholder consultation, including with Community Councils.

1.2   This report is submitted to Committee in terms of Section III (F) (15) the Council's Scheme of Administration relating to the duty of the Council as Roads Authority.

2.   RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Committee:

i)   **notes the outcome of the stakeholder consultation and changes made to the draft Road Safety Plan to 2030; and**

ii)   **approves the revised Road Safety Plan to 2030 attached as APPENDIX 1.**

3.   BACKGROUND

3.1   The draft Road Safety Plan to 2030 was approved at a meeting of this Committee on 14 November 2023 for an 8-week stakeholder consultation (para 6 of the Minute refers). The draft Road Safety Plan to 2030 sets out trends in reported accident and casualty data, along with the Council's, and other public services, approach to meeting the Scottish Government's targets set out in the Road Safety Framework to 2030 for reducing the number and severity of reported injury accidents.

3.2   The draft Road Safety Plan highlights the following areas where actions could be taken to work towards the target injury accident rates in the Roads Framework to 2030:

- The prevalence of accidents on rural roads;
- Ongoing maintenance of the road network;
- Driver behaviour and speed management;
- On-going education of road users; and
- Provision of infrastructure for vulnerable road users (cyclists, pedestrians etc.

3.3   As part of the draft plan, it was proposed to introduce a Road Safety Champions engagement group made up from members of Community Councils. The group would become a focal point for engagement and dissemination of road safety input and it is anticipated that officers from Police Scotland will also be involved.

Stakeholder Consultation

3.4   The plan was sent out for stakeholder consultation and comments were received from NHS Grampian, Health and Social Care Moray, Police Scotland, Scottish Fire and Rescue Service, Amey (Transport Scotland's contractors for the trunk roads), Transport Scotland and other council services and these have now been incorporated into the Plan.

3.5   The main comments which resulted in changes, were in relation to the Fire and Rescue service plan. A link is now included to this, along with an action from them. Information from Health and Social Care Moray and their promotion of active travel and ongoing healthcare recovery and a link to Public Health Scotland have also been included.

3.6   Over and above these there are minor changes to the Plan to reflect the current situation and update the data to include the comparison to 2022 throughout Scotland.

Joint Community Council – Road Safety Champions

3.7   Officers gave a presentation about the Road Safety Champions proposal to the Joint Community Council on 8 February 2024. The presentation was well received, with attendees asking a number of questions regarding how the group would operate.

3.8   A follow up email was sent to all Community Councils setting out the terms of reference for the group and seeking expressions of interest. 6 responses were received from 5 Community Councils volunteering to be a member of the group.

3.9   It is proposed that the Road Safety Champion group will meet on a quarterly basis, with the first meeting being face to face to provide some training on the national and local approach to improving road safety, setting local speed limits and cycle and pedestrian facilities. Road safety messages from national

campaigns would be shared with the Champions for dissemination through their Community Council. There will also be the opportunity to discuss with officers' local road safety concerns and possible measures to address them.

3.10   It is anticipated that the first meeting will take place in September 2024.

Next Steps

3.11   The final approved Plan will be published on the Council's website and used to support applications to the Scottish Government's Road Safety Improvement Fund. The plan will be subject to a mid-term review in 2027 to assess progress against national targets and to see where joint working has been successful/could be enhanced.

3.12   Finally, the draft plan was the subject of an Integrated Impact Assessment (**APPENDIX 2**). The minor amendments to the plan do not change the outcomes of this previous Integrated Impact Assessment.

4.   **SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS**

   (a) **Corporate Plan and 10 Year Plan (Local Outcomes Improvement Plan (LOIP))**
   The key policy documents which are relevant to Road Safety are the LOIP September 2021, the Moray Corporate Plan 2024 and the Moray Economic Strategy.

   (b) **Policy and Legal**
   Council has a duty under Section 39 of the Road Traffic Act 1988 to prepare and carry out a programme of measures designed to promote road safety.

   (c) **Financial implications**
   There are no financial implications arising from this report. However, revenue budgets for road maintenance, including surface dressing and drainage maintenance and improvement as well as specific road safety measures such as road markings, cats' eyes and road signs have reduced since approval of the last Road Safety Plan. The allocation of revenue and capital budget is a matter for corporate prioritisation in the budget setting process, and applications for external funding are made wherever possible.

   (d) **Risk Implications**
   There are no new risk implications arising from this report.

   (e) **Staffing Implications**
   There are no staffing implications as this process forms part of existing duties. However, any reduction in staff resources will have an impact on the ability to deliver the plan.

(f) Property

There are no property implications arising from this report.

(g) Equalities/Socio Economic Impact

An Integrated Impact Assessment has been undertaken and no negative impacts on any protected groups were found. An action in the Road Safety Plan is to provide active travel infrastructure which would be utilised by users with protected characteristics (Disability and Age). An individual Equalities Impact Assessment will be undertaken as individual schemes are developed to seek to maximise the benefits of each scheme.

(h) Climate Change and Biodiversity Impacts

An action in the Road Safety Plan is to provide active travel infrastructure. Promoting Active Travel is one of the key actions in the Council's Climate Change Strategy. Provision of dedicated active travel infrastructure can provide a positive impact on the climate through enabling and encouraging alternative modes of travel through Moray. Reduced emissions supports nature recovery and the overall improvement of environments.

(i) Consultations

Police Scotland, Scottish Fire and Rescue Services, Transport Scotland, Amey Limited, North Safety Camera Unit, the Scottish Ambulance Service, NHS Grampian, Moray Council Education and Environmental Health officers have been consulted and their comments incorporated in the plan.

The Depute Chief Executive (Economy, Environment & Finance), Head of Environmental and Commercial Services, Legal Services Manager, Chief Financial Officer, Equalities Officer and L Rowan, Committee Services Officer have been consulted and any comments taken into consideration.

5. **CONCLUSION**

5.1 **The draft Moray Road Safety Plan covers the period up to 2030, when it is anticipated that the next Scottish Road Safety Framework to 2040 will have been published.**

5.2 **The draft plan takes into account the Safe System approach to Road Safety which was introduced in the Scottish Road Safety Framework to 2030. The draft Plan also promotes joint working with neighbouring local authorities and other public sector bodies.**

5.3 **No significant changes have been made in relation to the stakeholder consultations.**

5.4 **A presentation was made to the Joint Community Council on the proposed Road Safety Champion group. Community Councils have been broadly supportive with 6 members from 5 Community Councils volunteering to be part of the group.**

5.5 **It is proposed to review the plan mid- term (2027) against the national targets and to see where joint working has been successful/could be enhanced.**

Author of Report: Elaine Penny, Engineer (Traffic)
Background Papers: Scotland's Road Safety Framework to 2030
Ref: SPMAN-524642768-1064

NOTE: Awaiting Infographics and layout review.

Moray Road Safety Plan to 2030

Table of Contents

Executive Summary

This Moray Road Safety Plan covers the period up to 2030, when it is anticipated that the next Scottish Road Safety Framework to 2040 will have been published.

The Plan takes into account the Safe System approach to Road Safety which was introduced in the Scottish Road Safety Framework to 2030 (published in 2021).

Safe System/Vision Zero has a long-term goal for a road traffic system which is eventually free from death and serious injury. It involves an important paradigm shift from trying to prevent all collisions to preventing death and mitigating serious injury in road traffic collisions, a problem which is largely preventable based on current knowledge.
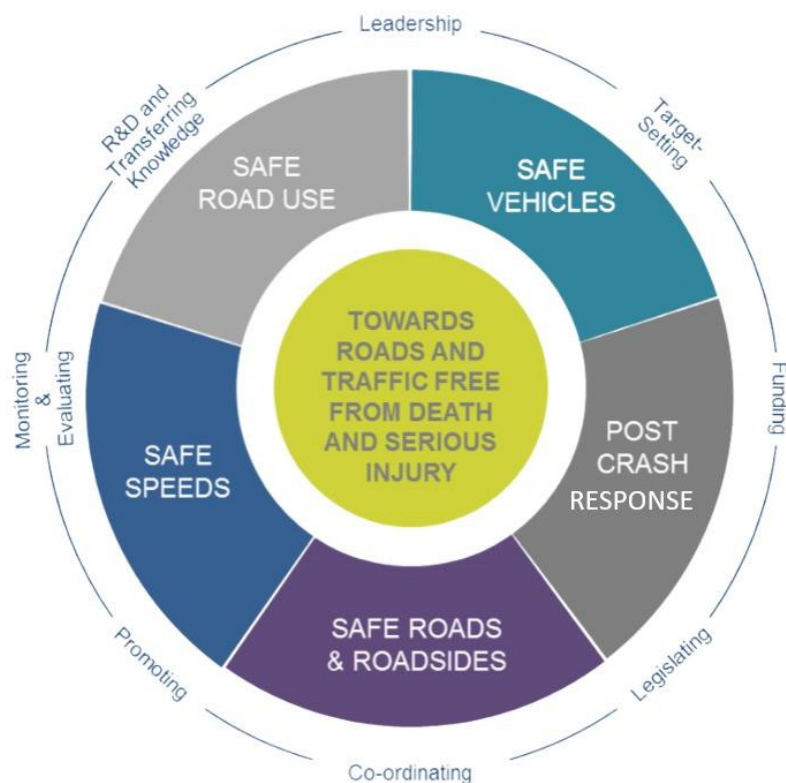
Source: Loughborough University Design School Safe System Course, 2017, with PACTS modifications, 2022

Available accident data up to 2023 has been reviewed and is presented in the plan. The Scottish Road Safety Framework sets the baseline period which all local authorities are required to use in their Road Safety Plans. Analysis of the accident data shows that trends are downward with a 59% reduction in the number of accidents between the baselines for the previous plan (2004-2008) and this plan (2014-18), with a consequent reduction in the number of people injured by 57%. The same figure for the whole of Scotland is 40%.

The biggest reduction is in slight injuries, which could be due to underreporting as a result of changes to data collected after Police Scotland's formation in April 2013. There is also, however, a 31% reduction in the number of people killed in road accidents in Moray. This is likely due to several factors including better in car safety, medical attention post-crash and engineering improvements to prevent the accident happening in the first place. The incidence of serious injuries has remained broadly similar.

The previous 5 years figures (2018-22) have been significantly affected by COVID19 travel restrictions with 2020 and 2021 recording the lowest ever casualty figures across Scotland. In 2022, across Scotland, apart from fatalities, the figures are still lower than they were prior to the pandemic 2023 figures are still being analysed for Scotland.

However, whilst the overall number of reported accidents is low compared to the rest of Scotland, in Moray over 70% of casualties are injured on non-built up roads (rural roads) compared to just a third of casualties for Scotland as a whole. It is therefore important to consider the relative risk, rurality and specific characteristics of injury accidents in Moray when developing interventions, as opposed to following the Scotland wide approach.

There is no discernible pattern or clusters of reported accidents on the rural roads. Therefore rather than focussing on specific engineering interventions at a particular location, it is recommended to continue to view our rural routes as a whole and look to ensuring that they remain fit for purpose with surfacing and road markings in good condition, signage being clear and not obstructed by vegetation and, where required, drainage interventions to reduce risks from

surface water and icing. Accident records and complaints from the public will be used to focus resources at locations or on routes where there is an increased risk of accidents. Road condition surveys will be used to provide further evidence of the need to prioritise a location/route.

Through this plan, the provision of dedicated active travel infrastructure to support movements on the road network by vulnerable users will be pursued, to provide an environment where users are more confident and therefore more likely to travel by foot, wheeling or cycling. This infrastructure will focus on areas which serve vulnerable users, e.g. young or older persons, and be delivered using external funding sources and the Road Safety capital funding.

The Scottish Government Road Safety Framework encourages a partnership approach with neighbouring authorities and other public sector bodies. Actions within this Plan include joint working with the Education and Lifelong Learning Service with respect to providing road safety education within the school setting to children and pre and new drivers, along with joint working with Police Scotland with respect to participating in ongoing campaigns and roadside education of drivers, and the delivery of New Driver interventions.

An appropriate level of capital budget will also be required to implement improvement schemes identified through the investigation of accidents which occur during the lifetime of the plan. The types of improvement schemes could relate to minor junction improvements, facilities to assist pedestrians and/or cyclists crossing the road, the provision of improved sightlines at junctions, improvement plans for routes and so forth. Applications will also be submitted to the Scottish Government Road Safety Improvement Fund for schemes which meet the fund criteria (mainly across the rural network).

The changes in travel behaviours during 2020 and 2021 as a result of the Covid 19 pandemic have led to significant reductions in the number of reported accidents during those two years. It is therefore proposed to undertake a mid-term review of the plan in 2027 to review Moray's progress towards the national interim targets for 2030 and to see where joint working has been successful/could be enhanced.

Introduction

This is the seventh Road Safety Plan for Moray, the previous plans being prepared in 1997, 2000, 2004, 2007, 2011 and 2018, respectively. Each previous plan laid out a framework of policies and actions to improve road safety over the life of that plan. This plan seeks to review road safety activity in Moray and create and maintain partnerships which will help develop proportionate interventions to continue to improve road safety in Moray. It is also the first plan which will see the focus on the safe system approach set out in Scotland's Road Safety Framework to 2030 *'Together, making Scotland's roads safer'.*

The Plan is produced to meet the council's statutory duty under Section 39 of the Road Traffic Act 1988 to prepare and carry out a programme of measures designed to promote road safety.

The Council is required to carry out studies into accidents arising out of the use of vehicles on roads for which they are the Roads Authority and must, in light of those studies, take such measures as appear to be appropriate to prevent such accidents, including:

- the dissemination of information and advice relating to the use of roads, the giving of practical training to road users or any class or description of road users;

- the construction, improvement, maintenance or repair of and other measures taken in the exercise of their powers for controlling, protecting or assisting the movement of traffic on roads; and

- in constructing new roads, must take such measures as appear to be appropriate to reduce the possibilities of such accidents when the roads come into use.

Road Safety sits within a wider context of policies and activities undertaken by local authorities and public bodies, as shown in the diagram below:

Figure 1: Road safety context
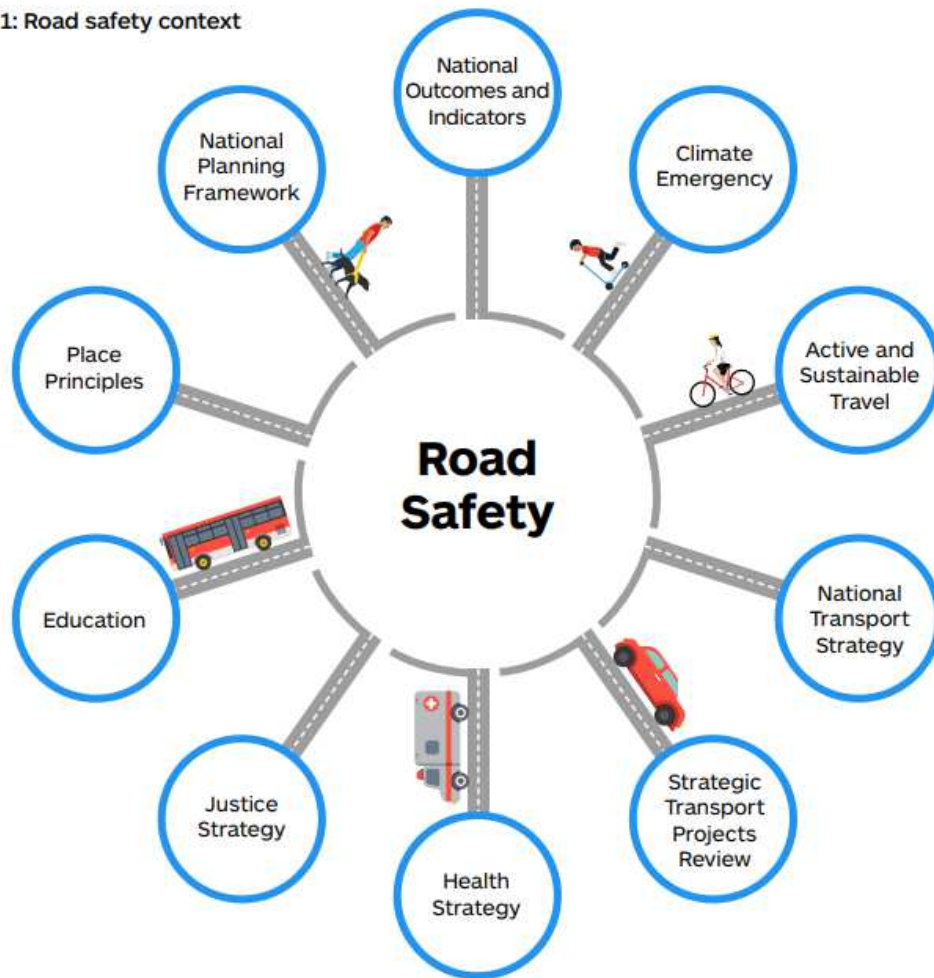
Source: Scotland's Road Safety Framework to 2030

The new Road Safety Framework promotes partnership working 'Together, making Scotland's roads safer'. However, it is also the responsibility of road users to ensure that their vehicles are road worthy, they have a valid licence for the type of vehicle they are using and that they are fit and competent to safely operate a vehicle.

There are strong interrelationship between the various groups and bodies with respect to Road Safety as demonstrated in the following diagram:

Although there are these relationships, each body has its own clear area of responsibility.
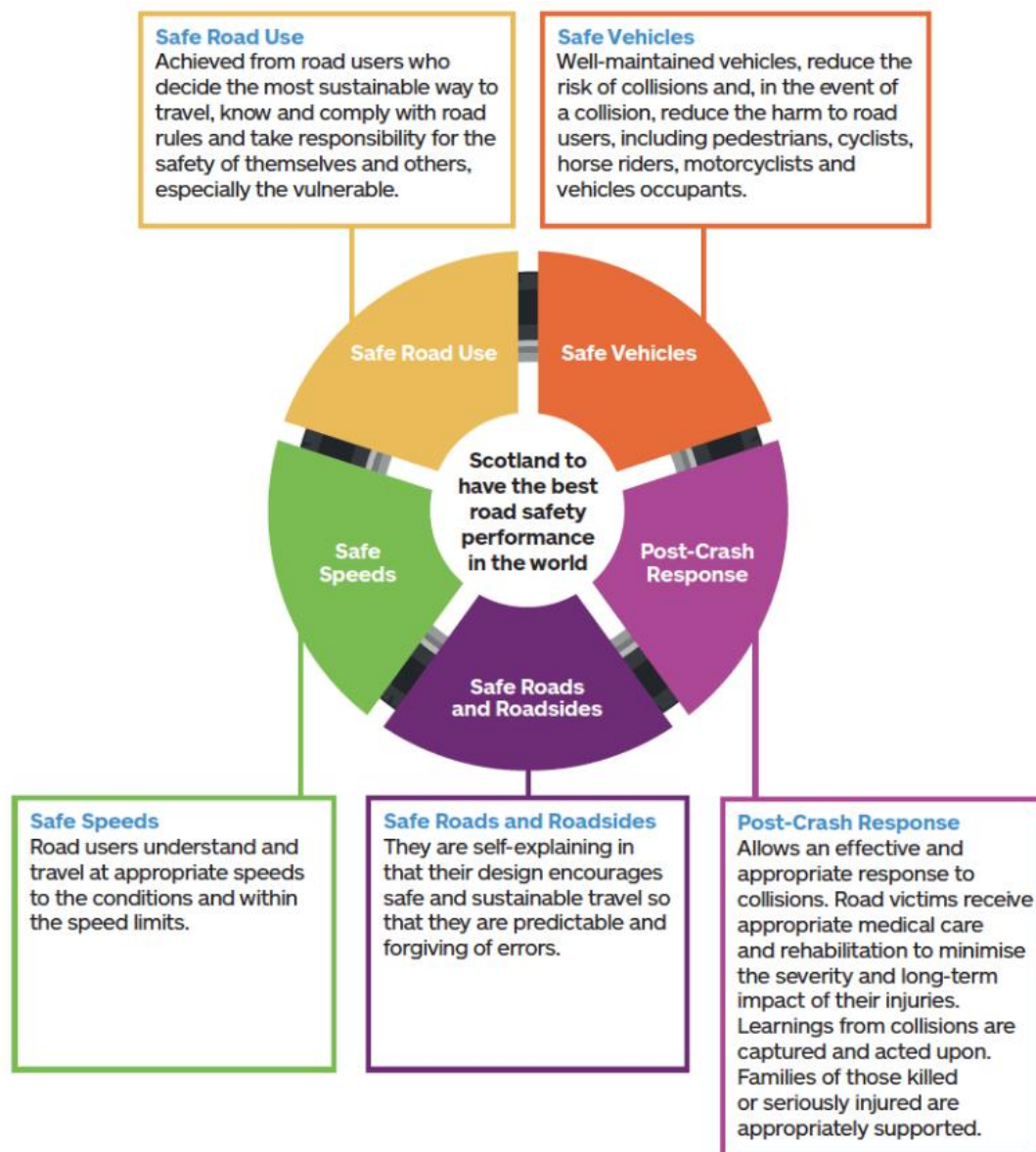
Whilst the Trunk roads throughout Moray are the responsibility of Transport Scotland, and are managed and maintained on their behalf by Amey, all the statistics quoted in this plan are for both trunk and local roads. This goes back to the council responsibility for road safety on all the roads within its area.

This Plan has been produced by the Moray Council's Transportation team in conjunction with local representatives of Police Scotland; Transport Scotland Amey; NHS Grampian; Scottish Fire and Rescue Service; The Scottish Ambulance Service, North East Safety Camera Unit and other Council services, such as Education and Lifelong Learning and Moray Health and Social Care Partnership.

Strategic Partnerships and Frameworks

Scotland's Road Safety Framework

Scotland's Road Safety Framework to 2030 - Together, making Scotland's roads safer, was published by Transport Scotland in February 2021[1]. It heralds a new approach to road safety by introducing the Safe System approach at a national, regional, local and even individual level. The following diagram sets out the five pillars of the Safe System:

Safe Road Use
Achieved from road users who decide the most sustainable way to travel, know and comply with road rules and take responsibility for the safety of themselves and others, especially the vulnerable.

Safe Vehicles
Well-maintained vehicles, reduce the risk of collisions and, in the event of a collision, reduce the harm to road users, including pedestrians, cyclists, horse riders, motorcyclists and vehicles occupants.

Safe Speeds
Road users understand and travel at appropriate speeds to the conditions and within the speed limits.

Safe Roads and Roadsides
They are self-explaining in that their design encourages safe and sustainable travel so that they are predictable and forgiving of errors.

Post-Crash Response
Allows an effective and appropriate response to collisions. Road victims receive appropriate medical care and rehabilitation to minimise the severity and long-term impact of their injuries. Learnings from collisions are captured and acted upon. Families of those killed or seriously injured are appropriately supported.

Scotland to have the best road safety performance in the world

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[1] Scotland's Road Safety Framework to 2030

The Framework also proposes new targets.[2] to 2030. These interim targets are 'milestones' or 'check points' for the Framework's long term goal of moving close to zero fatalities and serious injuries in road transport by 2050.

Scotland's Road Safety Framework Targets

Our Targets

Interim Targets to 2030
50% reduction in people killed
50% reduction in people seriously injured
60% reduction in children (aged <16) killed
60% reduction in children (aged <16) seriously injured

Intermediate Outcome Targets
- *40% reduction in pedestrians killed or seriously injured*
- *20% reduction in cyclists killed or seriously injured*
- *30% reduction in motorcyclists killed or seriously injured*
- *20% reduction in road users aged 70 and over killed or seriously injured*
- *70% reduction in road users aged between 17 to 25 killed or seriously injured*
- *Percentage of motorists driving/riding within the posted speed limit*
- *The casualty rate for the most deprived 10% SIMD areas is reduced to equal to the least deprived 10% SIMD areas.*

Intermediate Measures
- *Casualty rate per 100 million vehicle kilometres for cyclists killed and seriously injured*
- *Casualty rate per thousand population for pedestrians killed and seriously injured*
- *Number of people killed and seriously injured in collisions where at least one driver/rider was driving for work, not commuting*

It should be noted that within the Framework the baseline for accident data used to assess progress towards the above interim targets has been set as the years

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[2] Scotland's Road Safety Framework to 2030

2014 to 2018. The previous baseline for the Scottish Government Road Safety Framework to 2020 covered the years 2004 to 2008.

The baseline figures for Moray are

Child	2014-18 numbers
Adults killed	20
Children killed	3
Adults seriously injured (adjusted)	215
Children seriously injured (adjusted)	20
Adults Slightly injured (adjusted)	211
Children Slightly injured (adjusted)	22

This translates into our targets to 2030 per annum being:

50% reduction in people killed = 2.3
50% reduction in people seriously injured = 23.5
60% reduction in children (aged <16) killed = 0.2
60% reduction in children (aged <16) seriously injured = 1.6

These numbers are incredibly low and one accident can affect whether they are achieved, which is why the Scottish Government asks each area to contribute to the overall target, rather than set their own individually.

Local Partnership Forum North

In a wider context, and to improve communications between national and local level government, Transport Scotland's Road Safety Framework has developed three Scottish local partnership forum groups. The North Unit comprises the Councils of:

- Aberdeenshire

- Aberdeen

- Angus

- Perth & Kinross

- Moray

- Highland

- Comhairle nan Eilean Siar

- Shetland Islands,

- Orkney Islands.

These forums allow operational partners to discuss specific interventions and compare the types of road users who are injured. It is important that these links are developed as approximately a third of all Moray residents injured each year in road accidents happen on trunk roads. This pattern is similar across the neighbouring local authorities, who are also part of the Local Partnership Forum North and the Road Safety North East Scotland groups.

Road Safety North East Scotland (RSNES)

Across the north east of Scotland, agencies have been working in partnership since Local Government reorganisation in 1996 to reduce the number and severity of casualties on our road network. This culminated in a Joint Public Sector Group formalising a partnership which is now known as Road Safety North East Scotland (RSNES). From the peak road casualty figures in 2004-2006 the group has steadily reduced the number and severity of casualties in the intervening years. The latest strategy for the RSNES was approved in summer 2017[3]

The group comprises partners including the three north east local authorities; (Aberdeen City, Aberdeenshire and Moray Councils), NESTRANS, North Safety Camera Unit. NHS Grampian, Police Scotland, Road Safety Scotland, Scottish Fire and Rescue Service and Transport Scotland, all of which have a role in road safety.

The group monitors ongoing accident and casualty trends and collaborates on campaigns and research. Robert Gordon University are currently working on a

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[3] [North East Scotland Road Casualty Reduction Strategy 2017](#)

number of research projects on behalf of the RSNES in relation to young driver interventions, motorcycle crashes[4] and interventions[5] and the general downward trend of casualties across the North East compared to Scotland as a whole.

Prior to 2020, Aberdeenshire Community Safety Partnership alongside RSNES delivered the young driver intervention 'Safe Drive, Stay Alive'. However, in 2018 Transport Scotland commissioned a research report from TRL (Transport Research Laboratory) which reviewed the effectiveness of pre–driver interventions. The report[6] was critical of the type of Safe Drive interventions as there was little evidence that the main premise of any intervention should be 'do no harm' was fulfilled.

With this in mind, Police Scotland in Ayrshire developed a new type of young driver intervention, 'New Driver Scheme', which was evaluated by Research Scotland. The new intervention was more targeted and delivered face to face with an experienced police officer. This has now been rolled out across Scotland and was introduced in the North East in 2022[7].

The RSNES group also shares successes in engineering interventions and best practice.

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[4] [Motorcycle Safety Strategies in North East Scotland. Caroline Hood RGU](#)

[5] [Rider Refinement North 2022:independent evaluation report, Caroline Hood RGU](#)

[6] [Review and assessment of pre-driver, TRL, PPR838](#)

[7] [New Driver Scheme launch](#)

Local and Regional Policies and Context

At a local level, the key policy documents relevant to road safety are:

- [The Local Outcome Improvement Plan V2](#) (Moray Community Planning Partnership) September 2021

- Moray Corporate Plan 2024 (Moray Council)

- The Moray Economic Strategy (Moray Council)

This plan is consistent with the priorities of the Moray 10 year Plan – the Council's Local Outcome Improvement Plan V2[8] through:

- Building a better future for our children and young people in Moray by: promoting and supporting safer environments and communities; and

- Empowering and connecting communities through the Moray Economic Strategy 2022[9] by: supporting productivity growth through enhancing critical infrastructure.

The Council's Corporate Plan for 2024[10] also indicates that it '*will continue to provide services which support economic growth and well-being, such as …, maintaining an efficient road network …. These activities directly support national objectives.*'

In terms of regional policy, Moray is part of HiTrans Regional Transport Partnership area. This Plan is consistent with the aims and objectives of the HiTrans Regional Transport Strategy[11] draft May 2017 (an updated strategy is expected), and the second Moray Local Transport Strategy[12] which states at Sub-Objective S2 that we will:

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[8] [Local Outcome Improvement Plan V2, Moray Community Planning Partnership](#)

[9] [Moray Economic Strategy 2022](#)

[10] [Corporate Plan 2024](#)

[11] [HiTrans Regional Transport Strategy](#)

[12] [Moray Local Transport Strategy](#)

Develop solutions to traffic safety and capacity problems within Moray and work with the Scottish Government, developers and others to minimise predicted problems.

The speed of traffic through built up areas is a concern raised by many communities in Moray. However, it is on the rural roads outwith built up areas where speed tends to be a factor in road accidents. Enforcement of traffic speeds is carried out by Police Scotland and their Moray Local Policing Plan[13] supports the aims of this document through Operation CEDAR.

Operation CEDaR (Challenge, Educate, Detect and Reduce) is the north road safety strategy aimed at casualty reduction and improving safety on the roads within the Police Scotland North Command area (which Moray and North East local command areas fall under). Operation CEDaR is delivered through local initiatives which are specifically aligned to the issues identified in each Police Scotland Division. Where appropriate these initiatives will involve local policing teams and partner agencies to reduce the number of people killed and seriously injured in the area and improve the behaviour of drivers of all ages behind the wheel. Locally Police Scotland partner with DVSA, DVLA and NESCAMP as well as schools on occasion.

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[13] Moray Local Policing Plan 2023-2026

Accidents in Moray

It is important that any actions arising from this plan are designed to address issues identified through the consideration of recorded accident data. The following section analyses the recorded accident data provided to Moray Council by Police Scotland, seeks to understand the data and identify patterns and trends.

Accidents and casualties

Police Scotland collect information on all accidents reported to them, either at the scene of an injury accident or reported by a member of the public after the event. This information is then analysed by both police officers and roads engineers to determine locations on the road network which show clusters of accidents; different types of accidents and groups of road users who may be particularly at risk.

The number of accidents and casualties vary quite considerably from year to year as a result of weather and other external factors which can affect the number and type of journeys made. This can affect the reliability of any conclusions drawn on one particular year's data. This is especially true in areas which are largely rural and dependent on local conditions, as opposed to large urban areas where journey patterns are fairly stable.

Analysis of accident data is usually carried out over a three or five-year period.

The following graph (on page 17) shows the trends in reported accidents in Moray over the period 2004 to 2023. There are several points on the graph where there is a significant increase or decline in the number of reported accidents. These points have been highlighted and reasons for the anomalies/change given on the graph.

Additionally, from July 2019 Police Scotland introduced a nationwide accident and casualty data recording system called CRaSH (Collision Reporting and Sharing). The way serious casualties are now being recorded is based on specific injury types and the system then categorised the casualty by killed, seriously or slightly injured. Before this system was introduced, the classification of the injury was assessed by the attending police officer. The same system has been

gradually rolled out across Great Britain and the effect has been that some casualties previously categorised as slight were now being recorded as serious, leading to an overall increase in the serious injury numbers. The Department for Transport has subsequently adjusted the originally recorded figures and these are the ones being used to measure the future targets against. The graph shows the adjusted trend lines for serious and slight casualties. The 2020 - 23 numbers are not adjusted as the new system was in place during that period.

The adjusted trend lines follow the same pattern as that originally recorded, but are higher for serious casualties and lower for slightly injured. The reduction in Killed and Seriously injured casualties (KSI) between the two baselines in Moray is around 9% with the recorded figures. For Scotland this figure is around 37%. The adjustments haven't been made before 2006, so the adjusted base for 2004-08 is not available to calculate the reduction. For all casualties in Moray the reduction is around 57% which compares with around 40% for all Scotland.

The Moray data is a very small sample size and is prone to fluctuation. This can explain some of the variation between Moray and the whole of Scotland. The following sections seeks to explain this in more detail.
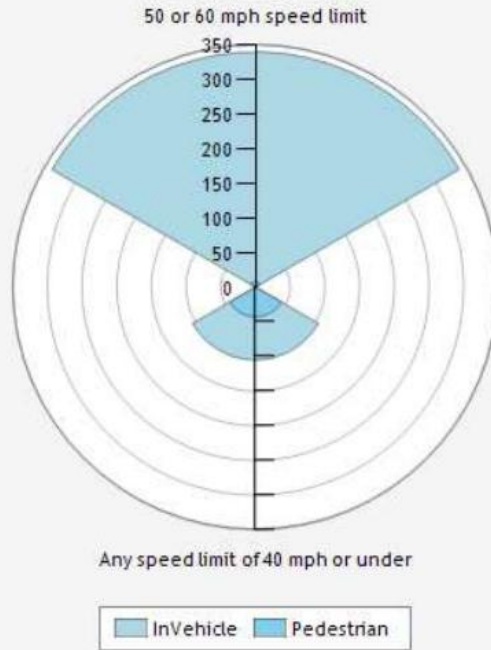
ALL MORAY CASUALTIES BY SEVERITY

Page 97
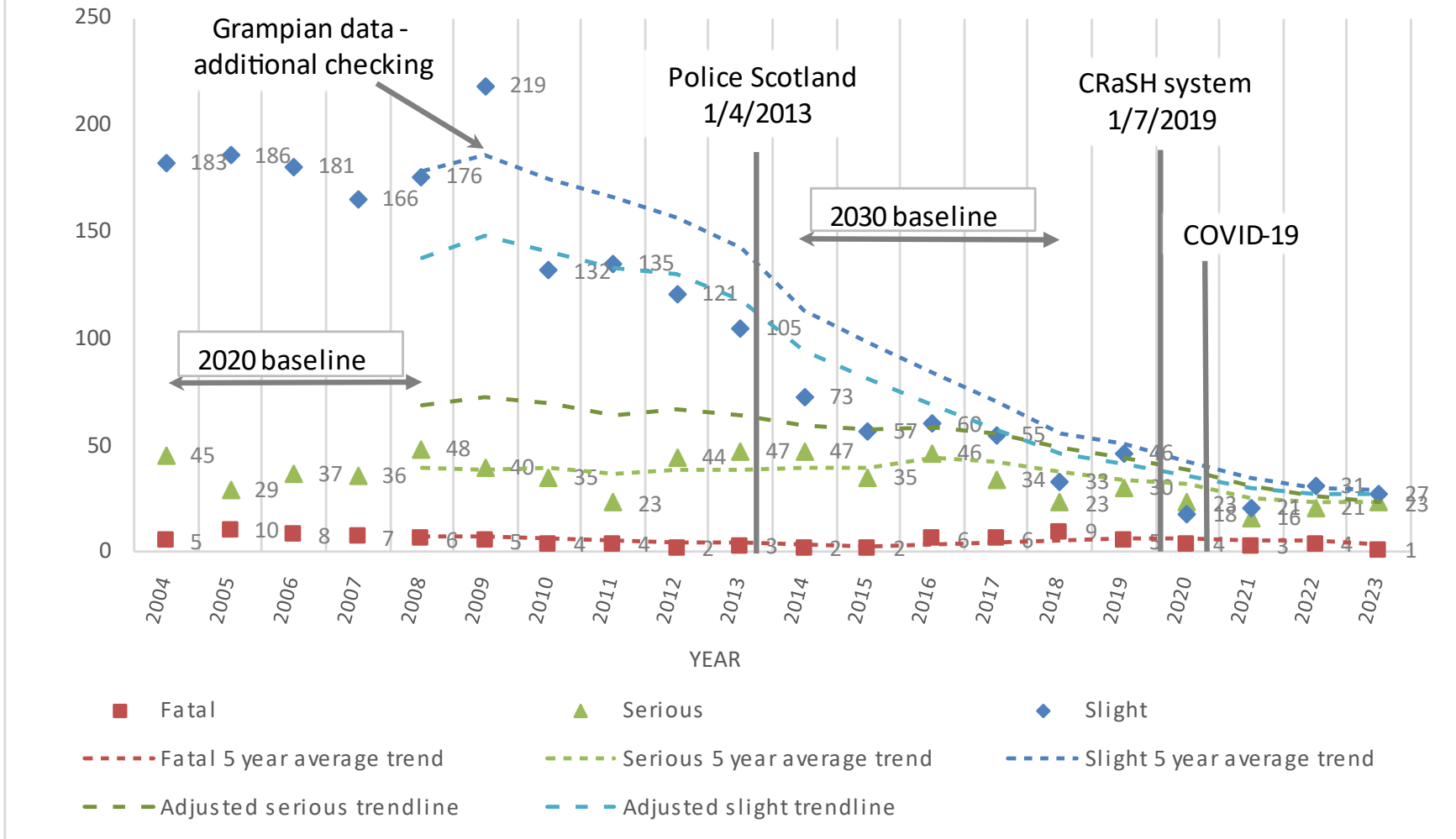
All data in this plan is quoted for a 5 year period 2018-2022 to allow comparison of 5 year data with national information in Reported Road Casualties Scotland.[14] Full 2023 data is likely to be published in October 2024, although interim data is usually available in May each year. The COVID19 pandemic has skewed these figures due to restrictions on travel and movement during both 2020 and 2021. Future years' figures will be more representative when compared to the baseline of 2014 to 2018 (set in the Road Safety Framework to 2030), although it should be noted that overall travel patterns are changing with the move to more hybrid working and online shopping. Scottish Government are also seeking to reduce car-kilometres by 20% by 2030. Measures to support that aim will be likely to have a further impact on travel behaviours. Therefore, travel patterns may never wholly revert to travel patterns observed prior to the pandemic.

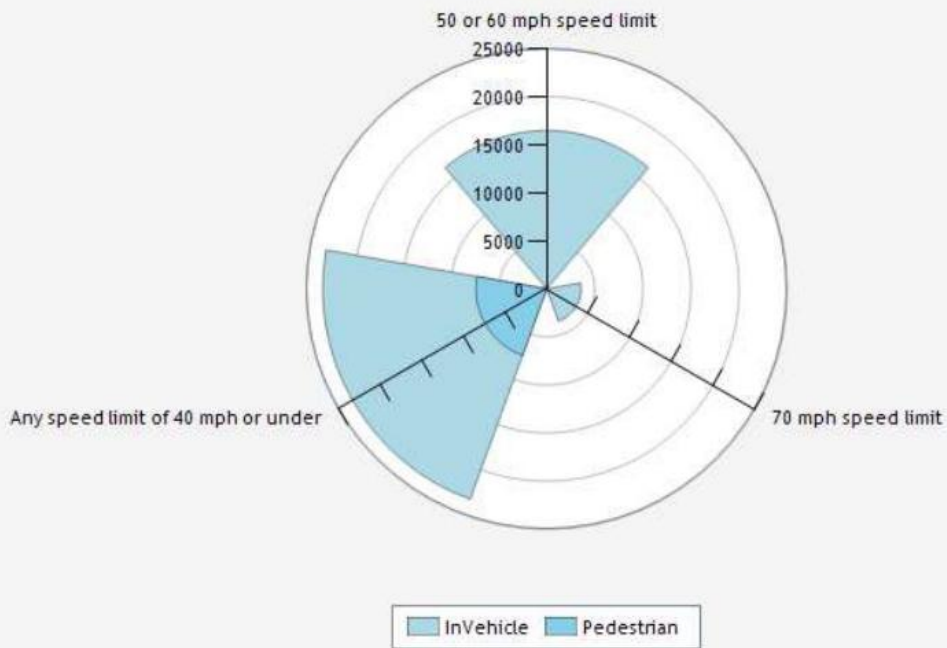**Casualties in Built up versus Non-built up areas**

Built up roads are defined as those having a 40mph speed limit or less and non-built up are national speed limit or 50mph speed limit. The pattern of where casualties are injured on the road network is very different in Moray when compared to Scotland as a whole. Between 2014 and 2018 (Road Safety Framework to 2030 baseline) over 70% of Moray casualties were injured in accidents happening on rural roads, compared to just a third of casualties for Scotland as a whole, as illustrated in the diagrams below:

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[14] Reported Road Casualties Scotland

Casualties by Built up and Non-built up - Moray

50 or 60 mph speed limit

350
300
250
200
150
100
50
0

Any speed limit of 40 mph or under

InVehicle   Pedestrian

Casualties by Built up and Non-built up - Scotland

50 or 60 mph speed limit

25000
20000
15000
10000
5000
0

Any speed limit of 40 mph or under

70 mph speed limit

InVehicle   Pedestrian

[15]

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[15] MAST Online Road Safety Analysis

As the data for Scotland as a whole shows higher accident rates in built up areas than on rural roads, Scottish Government has developed a National Strategy for 20mph, which would see the current limit of 30mph on most urban roads, being reduced to 20mph as standard to support reduction in the number and severity of accidents in built up areas..

Research carried out in the 80s, 90s and 00s identified fatality risk for pedestrians being struck by passenger vehicles travelling at certain speeds.[16] Results varied markedly but the general conclusion was that there is a low gradual risk for impact speeds up to 20mph, thereafter some studies suggest that this low risk rises as speeds increase towards 30mph and in some locations/instances the risk rises more steeply. This suggests that there are many other factors involved in accidents on built up roads rather than just speed.

Within Moray around 12% of accidents in built up areas have identified speed as a contributory factor. Whereas on rural roads, speed is a factor in around 30% of reported injury accidents.

This indicates that with 70% of injury accidents occurring on rural roads in Moray, and 30% of those accidents having speed as a contributing factor, accident reduction in Moray should be focussed on rural roads rather than in built up areas.

Casualties

- 29% of Moray residents who are injured in a crash, crash outside Moray
- 72% of people who are injured in a road crash in Moray are from Moray (with 14% unknown)

Crashes

- $\frac{1}{3}$ of Moray residents who crash, crash on Trunk Roads
- 1.2% of casualties involve a school pupil or on a school run.

Around one third of Moray residents injured in Scotland are injured on a Trunk

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[16] The role of speed in the frequency and severity of Road Traffic Collisions, NI Assembly

Road. Within Moray itself one third of those injured are also injured on a Trunk Road. This indicates that the partnership approach with Transport Scotland and Amey is crucial to assisting in reducing accidents and their severity in Moray.

Casualties by home residence

Across Scotland during the baseline period (2014-18) only 1% of people injured in road accidents in Scotland, were injured in Moray. Moray has approximately 2.9% of the Scottish Road network[17] and 2% of the Scottish population.[18] This shows that the relative risk of being involved in a crash in Moray is between half and a third of the rest of Scotland.

The chart below indicates where those injured in Moray come from.
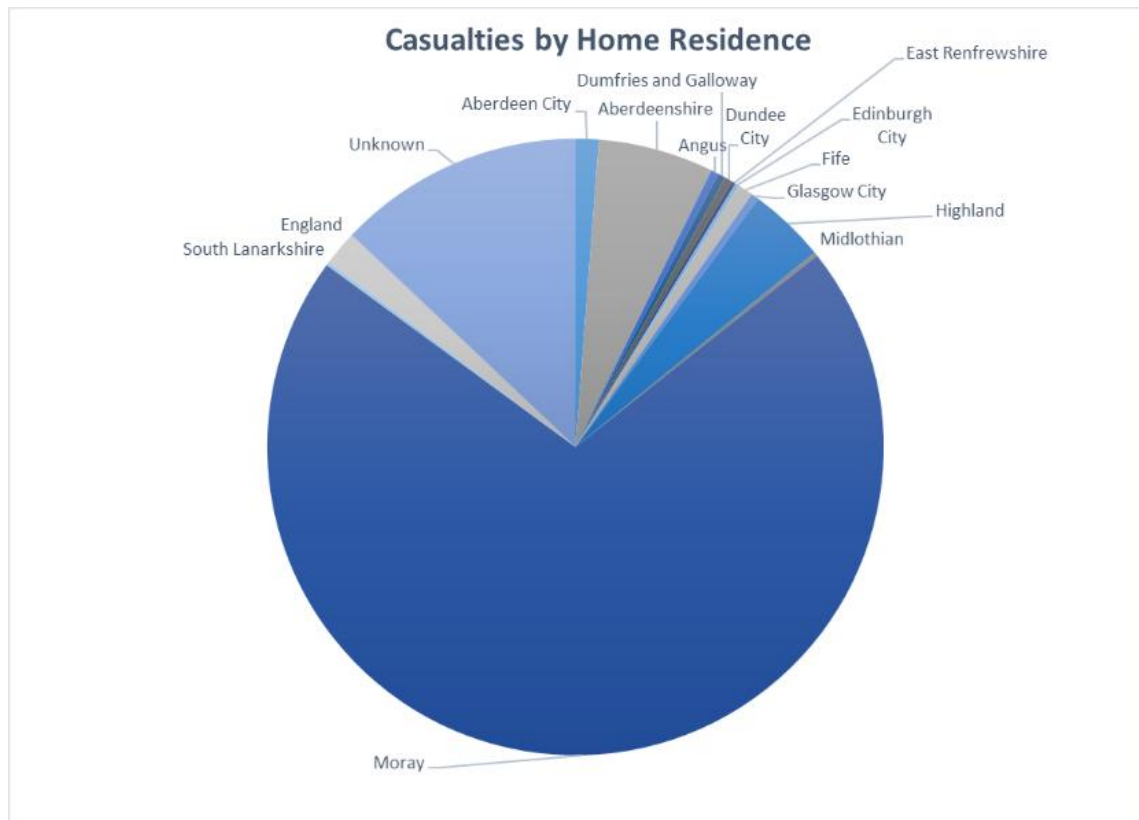
Source: MAST by Agylisis (2014-18)

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17 Scottish Transport Statistics 2022 Table 4.2

18 Scotland's Census 2022 – Rounded population estimates

Risk by road type

The table below shows the relative risk for injury accidents when travelling on 'A' roads within Moray for the Road Safety Framework to 2030 base line period of 2014 to 2018. This risk is calculated separately for urban and rural sections of road and is related to the length of the relevant section of road to give a comparable rate per kilometre.

Baseline Period 2014-2018 (totals)							
Road No	Urban Casualties	Rural Casualties	Total casualties	Urban length (km)	Rural length (km)	Urban rate (cas/km/pa)	Rural rate (cas/km/pa)
A95	0	10	10	0.5	13.7	0.00	0.15
A95(T)	4	30	34	2.8	34.7	0.28	0.17
A96(T)	34	85	119	8.7	54.5	0.78	0.31
A98	1	21	22	1.6	19.3	0.12	0.22
A920	1	0	1	0.0	6.1	0.00	0.00
A939	0	7	7	0.9	17.2	0.00	0.08
A940	0	2	2	2.2	20.9	0.00	0.02
A941	15	59	74	10.3	47.0	0.29	0.25
A942	4	1	5	6.1	5.0	0.13	0.04
A990	1	0	1	3.0	2.8	0.07	0.00
B roads	16	98	114	43.7	254.2	0.07	0.08
All other roads	72	33	105	374.7	1128.7	0.04	0.01
All Moray roads	148	346	494	454.5	1604.1	0.07	0.04

The rate calculated for all Scottish rural 'A' roads is 0.27 casualties/km per annum. The A96 then A941 have the highest per kilometre rates in Moray. The A96 at 0.31 casualties/km per annum is higher than the Scottish rate for all A roads, with the A941 a little below the Scottish rate. The next A road, the A98, has a rate well below that of the A96, A941 and the overall rate for A roads in Scotland.

Considering where the driver associated with a casualty lives on each route provides further insight into accident trends and patterns. Between 2014 and 2022, of injury accidents on the A95 and A96, 55% involve Moray drivers. For the A98, this figure increases to 73% of drivers involved in an injury accident living in Moray and for the A941 the proportion increases again to 79% of drivers. Across the 'A' road network the average is 63% drivers residing in Moray followed by 17% from Aberdeen, Aberdeenshire and Highland 5% from the rest of Scotland and 15% either unknown or outwith Scotland.
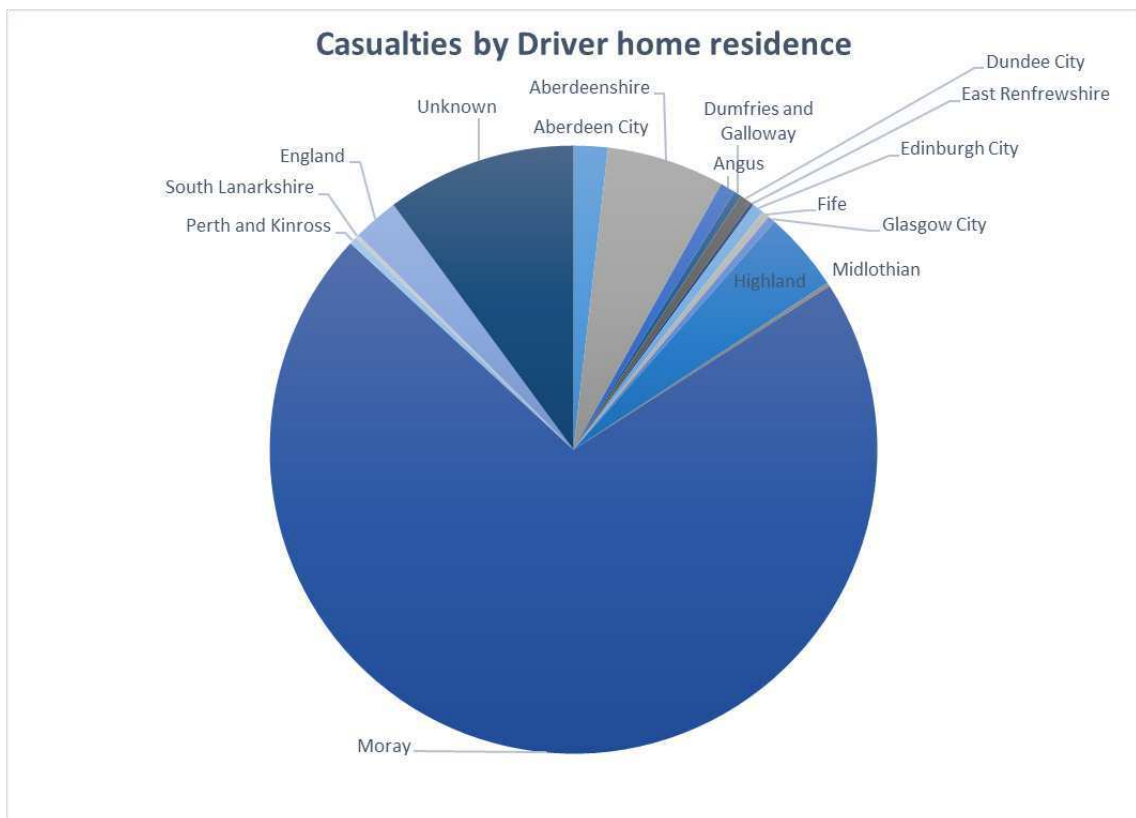
Source: MAST by Agylisis (2014-18)

This indicates that the injury accidents reported on rural roads such as the A98 and A941 where there are higher rates per kilometre per annum are more likely to involve drivers who are local residents and should be familiar with the road network.

Casualties by road user type

Looking at specific categories of road users, when compared to Scotland, the relative risk of being injured in an accident in Moray is much lower than the whole of Scotland as shown in the diagram below.
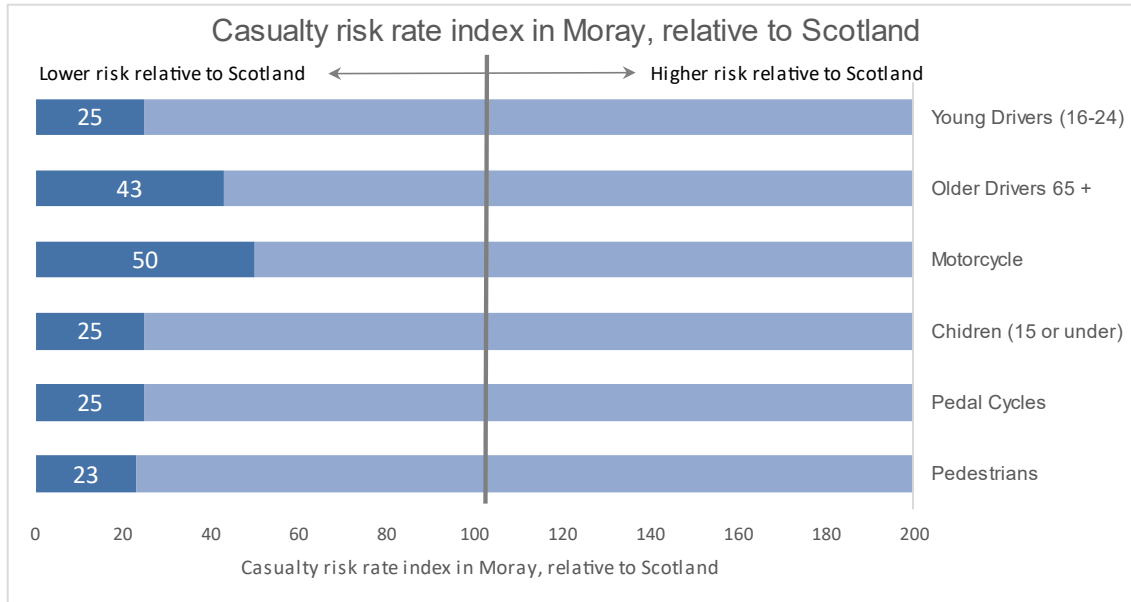
Source: MAST Scotland database 2018-2022, Road Safety Analysis Ltd. [19]

Comparing Moray with similar authorities, (Aberdeenshire, Stirling and the Borders) with respect to rurality, proportion of rural roads in their network, and population profile and population density shows similar accident and casualty trends to Moray.

It is therefore important to consider the relative risk, rurality and specific characteristics of injury accidents in Moray when developing interventions, as opposed to following the Scotland wide approach.

Age (Pre, young and older drivers)

Moray's population has remained virtually unchanged in the past 10 years [20] and currently (2022) stands at 93,400. Population estimates for Scotland indicate that

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[19] MAST Online Road Safety Analysis

[20] Scotland's Census 2022 - Rounded population estimates

the population is aging with over 20% being over 65 years old compared to 16.1% 10 years ago and just 12.1% 50 years ago. In Moray the figure is about 23%.

The aging population presents its own challenges with respect to road safety. Driver training for those who have been driving for some time, is difficult to 'sell', and issues such as eyesight and prescription drugs require careful handling. Joint working with the NHS and other parties is required to persuade individuals to be aware of these issues.

The younger population, under 25, is around 23,900 or around 25% of the population. This is a reduction from 29% in 2011.

Schools, and their role in providing Road Safety advice is crucial to pre drivers and young people in general. Curriculum based material is available nationally from Road Safety Scotland. Joint working with Education and Lifelong Learning to develop Road Safety Champions who can share and provide advice on this material to their fellow pupils is one way to disseminate road safety messages to this age group.

Accidents involving young drivers has reduced by over 80% in the past 15 years. There are many factors which have contributed to this including the rising cost of insurance and fuel along with interventions previously carried out by the Police before 2013. In the years during COVID19 the reduction is 50% over the 2014-18 average. The introduction of free bus travel to under 22 year olds in January 2022 may also be a factor in this reduction.

The Cost of Accidents

The UK Government produces figures each year which reflects on average how much an accident costs to society. It takes into account the costs of the police and other emergency services, medical costs, lost output (e.g. loss of earning capacity), damage to property, and a sum which reflects the effects of pain, grief, suffering etc. i.e. the emotional impact of an accident. Average costs are shown below for Scotland[21], according to the severity of the injury.

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[21] Reported Road Casualties Scotland 2021, Table 10

Severity of Accident	Cost
Fatal	£ 2,309,788
Serious	£ 273,510
Slight	£ 27,985

Over the past five years, the cost of accidents in Moray amounted to some £15 million.

The Council is committed to improving road safety and has approved capital funding of £105,000 for 2024/25. On-going Capital funding will be required to ensure that any required engineering improvements identified through the life of the Road Safety Plan can be developed and delivered. Transport Scotland, through Amey, has also programmed engineering improvements for the two Trunk Roads in Moray namely A96 Inverness to Aberdeen road and A95 Aviemore to Keith road. This expenditure has been complemented both by the financial support and manpower resources of the police, fire, ambulance, health board and other council services in education, enforcement and encouragement.

The Scottish Government has recently introduced a new Road Safety Improvement Fund as part of the funding to support the Road Safety Framework. Funding was secured for 2023/24 for two improvement schemes in Moray; the first for works at the A940 at Glenernie and the second to improve road markings (lining) and cats eye upgrades on A940 and A941. Bids will continue to be submitted for future years.

Furthermore, progress on improving the cycle and walking network has been given a major boost by the increases in Cycling, Walking and Safer Routes funding which has been received from Scottish Government annually since 2001. Although primarily for improvements to the active travel network, these have a positive road safety benefit for these vulnerable road users and help pedestrians, cyclists and wheelers to feel more confident when using the road network.

Issues and Actions

The aim of this plan is to contribute to the delivery of Scotland's Road Safety Framework to 2030 with the vision '*For Scotland to have the best road safety performance in the world*[22].

This is to be achieved through:

- Safe Road Use

- Safe Vehicles

- Safe Speeds

- Safe Roads and Roadsides

- Post-Crash Response

Road safety is defined as any policy, project, plan, programme or strategy which aims to reduce the number and severity of road traffic casualties or reduces road danger with better education or through the design, building, operation or use of the road system.

There are a number of measures which can be used to help reduce the number and severity of road accidents. These fall into three broad categories:

- Education

- Engineering

- Enforcement

The behaviour of road users is influenced by educational methods and engineering measures. Enforcement of the traffic legislation is necessary when that behaviour is irresponsible or dangerous. However, the aim of the **education**, **engineering** and **enforcement** measures are to **encourage** everybody to adopt safer practices when on their daily journeys.

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[22] Scotland's Road Safety Framework to 2030

Issues

The main issues identified from the data are:

- The prevalence of accidents on rural roads;

- Ongoing maintenance of the road network;

- Driver behaviour and speed management;

- Ongoing education of road users; and

- Provision of cycle and walking infrastructure.

The following sections describe the interventions which are currently being pursued by the key public bodies involved in the development of this plan to address the above issues. The interventions are grouped under the Safe System areas set out in Strategic Framework and Partnerships section of this Plan.

Safe Road Use

This is achieved from road users who decide the most sustainable way to travel, know and comply with road rules and take responsibility for the safety of themselves and others, especially the vulnerable.

Safe road users are competent at all levels, including: paying full attention to the road ahead and the task in hand; adapting to the conditions (weather, the presence of other users, etc.); travelling at lower speeds; not driving while impaired through drink, drugs (including medicines) or fatigue; not being distracted by in-vehicle technology (mobile phones, entertainment systems, 'sat navs', etc.); and giving sufficient room to all other road users, no matter what their mode of travel.

Throughout Moray we are continuing to improve the active travel network to help users make sustainable choices. Many of these improvements are funded from external grants for example Sustrans, Places for Everyone and the annual allocation from Scottish Government for Cycling, Walking and Safer Routes projects.

There are various local and national campaigns on safe road use such as the National 'Think! Campaigns covering areas such as The Highway Code, mobile phone use, seat belts, speeding on rural roads, vehicle safety checks, motorcycling, country road driving, drug and drink driving, cycle safety and education and games for primary aged children.[23]

In Scotland, a similar organisation, Road Safety Scotland was launched in 1985 as The Scottish Road Safety Campaign, becoming Road Safety Scotland in 2005. Road Safety Scotland (RSS) is part of Transport Scotland, the Scottish Government's transport agency.[24].

RSS's work is based on research and evaluations of previous campaigns and road safety initiatives. The most recent campaigns have been around:

- Use of Seatbelts;

- Young Driver Campaigns;

- Driver Fatigue:

- Road User Advice;

- Children and Educators:

- Cycling:

- Horses and Road Safety; and

- In Car Child Safety.

Seatbelts

It only takes seconds to put on a seatbelt. But it's a simple act that could save your life. On average 13%[25] of those killed on roads in Scotland over the last five years were not wearing a seatbelt. Seat belt wearing became compulsory in 1983.

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[23] Think campaign website https://www.think.gov.uk/

[24] Road Safety Scotland website https://roadsafety.scot/campaigns/

[25] PACTS: Seat Belts – time for action

Young Drivers Campaigns

Young drivers have been identified nationally as being over represented in the casualty statistics. In the early 2000's Moray and across the north east had a real issue with young drivers crashing. This was tackled by campaigns with the Police and education events such as Safe Drive, Stay Alive. However, numbers have reduced considerably and are no longer the major issue they once were. This should not lead to complacency and Road Safety Scotland's (RSS) campaigns should continue to be supported. The RSS 'Drive like Gran's in the Car' campaigns cover subjects such as

- Drink Driving

- Drug Driving

- Speeding

- Distraction

- Vulnerable road users (motorcyclists, cyclists, pedestrians and horse riders)

The campaign concentrates on messages such as "Crash and you'll no be able to come round for my mince and tatties!"[26] and uses humour to get the road safety messages across.

Driver Fatigue

Driver fatigue causes hundreds of road accidents each year. And these accidents are roughly 50% more likely[27] to result in death or serious injury. When drivers fall asleep, the police find no signs of braking, or any avoiding actions, so there is a tendency to result in higher-speed collisions. This is a particular concern for Moray with long distances to travel to the central belt for work and deliveries. Whilst, it has been difficult to identify this specific issue in the accident statistics

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[26] Young drivers drink driving campaign

[27] Driver fatigue campaign

to date, driver fatigue .will remain a focus when analysing data and supporting any national campaigns.

Road User Advice

Road Safety Scotland provides advice to drivers, by life stage, behaviour and for other road users and for visitors on driving in Scotland. [28] Older Drivers are of particular concern across Scotland. In Moray, however, the numbers are low and the older population is not over represented in the accident data. There are some concerns about people driving longer than they should, particularly with poor and failing eyesight. This may be a result of the rurality of Moray and having limited public transport alternatives.

Children and Educators

Road Safety Scotland aims to provide road safety learning at every level, engaging children and young people. RSS Children and Educators. The learning resources link to the seven principles of Curriculum for Excellence.

Cycling

Most accidents to cyclists in Scotland happen on built up roads. Cycling Scotland provides training and information to help improve cyclists' safety. In Moray, Primary Schools participate in Bikeability training for pupils and the Moray Bothy project provides road safety advice for new and returning cyclists, including led rides to help build confidence.

Horses and Road Safety

Working with the equestrian community can to encourage a high level of safety awareness among riders. The British Horse Society (BHS) has been awarded the Prince Michael International Road Safety Award for its contribution to Road Safety. Visit Equestrians on the road. The BHS have undertaken joint road safety campaigns with local authorities in England and it is understood that they are

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[28] RSS Road User Advice

seeking to engage with Transport Scotland to undertake similar joint road safety campaigns in Scotland.

In-Car Child Safety

RSS is a key partner in the Scottish In-Car Child Safety Campaign. This is an ongoing campaign aimed at improving the safety of all children in vehicles. A major element of this is the provision of advice and information on the correct fitting of child car seats visit Good Egg Car Safety or Carrying Children Safely. In Moray partnering with Good Egg through their training programme will enable the local delivery of this advice. Staff have attended the specific training provided by Good Egg.

Safe Vehicles

Well-maintained vehicles reduce the risk of collisions and, in the event of a collision, reduce the harm to road users, including pedestrians, cyclists, horse riders, motorcyclists and vehicle occupants.

Police Scotland target drivers of vehicles with expired MoT certificates as these vehicles are more likely to be less well maintained. Under inflated tyres can contribute to both vehicle and cycle accidents.

In-vehicle safety has been improving steadily with the introduction of seatbelts, airbags, lane control and other vehicle control measures.

As mentioned above the correct fitting of child car seats is crucial to improving in vehicle safety. The Euro NCAP safety ratings can inform potential owners of the safety features in vehicles.

Safe Speeds

The aim is that road users understand and travel at appropriate speeds to the conditions and within the speed limits.

Traffic survey information is collected regularly and used to respond to complaints about speeding and, where appropriate, this data is shared with Police Scotland. Traffic speed and volume data is also collected before and after proposed schemes and developments to inform the decision-making process and reflect on a scheme's outcomes. It also helps determine the appropriate speed limits to post for built up areas, in particular where new developments are taking place at the edge of settlements. Existing speed limits are regularly reviewed for new developments or as the result of concerns raised by communities.

The key factors that should be taken into account in any decisions on local speed limits are:

- history of collisions;

- road geometry and engineering;

- road function;

- composition of road users (including existing and potential levels of vulnerable road users);

- existing traffic speeds; and

- roadside environment.

Enforcement of posted speed limits is carried out by both Police Scotland and Safety Cameras Scotland. Safety Cameras Scotland is the collective name for the North, East and West Safety Camera Units. This is an arms-length organisation governed by Transport Scotland through the Scottish Safety Camera Programme, but working within Police Scotland.

The site selection process for the Safety Camera unit is based on accidents and where they happen. The process for determining new sites is described in Appendix 1.

Safe Roads and Roadsides

This aim of the Safe System seeks to provide roads that are self-explaining in that their design encourages safe and sustainable travel so that they are predictable and forgiving of errors.

With the majority of accidents resulting in people being injured happening on rural roads in Moray, this is where the majority of interventions have taken place in the past, including Route Accident Reduction Plans (RARPs). The most recent of these was on the B9008 and involved review of the road markings, in some places removing the centreline and replacing with edge lines to reduce verge overrun. This was done at locations where the road width is less than 5.5m wide and hence too narrow to allow 2 vehicles to pass safely. Signing was also reviewed to give a consistent message and highlight features such as narrow bridges and bends where accidents have happened. This type of work has been carried out on the A roads in the past, but requires ongoing maintenance to keep the messages clear and consistent.

Adequate and appropriate road maintenance is crucial to achieving safe roads and roadsides. Potholes, poor conditions of the surface, low skid resistance, overgrown verges, poor drainage, lack of visibility, no footway or cycle route, worn road markings, unclear signing and trees can all contribute to crashes happening on rural roads, before driver error or inappropriate speed comes into the situation. Additionally surface dressing can cause issues for motorcyclists due to the loose chippings and uneven surface.

Recently, funding from the Road Safety Improvement Fund (RSIF) has become available for specific schemes. Improving the road markings (centreline and edge lines) and cats' eyes on both the A941 and A940 were the main schemes to receive funding from the RSIF in 2023/24, which works undertaken which will have a direct impact on providing safer roads and roadsides.

Through the Moray Active Travel Strategy consultations and focus groups a clear desire was identified for inter-settlement cycle infrastructure and this will contribute to both the road safety and climate change agenda by providing sustainable commuter routes. However, such schemes have high costs and often

require third party land. The Council will continue to support community groups with this aim and may seek specific funding to support their delivery, where there is a clear positive business case.

Transport Scotland is responsible for the trunk roads within Moray. These are the A96 and the A95 from Keith to the Highland Council boundary.

Transport Scotland, through its Operating Companies, undertakes an annual review of collisions on the trunk road network to identify cluster sites, or routes with recorded collisions that may be worthwhile of further investigation. The screening process, together with a detailed understanding of collision trends around the network, results in a prioritised programme of sites that are investigated further. This evidence-led approach ensures that resources can be targeted at locations where the greatest potential for casualty reduction is available. This approach has been successful in reducing casualties across Scotland's trunk road network.

Amey (Trunk Road Operating Company for the North East) apply the Safe System approach as described in Scotland's Road Safety Framework to 2030 to deliver an evidence-led casualty reduction programme to work towards meeting the Scottish Government's casualty reduction interim targets to 2030.

Carrying out Safety Audits on new schemes can identify issues which may cause accidents and seek to reduce them before the scheme is fully operational. Safety Audits will be undertaken on significant schemes promoted by the council. Developers are required to provide and act on Safety Audits for their works on the public road and where they are creating new sections of public road. These will continue to be a requirement to support Planning Applications and applications for Road Construction Consent.

Post-Crash Response

When a crash happens the response ranges from no emergency services attending to all of them being present and can include the air ambulance.

It is vital to work with the emergency services and the National Health Service (NHS) to enable the best possible response to collisions, ensure victims are effectively cared for, and facilitate meaningful investigations into the causes and potential solutions for the future. Health outcomes for victims rely on the ability of the system to quickly locate and provide emergency first responder care, to stabilise victims and transport them to hospital for further specialist treatment. Additionally the Health and Social Care Partnership provides information on recovery, ongoing health benefits of active travel and eyesight information.

Each of the services have a local service plan:

- Police Scotland through their Moray Local Policing Plan[29]

- Scottish Fire and rescue Service through their Local Fire and Rescue Plan[30]

- Scottish Ambulance Service in Our 2030 strategy with respect to Major incidents[31]

- NHS Grampian

- Health and Social Care Moray underpinning the work in health improvement.[32]

These services and the aftercare are crucial to the outcome of any casualties.

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[29] Moray Local Policing Plan 2023-2026

[30] https://www.firescotland.gov.uk/your-area/

[31] Scottish Ambulance Service - Our 2030 Strategy

[32] https://www.gov.scot/publications/scotlands-public-health-priorities/

What we are going to do

Although the number of people injured on Moray's roads is low, there is no room for complacency. There are ongoing concerns such as the aging population and the ongoing climate crisis which is encouraging the wider use of sustainable forms of travel such as walking and cycling. Rural roads remain a concern as this is where the majority of crashes happen in Moray and in particular on the Trunk Road network.

Journeys to school by sustainable means have remained broadly unchanged at around 50%. However, the numbers of pupils being driven has gradually crept up over the years along with those being driven part of their journeys at the expense of travel by bus. This could be a reflection of 'parental choice' with School buses not being available to out of zone pupils.

Actions

The following key actions have been identified based on the analysis of the accident data, the aims of the Road Safety Framework to 2030 and the joint working partnerships within the RSNES group.

Action	Target Date	Who	Safe System
Contribute to the North East Scotland Road Safety Strategy	tbc	All	Safe Road Use; Safe Speeds; Safe Roads and Roadsides, Post-crash response
Investigate options for a Moray Road Safety Group and better connections with the Trunk Road operating company	2024-25	Moray Council Transportation and Transport Scotland/Amey	Safe Road Use; Safe Speeds; Safe Roads and Roadsides, Post-crash response

Continue to carry out road accident analysis on an annual basis and otherwise as identified and to use this information to carry out effective and appropriate AIP engineering measures.	On-going throughout the term of the Plan to 2030.	Moray Council Transportation, Amey./ Transport Scotland	Safe Roads and Roadsides
Support the North Safety Camera Unit to identify sites for enforcement and to make representations to the Scottish Safety Camera Programme Office to consider appropriate criteria for speed camera sites.	On-going throughout the term of the Plan to 2030.	Police Scotland, Moray Council Transportation, Amey / Transport Scotland	Safe Speeds
To continue to support Road Safety Scotland	On-going throughout the term of the Plan to 2030.	Moray Council Transportation, Police Scotland, Transport Scotland	Safe Road Use
Support Police Scotland with their Motorcycle operation in a bid to reduce accidents	On-going throughout the term of the Plan to 2030.	All and involving this road user group	Safe Road Use; Safe Speeds
Concentrate resources on reducing the number and severity rural accidents, particularly those associated with speed.	On-going throughout the term of the Plan to 2030.	All	Safe Roads and Roadsides
Review young and pre-driver interventions, e.g. Police Scotland New Driver Scheme; and monitor the effectiveness.	By 2025	All	Safe Road Use; Safe Speeds
Investigate proposals for school Road Safety Champions	By 2025	Council	Safe Road Use
Review how best to deliver road safety advice and information	By 2024	Council,	Safe Road Use

Support national campaigns	On-going throughout the term of the Plan to 2030.	All	Safe Road Use
Police Scotland to continue to take a 'hard line' approach to young drivers involved in risky or antisocial behaviour	On-going throughout the term of the Plan to 2030.	Police Scotland	Safe Road Use
Seek to develop Community Council understanding of accident risks and traffic speeds, and have 'Champions' who can assist with disseminating of Road Safety campaigns and information	2024	All	Safe Road Use
Continue to seek funding to construct off road cycle tracks to provide segregation for vulnerable road users	On-going throughout the term of the Plan to 2030.	Roads	Safe Roads and Roadsides
Investigate options for the delivery of adult and secondary school cycle training	2025	Council	Safe Road Use
Fire and Rescue service will seek to role out the 'biker down' initiative in Moray	2025+	Scottish Fire and Rescue Service	Safe Road Use

A mid-term review of progress towards the Road Safety Framework to 2030 targets and the above actions will be undertaken during 2027. This date has been chosen as by then there will be 3 to 5 years of accident data available which have not been impacted by the changes in travel behaviours by the Covid-19 pandemic.

Future Targets

In 2040 the Scottish Government is due to set new targets and through the North East Scotland Road Casualty Reduction groups, council officers will seek to inform and influence these new targets.

Once the new Road Safety Framework to 2040 has been published, an updated Road Safety Plan will be produced in 2031/32 to coincide with any new targets.

Glossary of Terms

AIP - Accident investigation and prevention

Fatal casualty – a casualty who dies within 30 days of an injury being sustained

Fatal accident – an accident where at least one casualty is fatally injured

Serious casualty – a casualty who requires an overnight hospital stay or has a major bone fracture

Serious accident – an accident where at least one casualty is seriously injured

Slight casualty – a casualty who sustains minor injuries or bone fractures, not requiring an overnight hospital stay.

Slight accident – an accident where at least one casualty is slightly injured

KSI – Killed or seriously injured

AA – Automobile Association

DSA – Driving Standards Agency

NESCamp – North East Safety Camera Partnership

HiTrans – Highlands and Islands Regional Transport Partnership

NESTRANS - North East Scotland Regional Transport Partnership

RSS – Road Safety Scotland

ACPO(S) – Association of Chief Police Officers in Scotland

ORR - Occupational Road Risk

Organisations Involved

Moray Council, Transportation Service, Traffic and Public Transport Sections

Moray Council, Education Service

Moray Council, Community Safety

Police Scotland

- Aberdeen and North East Division Community Safety

- Road Policing Division

- North Safety Camera Unit
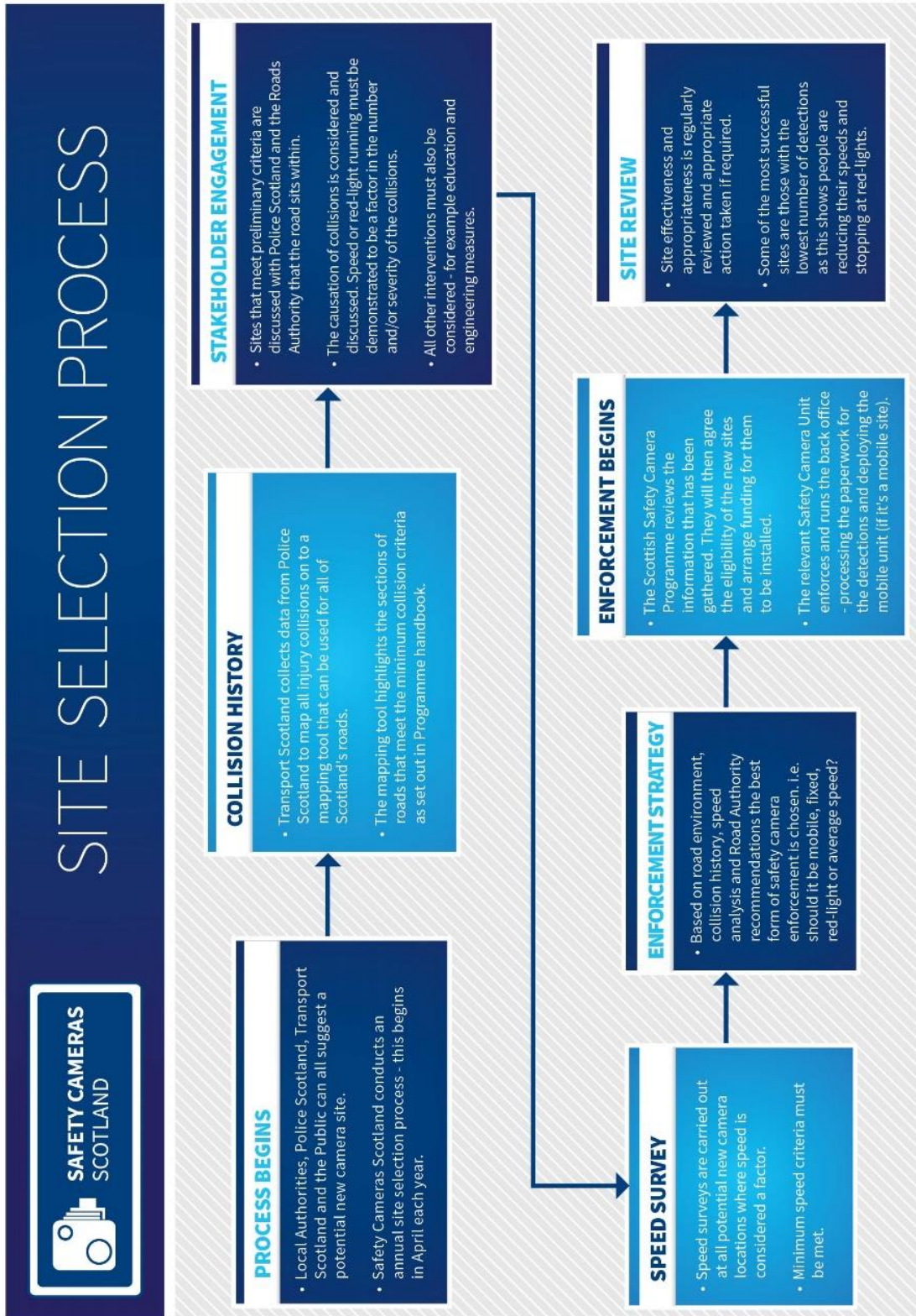
NHS Grampian

Scottish Fire and Rescue Service

Scottish Ambulance Service

Transport Scotland

Amey Limited, Trunk Road operating company

Appendix 1

Safety Cameras Scotland – Site selection process.

SITE SELECTION PROCESS

SAFETY CAMERAS SCOTLAND

PROCESS BEGINS
- Local Authorities, Police Scotland, Transport Scotland and the Public can all suggest a potential new camera site.
- Safety Cameras Scotland conducts an annual site selection process - this begins in April each year.

COLLISION HISTORY
- Transport Scotland collects data from Police Scotland to map all injury collisions on to a mapping tool that can be used for all of Scotland's roads.
- The mapping tool highlights the sections of roads that meet the minimum collision criteria as set out in Programme handbook.

STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT
- Sites that meet preliminary criteria are discussed with Police Scotland and the Roads Authority that the road sits within.
- The causation of collisions is considered and discussed. Speed or red-light running must be demonstrated to be a factor in the number and/or severity of the collisions.
- All other interventions must also be considered - for example education and engineering measures.

SPEED SURVEY
- Speed surveys are carried out at all potential new camera locations where speed is considered a factor.
- Minimum speed criteria must be met.

ENFORCEMENT STRATEGY
- Based on road environment, collision history, speed analysis and Road Authority recommendations the best form of safety camera enforcement is chosen. i.e. should it be mobile, fixed, red-light or average speed?

ENFORCEMENT BEGINS
- The Scottish Safety Camera Programme reviews the information that has been gathered. They will then agree the eligibility of the new sites and arrange funding for them to be installed.
- The relevant Safety Camera Unit enforces and runs the back office - processing the paperwork for the detections and deploying the mobile unit (if it's a mobile site).

SITE REVIEW
- Site effectiveness and appropriateness is regularly reviewed and appropriate action taken if required.
- Some of the most successful sites are those with the lowest number of detections as this shows people are reducing their speeds and stopping at red-lights.

Through targeted camera enforcement and improving driver behaviour the aim of Safety Cameras Scotland is to reduce the number of casualties on Scotland's roads. This means the cameras are sited in the areas most in need in terms of road casualty reduction, and deployed primarily where they will have the greatest casualty and collision reduction potential.

Criteria for enforcement locations are set out in the Scottish Safety Camera Programme Handbook and include:

- a history of injury collisions - have people been injured on this road and how severely?

- speed profile - is there a problem with speed on this road?

- agreement from partners - do Police Scotland and the Roads Authority agree that a safety camera is the right solution?

- enforcement strategy - what will be the best type of camera for this location?

- site review - an annual review - is this camera reducing injury collisions?

Whilst regular enforcement locations follow the process above, in order to meet demands the programme is able to offer short term and flexible deployment locations that should be utilised where and when appropriate.

- Short Term Deployments - To improve operational effectiveness and deployment flexibility, there will be occasions when short-term mobile enforcement deployments are required. The Programme therefore includes flexibility to reallocate provision in response to emerging issues or one-off/short-term events where the expected change in traffic behaviour has raised road safety concerns from stakeholders. Any deployments of this manner are limited to a maximum period of 1 month.

- Flexible Deployments - A number of enforcement hours will be available for deployments in support of improving driver behaviour and speed limit compliance in high footfall areas where active travel could be encouraged by lower speeds while reducing risk exposure. Flexible deployments should be based around a clearly evidenced prioritisation considering

speed and risk factors and will require a recent speed survey to evidence the issue of speed.

Police Scotland Road Policing have responsibility for enforcement on fast roads. We use Randomised Scheduled Enforcement Strategy (RSE)

This strategy has been utilised worldwide and targets high-risk locations at specific times to create an image of police omnipresence. By applying this concept, motorists will become increasingly uncertain and/or unable to predict the location of enforcement activity, therefore positively influencing driver behaviour. The locations and days identified each month are supported by analytical data from collisions for that month in the previous 5 years.

Local Policing Teams have the ability to enforce speed limits within the built up area.

INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT COVERING

- **EQUALITIES & SOCIO ECONOMIC DUTIES**
- **HUMAN RIGHTS AND RIGHTS OF THE CHILD**

STAGE 1 - DO I NEED AN INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT?

Name of policy or proposal:	
Is this a	Mark X below
New activity, programme or policy?	
Change to an existing activity, programme or policy?	X
Budget proposal?	

Duties: tick the boxes you think apply	No	Maybe	Yes
Equalities: Will your proposal have an impact on groups with protected characteristics? *Consider the impact of your proposal on people and how they access your services and information without barriers.*			X
Socio-economic *Not every person/family has access to regular income or savings. Will your proposal have an adverse impact on them*	X		
Does your proposal impact on the **human rights** of people?	X		
Does your proposal impact on the **rights of children** and young people	X		

Reasoning
Briefly describe your reasoning for the responses given above: **The actions from the Road Safety Plan to 2030 include providing infrastructure for vulnerable road users, which include children and persons with impaired mobility/senses. The provision of such infrastructure will be to the benefit of these groups.**

There would be no adverse socio-economic impact from the actions within the plan asprovision of active travel infrastructure will also support travel for low income groups who often do not have access to a vehicle.

Likewise the Plan does not have any implications on Human Rights or the Rights of Children.

If you have answered "maybe" or "yes" to any of the Stage 1 questions above then proceed to complete the Stage 2 Integrated Impact Assessment questions below.

If you have answered "no" to the Stage 1 questions above then provide the details below and submit to [email]

Lead Officer for developing the contract	Diane Anderson
Other people involved in the screening (this may be council staff, partners or others i.e. contractor or community)	Elaine Penny
Date	16 October 2023

STAGE 2: INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Brief description of the affected service

1. Describe what the service does:
   The Transportation Service is responsible for Road Safety.
   Road Safety is a statutory duty and the Council is obliged under the Road Traffic Act 1988 (Section 39) to prepare and carry out a programme of measures designed to promote road safety and prevent accidents. It is further recommended that each Local Authority produce a Road Safety Plan which sets out the strategy for improving safety and identifies clear targets. In this instance the targets are informed by the Scottish Government Road Safety Framework to 2030.

   This is the seventh Road Safety Plan for Moray.

2. Who are your main stakeholders?
Road users, by all modes of transport, across Moray.
Road safety partners - Police Scotland, Fire and Rescue Service, NHS Grampian, Transport Scotland

3. What changes as a result of the proposals? Is the service reduced or removed?

There are no changes to the service resulting from the new Road Safety Plan.

4. How will this affect your customers?
 As there is no change to service, there will be no impact on customers.

5. Impact on staff providing the service – None duties with respect to Road Safety remain unchanged.

6. **Please indicate if these apply to any of the protected characteristics**	
Protected groups	**Potential impacts and considerations**
Race	
Disability	An action of plan is to provide more active travel infrastructure to support movement by walking, wheeling and cycling. The needs of mobility and visually impaired road users will be taken into account in the design of this infrastructure.
Carers (for elderly, disabled or minors)	
Sex	
Pregnancy and maternity (including breastfeeding)	
Sexual orientation	
Age (include children, young people, midlife and older people)	An action of plan is to provide more active travel infrastructure to support movement by walking, wheeling and cycling. The needs of road user, (children, young people, midlife and older people) will be taken into account in the design of this infrastructure.
Religion, and or belief	
Gender reassignment	
Inequalities arising from socio-economic differences	An action of plan is to provide more active travel infrastructure to support movement by walking, wheeling and cycling. This is a benefit as persons with a low income are less likely to have access to a vehicle.

Human rights

List of convention rights	Describe, where applicable, if and how specific rights are engaged
Article 5: Right to liberty and security	
Article 6: Right to a fair trial	
Article 8: Right to respect for private and family life, correspondence and the home	
Article 10: Freedom of expression	
Article 11: Freedom of assembly and association	
Article 12: Right to marry	
Article 14: Prohibition of discrimination (in relation to the convention rights)	
Article 1 of Protocol 1: Protection of property	
Article 2 of Protocol 1: Right to education	
Article 3 of Protocol 1: Right to free elections by secret ballot	

Children's Rights and Wellbeing

Relevant articles – UNCRC	
Article 2 – Non discrimination	
Article 12 – Respect of the views of the child	
Article 3.1 – Best interest of the child	
Article 6.2 – Right to survival and development	

7. Evidence. What information have you used to make your assessment?

Performance data	

Internal consultation	This is the seventh Road Safety Plan for Moray. Internal consultation and consultation with key stakeholders/partners (e.g. Police Scotland) has been part of the development of this plan.
Consultation with affected groups	No direct consultation has been undertaken. However the provision of active travel infrastructure is part of the Active Travel Strategy which has been the subject of public and stakeholder consultation.
Local statistics	Accident data
National statistics	Accident data
Other	

8. Evidence gaps

Do you need additional information in order to complete the information in the previous questions?

No

9. Mitigating action

Can the impact of the proposed policy/activity be mitigated? Please explain

Proposed active travel infrastructure will support travel by foot, cycle, wheeling by vulnerable road users including mobility/visually impaired persons, children and young people, midlife and older people.

The design of this infrastructure will take into consideration the needs of these groups.

10. Justification

If nothing can be done to reduce the negative impact(s) but the proposed policy/activity must go ahead, what justification is there to continue with the change?

SECTION 3 CONCLUDING THE IIA

Concluding the IIA

1. No potential negative impacts on any of the protected groups were found.	X
2. Some potential negative impacts have been identified. The impacts relate to:	
Reducing discrimination, harassment, victimisation or other conduct prohibited under the Equality Act 2010	
Promoting equality of opportunity	
Fostering good relations	
3. The proposals interfere with human rights and/or the rights of the child	
4. Negative impacts can be mitigated the proposals as outlined in question 8	
5. The negative impacts cannot be fully mitigated but are justified as outlined in question 9.	
6. Further consultation with affected groups is needed.	
7. It is advised not to go ahead with the proposals.	

Decision:
Set out the rationale for deciding whether or not to proceed with the proposed actions:
An action in the Road Safety is to provide active travel infrastructure which would be utilised by users with protected characteristics (Disability and Age). An individual Equalities Impact Assessment will be undertaken as individual schemes are developed to seek to maximise the benefits of each scheme for these user groups.

Date of Decision: 16 October 2023

Sign off and authorisation:

Service	Transportation
Department	Economic and Commercial Services
Policy/activity subject to IIA	
We have completed the integrated impact assessment for this policy/activity.	Name: Diane Anderson Position: Senior Engineer Transportation Date: 16 October 2023
Authorisation by head of service	Name: Nicola Moss Position: Head of Environmental and Commercial Services Date:16 October 2023
Permission to publish on website -	
Please return this form to the Equal Opportunities Officer, Chief Executive's Office.	

REPORT TO: ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND INFRASTRUCTURE SERVICES COMMITTEE ON 18 JUNE 2024

SUBJECT: CONSULTATION RESPONSE HITRANS DRAFT REGIONAL TRANSPORT STRATEGY

BY: DEPUTE CHIEF EXECUTIVE (ECONOMY, ENVIRONMENT AND FINANCE)

1.   REASON FOR REPORT

1.1   To inform the Committee of the recently published draft Hitrans Regional Transport Strategy and the consultation for the draft strategy.

1.2   This report is submitted to Committee in terms of Section III (F) (15) To exercise all functions of the Councils as Roads Authority including safety, the detailed planning, design and construction, improvement, maintenance and lighting of roads, bridges and other structures and excluding street naming functions [see Section III (E)(6) above]. (16) To exercise the functions of the Council under the Roads (Scotland) Act 1984 and other relevant legislation. (17) To deal with traffic and transport management functions, including the preparation and implementation of traffic management schemes. (18) To exercise the function of the Council in relation to public passenger transport under the Transport Act 1985.

2.   RECOMMENDATION

2.1   **It is recommended that Committee approve the Moray Council Response to the Highlands and Islands Transport Partnership (Hitrans) Draft Regional Transport Strategy.**

3.   BACKGROUND

3.1   Moray Council is a partner of the Hitrans Regional Transport Partnership. Hitrans have developed a draft Regional Transport Strategy which sets out a 20-year vision for transport improvements across the region. This report is a brief overview of the draft Hitrans Regional Transport Strategy which reflects the National Transport Strategy and Moray Council's recent Transport plans such as the Active Travel Strategy and Action Plan and Road Safety Plan to 2030, approved by Economic and Development Committee on 14 November 2023 (para 5 of the Minute refers).

3.2 Moray Council Officers and Councillors have been involved in the development of the draft strategy over the past couple of years as a partner of Hitrans. A Moray Councillor (Cllr Amber Dunbar) sits on the Board and the Strategic Transport Services Manager acts as a professional advisor. Hitrans do a lot of work with Moray Council in terms of raising issues at a National level and working proactively and in partnership with staff in terms of funding, procurement and making best use of resources, in many of our projects such as our m.connect app and active travel initiatives.

3.3 The draft vision is:
"Our transport networks and services will act to realise the economic potential of our region through reducing the actual and perceived impacts of distance, poor resilience and low population density. By doing this, they will facilitate economically and socially valuable activities for all, provide equality of opportunity, enable people to live active and healthy lives and allow our region to contribute fully to the national net zero emissions target."

3.4 There are six objectives of the strategy. The strategy will provide the strategic framework for the development of transport in our region.
The six objectives are:

1. Make a just transition to a post-carbon and more environmentally sustainable transport network;
2. Transform and provide safe and accessible connections between and within our city, towns and villages to enable walking, wheeling and cycling for all;
3. Widen access to public and shared transport and improve connectivity within and from/to the region;
4. Improve the quality and integration of public and shared transport within and from/to the region;
5. Ensure reliable, resilient, affordable and sustainable connectivity for all from/to our island, peninsular and remote communities;
6. Improve the efficiency, safety and resilience of our transport networks for people and freight and adapt to the impacts of climate change.

3.5 These objectives reflect Moray Council's Corporate Plan, the Active Travel Strategy and Action Plan and draft Road Safety Plan to 2030 which were approved by this Committee at its meeting on ? November 2023 (paragraphs 5 and 6 of the minute refers)

3.6 There are 11 themes, and each theme has several policies underneath it.

3.7 A copy of the draft Regional Transport Strategy is available in **Appendix 1** and a copy of the full consultation response is available in **Appendix 2**.

3.8 The consultation response states support for most of the draft Regional Transport Strategy. The consultation response is neutral where it does not affect the Moray Council area. For example, ferries for the Islands.

3.9 The exceptions to this are:

a) A recommended response that strongly agrees with the Policy ST7a "The RTS restates our support for the full dualling of the A9 and A96, with early prioritisation of the Elgin and Keith bypasses to dual carriageway standards, following the already committed Inverness to Wester Hardmuir scheme."

b) A response which disagrees with the policies ST8j and ST8k (around alignment on parking management and parking enforcement) stating that Moray Council would like to continue to be able to decide what is appropriate for Moray in terms of parking restrictions, cost of parking and enforcement.

4   **SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS**

(a)   **Corporate Plan and 10 Year Plan (Local Outcomes Improvement Plan (LOIP))**

The draft Regional Transport Strategy links to the Corporate Plan. Our young people grow up safe, well-educated and reach their full potential. People lead healthy lives and have access to quality care when they need it. Our businesses and communities prosper. Our natural environment thrives for the betterment of all and the priorities; Tackle Poverty and Inequality, Build Stronger Greener Vibrant Economy and Build thriving, resilient, empowered communities.

(b)   **Policy and Legal**
There are proposed new transport policies for the region within the draft Regional Transport Strategy and this report is a consultation response to them.

(c)   **Financial implications**
There are no financial implications at present within this report as it is a consultation response to a draft strategy.

(d)   **Risk Implications**
There are no risk implications within this report.

(e)   **Staffing Implications**
There are no staffing implications within this report.

(f)   **Property**
There are no property implications relating to this report.

(g)   **Equalities/Socio Economic Impact**
There are no equalities/socio economic impacts arising from this report but if the strategy is implemented there could be a positive impact on equalities and access to transport. Integrated Impact Assessments have previously been carried out for Moray Council's Road Safety Plan and Active Travel Strategy, which link into this draft Regional Transport Strategy. The responsibility for determining the need / carrying out an IIA for the Regional Transport Strategy itself sits with HITRANS.

(h)   **Climate Change and Biodiversity Impacts**

There are no climate change biodiversity impacts arising from this report but if the strategy is implemented there could be positive impacts on the environment through a reduction in carbon emissions from transport.

(i) **Consultations**

The Depute Chief Executive (Economy, Environment and Finance), Head of Environmental and Commercial Services, Legal Services Manager, Chief Financial Officer, Climate Change Officer, Community Support Unit
Manager, Equalities Officer and L Rowan, Committee Services Officer have been consulted and their comments incorporated into this report.

5. **CONCLUSION**

5.1 **This report is a brief overview of the draft Hitrans Regional Transport Strategy. The draft strategy reflects the National Transport Strategy and Moray Council's recent Transport plans such as the Active Travel Strategy and Action Plan and Road Safety Plan to 2030, approved by Economic and Development Committee on 14 November 2023 (para 5 of the Minute refers). It is recommended that this Committee approves this consultation response in Appendix 2.**

Author of Report: Kelly Wiltshire, Strategic Transport Services Manager

Background Papers: Hitrans Draft Regional Transport Strategy

Ref: SPMAN-524642768-1112

HITRANS Regional Transport Strategy

Draft Regional Transport Strategy

On behalf of the **Highlands and Islands Transport Partnership**

Document Control Sheet
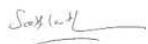
Project Name: **HITRANS Regional Transport Strategy**

Project Ref: 330610615

Report Title: Draft Regional Transport Strategy

Date: 17th January 2024

	Name	Position	Signature	Date
Prepared by:	Stephen Canning	Senior Associate		09/01/24
Reviewed by:	Scott Leitham	Director, Transport Planning		11/01/24
Approved by:	Stephen Canning	Senior Associate		17/01/24
For and on behalf of Stantec UK Limited				

Revision	Date	Description	Prepared	Reviewed	Approved
v.2.0	26/03/24	Draft for consultation following HITRANS comments			
vFINAL	18/04/24	Minor amendments to draft for consultation			

This report has been prepared by Stantec UK Limited ('Stantec') on behalf of its client to whom this report is addressed ('Client') in connection with the project described in this report and takes into account the Client's particular instructions and requirements. This report was prepared in accordance with the professional services appointment under which Stantec was appointed by its Client. This report is not intended for and should not be relied on by any third party (i.e., parties other than the Client). Stantec accepts no duty or responsibility (including in negligence) to any party other than the Client and disclaims all liability of any nature whatsoever to any such party in respect of this report.

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RTS Foreword – HITRANS Chair – Cllr Uisdean Robertson

The Highlands and Islands Regional Transport Strategy 2008-2022 (RTS) was approved by Scottish Minsters in 2008. It was informed and influenced by widespread public and stakeholder consultation. The RTS, projects and themes from the associated Delivery Plan, set out the key policies and proposals required to deliver our vision for transport in the region. Much of the core policy framework and strategic direction of the RTS and its vision and objectives remain valid today with a focus on a prosperous economy and on inclusive, connected and healthy communities. However, there have been several changes to the policy, economic, societal and environmental contexts within which our Partnership now operates, and these are reflected in our updated Draft RTS.

The Scottish Government published its updated the National Transport Strategy in 2020. This sets out four key priorities to support it vision: reducing inequalities; taking climate action; helping deliver inclusive economic growth; and improving our health and wellbeing. At its heart is the *Sustainable Investment Hierarchy* which is now being used to inform future investment decisions and ensure transport options that focus on reducing inequalities and the need to travel unsustainably are prioritised. It also highlights a need to focus on maintaining and safely operating existing assets, taking due consideration of the need to adapt to the impacts of climate change.

It is in this context that HITRANS and other Regional Transport Partnerships have been updating their Regional Transport Strategies. Our Draft RTS seeks to ensure that these national outcomes are supported whilst also reflecting the local opportunities and challenges within the HITRANS region. Our overarching Vision underpinning the Strategy is that that **our transport networks and services will act to realise the economic potential of our region through reducing the actual and perceived impacts of distance, poor resilience and low population density. By doing this, they will facilitate economically and socially valuable activities for all, provide equality of opportunity, enable people to live active and healthy lives and allow our region to contribute fully to the national net zero emissions target.**

In developing the Strategy and through an initial public consultation last year on the 'Case for Change' report, we have already agreed a series of objectives against which our transport problems and options for addressing them have been assessed. The Draft Strategy on which we are now consulting considers the options identified in the Preliminary Options Appraisal under **11 Strategy Themes, with each theme containing a set of individual policies.**

In responding to this consultation, we are keen to hear your views on each of these themes and whether we have the correct policies to address the transport problems and challenges that have been identified. We encourage as many individuals and organisations to respond as possible. While we are keen to hear your views on all aspects of the Draft Strategy, we realise that this is an extensive document so would encourage you to ensure that in responding you highlight those areas that you feel are most important to both you and for the wider region.

RTS Introduction

The original Regional Transport Strategy (RTS) was published in 2008. We refreshed the Strategy in 2018 but following the publication of a new National Transport Strategy in 2020, our Members considered it appropriate that we undertake a full update of our own Strategy to ensure it reflected the current policy landscape and wider regional priorities.

The development of the draft RTS has followed a staged process and we have already completed the '*Case for Change'* following a public consultation on a draft that sought initial views on our proposed Vision and Strategy Objectives. Subsequently, we undertook a *Preliminary Options Appraisal* report that appraised a long-list of options that had been identified to address the transport problems in our region. Each stage has also been informed by a multi-stage Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA), Equalities Impact Assessment (EqIA) and Island Communities Impact Assessment (ICIA).

We are now undertaking an **eight-week** statutory public consultation on the Draft Regional Transport Strategy. The Draft RTS has placed shortlisted options into 11 themes with each containing a set of policies to address the transport challenges and problems in the Highlands and Islands. The final Strategy will provide the strategic framework for the development of transport in our region for the next 20 years. It is necessarily a comprehensive document requiring relevance to both immediate issues but also those medium to longer term challenges that will take many years to address.

Following the review of the public consultation, HITRANS will seek Ministerial approval of the finalised Regional Transport Strategy, at which point we will also publish a Delivery Plan that will set out our priorities for implementing the Strategy. The Delivery Plan will be updated regularly, providing an opportunity to reset or realign priorities to the changing political, social, environmental and economic landscape.

Our work to date and early engagement with key stakeholders has highlighted a number of priority areas that the Draft Regional Transport Strategy seeks to address.

Firstly, the challenge of ensuring the reliability and resilience of our existing transport networks and services let alone an improvement is increasingly evident. Severe weather events have closed or disrupted our transport services with closures impacting the strategic network not just at known areas of weakness such as the Rest and Thankful on the A83 but at multiple locations throughout the region and with an increasing frequency. Our Draft RTS highlights the need for all levels of government to work collaboratively and innovatively to better address and mitigate these challenges.

Similarly, we have seen increasing pressures on our lifeline ferry networks. The introduction of Road Equivalent Tariff has seen significant success in growing demand for travel on the Clyde and Hebrides Ferry Services (CHFS) network. However, that this success was not reinforced with the timeous replacement of new vessels to replace life expired tonnage or to increase frequency and has left a perception that this increased demand for travel on the network is a bad thing. The impact of the eagerly anticipated six new major vessels into the CHFS fleet will help address many of the recent significant resilience challenges that have so heavily impacted the lives of islanders across the HITRANS region.

However, there are many wider challenges impacting ferry services beyond the need for new tonnage on the CHFS network. HITRANS has recently produced a report on the severe capital and revenue pressures faced by those local authorities - Argyll and Bute, Highland, Orkney and Shetland – that operate ferry services. HITRANS has also recently responded to the consultation on the CHFS3 contract, highlighting a number of strategic changes which we and our local partners feel are required to ensure that the future investment and operation of services delivers for the communities it serves. The opportunity to fundamentally change how

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we provide and operate services to our islands (and remote peninsular communities) must be grasped.

The Draft RTS reiterates our support for the early delivery of several committed transport improvements in our region. These include the dualling of the A9 and A96. We have recently written to the Cabinet Secretary highlighting our Board's support for the early prioritisation of the Inverness to Auldearn section and bypasses of Elgin and Keith that will provide an opportunity to transform the centres of these two towns and that of Nairn with the removal of the congestion and heavy goods traffic that they currently have to accommodate. Investment in these key arteries and other sections of the strategic network that are still not constructed to a suitable standard for the function they perform is essential for addressing issues relating to road safety, driver frustration, journey reliability and perceptions of remoteness, and in doing so, will help realise the economic potential of the Highlands and Islands. The A82 and A83 perform similar functions for the West Highland and islands economies, transporting the goods and visitors to this region but also providing the connectivity necessary for our residents and businesses to thrive. We would like to see the designed scheme for Tarbet to Inverarnan progressed and a solution found for the negative economic and environmental impacts that heavy strategic traffic are having on both Fort William and Oban. Recent work has highlighted the value of the goods transported on our regional strategic network to the Scottish and UK economies. We would like to see an expansion of support for projects that enable the transfer of freight movements from road to rail and sea such as those funded through the Timber Transport fund and Tesco in Inverness, but in many areas the road network remains the only viable means of transporting heavy goods.

In addition to these traditionally successful exports, the Highlands and Islands is well placed to benefit from a number of recent economic developments. The huge potential to be realised from ScotWind Leasing – the process of making seabed available for commercial-scale offshore wind projects – is only starting to be realised but has the potential to benefit businesses and communities in the region for decades to come as well as providing a major boost to national clean energy production. With strategic oversight and collaboration there is an opportunity to harness this and other renewable energy in the region to provide a 'Just Transition to Net Zero' that will enable all aspects of the region's economy to benefit from decarbonising.

In 2023, it was announced that Inverness and Cromarty Firth Green Freeport was successful in being awarded Green Freeport status by the Scottish and UK Governments. The primary objective of the public and private partnership is to maximise the local benefits from a pipeline of renewable energy projects which will create business opportunities and employment, attract inward investment, research and development, and position the Highlands at the heart of the country's commitment to becoming a net-zero economy.

When operational, it is estimated that the Green Freeport will attract 10,000 jobs and £3bn of investment. HITRANS has already been engaging with the Freeport and other key stakeholders to understand the transport improvements required to support what will be a step-change in economic investment within the area and enable the wider Highland economy to benefit.

There is now a recognition across public and private stakeholders that transport networks and services need to urgently decarbonise and HITRANS has been at the forefront of projects to realise the regions renewable energy surplus. HITRANS is now the lead partner of the Sustainable Aviation Test Environment (SATE) project. SATE, which is based at Kirkwall Airport, is the UK's first low carbon test location at an operational airport.

The project and its partners show emerging technologies along with real-world potential scenarios that seek to highlight the environmental, social and economic contribution sustainable aviation can make. Similarly, through the FASTER ERDF project we have worked with partner Local Authorities to roll out EV charging Infrastructure in the West Highlands and islands. We will continue to work with public and private partners to develop electric, hydrogen and other innovative alternative fuelled options that can decarbonise all modes of transport in our region.

Our consultation and engagement to date has highlighted the increasing challenge our residents face in accessing healthcare within our region. On a number of transport services including some air links, passengers accessing healthcare can make up the majority of passengers. The centralisation of healthcare provision into a number of specialised facilities has resulted in increased journeys and the cost of accessing healthcare for both patients and their families. HITRANS will seek to work with the NHS, local authorities and transport providers to improve the options available to patients and reduce the need to travel wherever possible.

While the expansive geography and low population density of our region can involve travelling longer distances to access employment and key services, the vast majority of trips are, even in most rural areas, within walking or cycling distance. Indeed, the HITRANS region has the highest cycle to work rates of any region and individual settlements such as Elgin and Inverness the highest levels for any large town or city in Scotland respectively. We welcome the Scottish Government's recent move to provide more direct funding for active travel infrastructure to our local authority partners and the funding of Regional Transport Partnerships to encourage people to travel sustainably through the utilisation of behaviour change funding. We are currently developing an ambitious programme of interventions for 2024/25 that will see the roll out of cycle parking to key trip generators across the region and the expansion of the HI-Bike e-bike hire scheme within Inverness and Fort William and into Elgin.

We have highlighted the increasing challenge to the resilience of our rail network from climate change but there are also significant opportunities for rail to tackle many of the underlying transport challenges in our area. Transport Scotland's Route Map to reducing car kilometres by 20% by 2030 has highlighted that a small number of longer journeys account for a disproportionate percentage of total car kilometres. Enhanced, reliable and affordable rail services and reduced journey times on key inter-urban routes offer an opportunity to encourage significant modal shift on journeys both within our area but also improved connectivity to the major urban centres in Scotland and the rest of the UK. For this to be realised we need to see continued investment in expanding the electrification of the network into our area. HITRANS was a key stakeholder in the new Inverness Airport Station and will continue to make the case for investment in the redevelopment of Inverness Station which is a Strategic Transport Projects Review 2 priority.

Improving the integration of transport services is another consistent theme which initial public consultation has highlighted. Integration covers a myriad of different issues but at its heart is the need for the public to have both confidence to undertake public transport journeys with multiple legs with the security that they will reach their destination on time and, when there is disruption, information on alternative arrangements is available. Improving transport Integration is also about addressing the ease and cost of purchasing multi-modal journeys. With the support of the Scottish Governments MaaS Investment Fund, HITRANS has developed the award-winning Go-Hi app which allows users to find, book and pay for all of their travel in and around the Highlands and Islands of Scotland in one place. We have also developed and made available the Demand Responsive app Moove Flexi, which allows passengers to book journeys on flexible services and track their progress in real-time. This has seen passenger numbers grow on each service where it has been deployed including in Moray, where under the successful m.connect brand it offers the first council wide demand responsive transport service. We have also provided and operate over 150 real-time information displays at key interchanges and bus stops and produce static at-stop information for over 2,000 stops across the region. We are keen to expand the provision of these services in partnership with local authorities and operators.

The most effective way to improve integration is often by increasing the frequency of services which reduces the waiting time and pressure on connecting services. HITRANS, recently published a paper on Rural Bus Service Support and Funding (March 2021) that identifies some of the challenges which have led to a sharp decline in local bus services across Scotland for the last 15 years or so. Frequency of bus use is, as expected, higher in urban areas where more bus services operate. Much of rural Scotland continues to rely on supported local bus services, and communities are dealing with the reduction and demise of many routes in their areas. The national funding schemes for local bus services in Scotland all

favour urban areas and areas operating with commercial services. HITRANS will continue to articulate the need for dedicated national funding streams for rural transport.

Tourism and visitors to our region have been and remain a linchpin of the local economy in the majority of the HITRANS area. However, its recent growth and the changing way in which people visit has placed severe pressure on local communities and the natural environment in a number of areas. The Draft RTS seeks to promote policies which enable us to provide infrastructure and public transport services that both reduces the impact of visitors but also provides improved connectivity for local residents.

This introduction covers just a small selection of some of the fundamental transport challenges in the Highlands and Islands which we are looking to address with local, regional and national partners in the years ahead. We hope you take the opportunity to consider the Draft Regional Transport Strategy and let us know what you think of the policies which we are proposing.

Executive Summary

Overview

This Regional Transport Strategy (RTS) has been prepared by the Highlands and Islands Transport Partnership (HITRANS), the statutory Regional Transport Partnership for much of the Highlands and Islands covering the entire council areas of Comhairle nan Eilean Siar, Moray Council, Orkney Islands Council, The Highland Council and Argyll and Bute Council (Helensburgh and Loch Lomond excepted, which are covered by Strathclyde Partnership for Transport, SPT). A map of our region is provided below:

Figure ES1: Our RTP area

As an RTP, our core function under the Transport (Scotland) Act 2005 is to produce an RTS for our region. The RTS sets out the transport needs of our region, identifies the practical means of addressing these needs and sets out how transport will be provided, developed,

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maintained, improved and operated. This Strategy has been prepared to fulfil this requirement and replaces our previous RTS which was published in 2008.

Our new RTS sets the strategic framework for the development of transport in our region over the next 20 years. Its aim is to deliver a transport system that contributes to the priorities of the National Transport Strategy 2 (NTS2) through reducing inequalities, taking climate action, delivering inclusive economic growth and improving health and wellbeing.

How have we approached the preparation of our new RTS?

Our new RTS has been prepared in accordance with the Transport Scotland RTS development guidance (2006), the revised (2022) Scottish Transport Appraisal Guidance (STAG) and all relevant legislative and policy requirements. The RTS itself marks the final step in a three-stage process which involved the delivery of a:

- **'Case for Change Report'**, published in early 2023, which detailed the transport problems that need to be considered in the RTS and the RTS Strategy Objectives which will underpin it.
- **Preliminary Options Appraisal Report**, produced in summer 2023, which generated, developed, packaged and appraised options which could address the identified transport problems.

The outputs from the 'Case for Change' and Preliminary Options Appraisal have been directly incorporated into this RTS, as shown in the figure below:

Project commences • March 2022 → Case for Change Report • February 2023 → Preliminary Appraisal Report • August 2023 → Draft Regional Transport Strategy • April 2024

Strategic Environmental Assessment, Equalities Impact Assessment and Island Communities Impact Assessment

RTS development process and timeline

The preparation of our new RTS has also been informed by a multi-stage **Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA), Equalities Impact Assessment (EqIA) and Island Communities Impact Assessment (ICIA)**. These standalone and independent processes set out how relevant environment, equalities and islands considerations were considered within the RTS development process. SEA, EqIA and ICIA assessments of the Draft RTS accompany this document.

Our RTS Vision and Strategy Objectives

Vision

Our RTS Vision is an expression of the type of region that we want the HITRANS region to be and how transport can contribute to achieving that for everyone. It has been developed to reflect national policy and legislation, most notably the commitment to net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2045, but at the same time reflects the very distinctive character of our region. The Vision provides an overarching context within which our RTS Strategy Objectives can sit and provides a long-term focus for HITRANS and our constituent members.

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> Our transport networks and services will act to realise the economic potential of our region through reducing the actual and perceived impacts of distance, poor resilience and low population density. By doing this, they will facilitate economically and socially valuable activities for all, provide equality of opportunity, enable people to live active and healthy lives and allow our region to contribute fully to the national net zero emissions target.

RTS Strategy Objectives

The RTS Strategy Objectives: (i) provide the bridge between the transport problems in our region and the outcomes that we are seeking through our RTS; and (ii) express how our RTS Vision will be realised. In order to ensure that the process of setting RTS Strategy Objectives was both systematic and rigorous, a seven-step bottom-up approach was adopted.

The RTS Strategy Objectives define the outcomes that we are trying to achieve through the RTS. Emerging from 'Step 6' of the above referenced process, they are an aggregation of individual Transport Planning Objectives (TPOs) set in relation to each specific transport problem identified in the Transport Problems Framework. The Strategy Objectives are therefore:

Strategy Objective 1: To make a just transition to a post-carbon and more environmentally sustainable transport network.

Why? – Scotland has a target to achieve net zero carbon emissions of all greenhouse gases by 2045 and transport is a key sector in terms of such emissions, accounting for 20% of territorial emissions (CO_2e) across the region[1]. The transport networks and services in our region must adapt to fulfil this target in a fair and equitable way whilst also being developed in as environmentally sustainable a way as possible. The process must also recognise the needs of all groups through a 'Just Transition'.

Strategy Objective 2: To transform and provide safe and accessible connections between and within our city, towns and villages, to enable walking, wheeling and cycling for all.

Why? – to allow everyone to walk, wheel and cycle more, leading to more local living patterns, greater inclusion, affordable transport, healthier lifestyles, and reduced car use – the latter leading to reduced emissions / noise etc and improved road safety.

Strategy Objective 3: To widen access to public and shared transport and improve connectivity within and from / to the region.

Why? – to give people in the HITRANS region new travel choices, allowing them to: (i) use accessible and affordable public or shared transport options to make journeys they previously could not make; or (ii) to use public or shared transport instead of the car - this leading to lower levels of car use and reduced emissions / noise etc., as well as improved road safety. This objective is also important in encouraging inclusive economic growth by widening labour markets and providing improved accessibility to employment opportunities by public transport.

Strategy Objective 4: To improve the quality and integration of public and shared transport within and from / to the region.

Why? – to make public and shared transport in the HITRANS region more attractive and competitive with car-based travel and to ensure the accessibility needs of all groups are accommodated. This will improve the travel experience for existing public transport users and

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[1] Derived from https://www.data.gov.uk/dataset/723c243d-2f1a-4d27-8b61-cdb93e5b10ff/uk-greenhouse-gas-emissions-local-authority-and-regional

encourage people to use public or shared transport instead of the car, leading to lower levels of car use and reduced emissions / noise etc, improved road safety and will support the social benefits associated with shared transport.

Strategy Objective 5: To ensure reliable, resilient, affordable and sustainable connectivity for all from / to our island, peninsular and remote communities.

Why? – some of our island and peninsular communities have suffered from pronounced connectivity difficulties in recent years. This has had wide-ranging impacts on these communities and this objective recognises the need to tackle this issue, in tandem with Strategy Objective 4. Delivering this objective will provide the foundation for the long-term sustainability and success of these vulnerable communities, including through helping meet the needs of people with protected characteristics and by tackling socio-economic disadvantage.

Strategy Objective 6: To improve the efficiency, safety and resilience of our transport networks for people and freight and adapt to the impacts of climate change.

Why? – our transport systems must be safe and able to adapt to changing demands (e.g., tourism patterns, trade etc) and be resilient in the face of climate change. This objective is important in allowing the society and economy of our region to prosper and to reduce inequalities of outcome associated with socio-economic disadvantage.

RTS Themes and Policies

Following the completion of the Preliminary Options Appraisal, the shortlisted options were aggregated into **11 Strategy Themes**. The RTS Themes have been used to shape the content of the RTS, with each theme containing a set of individual policies therein.

Strategy Theme 1: Transforming our communities and reducing the impact of transport upon them

Strategy Theme 2: Connecting our communities

Strategy Theme 3: Enhancing public transport connectivity to / from: (i) Inverness; (ii) our sub-regional centres; and (iii) Scotland's other cities and beyond

Strategy Theme 4: Improving the integration, quality of and access to public and shared transport

Strategy Theme 5: Providing connectivity that supports our island and peninsular communities

Strategy Theme 6: Improving the efficiency of transport networks and supply-chains and reducing their impact on our communities

Strategy Theme 7: Improving the safety, reliability and resilience of our road and rail networks

Strategy Theme 8: Facilitating sustainable visitor travel demand

Strategy Theme 9: Decarbonising our transport, mitigating the effects of climate change

Strategy Theme 10: Embracing new technologies

Strategy Theme 11: Reducing the cost of travel, particularly for those most in need

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The Strategy Themes are summarised below, together with the inherent policies.

Strategy Theme 1: Transforming our communities and reducing the impact of transport upon them	
Improving the public realm and mobility within settlements by reducing the dominance of the private car and maximising opportunities for walking, wheeling and cycling	
Policy ST1a	The RTS supports the principle of **reallocating road space**, including parking, from general traffic. This should support placemaking to shape improved walking, wheeling and cycling opportunities in our communities as a means to promote safe active travel and encourage use of active travel modes. Reallocation of road space should avoid any negative impacts on bus services.
Policy ST1b	Where traffic in settlements is reduced by investment in road infrastructure, **road space reallocation** should be undertaken as an integral component of that investment.
Policy ST1c	The RTS supports the principle of **traffic calming and speed limit reductions** and enforcement where this is the wish of our communities, including on the Trunk Road network.
Policy ST1d	The RTS supports measures to **reduce road-based severance** in our communities.
Policy ST1e	The RTS recognises the challenges presented by the impacts of increasing **abnormal load movements** across the region. It calls for a coordinated approach to be taken to ensure that appropriate planning and mitigation is put in place as part of the planning process for new developments that will generate such movements.
Policy ST1f	The RTS supports **greater consistency (in 'like-for-like' locations) of parking management across our region**, including payment mechanisms, parking information and enforcement.
Policy ST1g	The RTS supports the principle of improving the management and enforcement of **traffic and parking around schools**, including *School Streets* (a road outside a school with temporary restriction on motorised traffic at school drop-off and pick-up times).
Policy ST1h	The RTS supports the prioritisation of **new development** in locations that are in proximity to key services and already well-served by active travel and public transport.
Policy ST1i	The RTS supports the **local delivery of public services**, including health and education, and other day-to-day retail and personal services (e.g., banking) which minimise the need to travel.
Policy ST1j	The RTS supports the integration of active travel, public transport and shared mobility into the **planning of all new developments**. New development proposals should be required to outline how they will connect into the local active travel and public transport networks.
Policy ST1k	The RTS supports the concept of '**infrastructure first**' in relation to major developments across our region.
Policy ST1l	The RTS recognises the centrality of **environmental considerations**, particularly biodiversity enhancements and nature networks, within the planning and decision-making process.

Strategy Theme 2: Connecting our communities	
Facilitating walking, wheeling and cycling within settlements and improving active travel connections between them.	
Policy ST2a	The RTS supports transformational investment in the improvement of our existing **active travel networks** to make these accessible to all.
Policy ST2b	The RTS supports the reinstatement and expansion of a network of **strategic and local traffic free / quiet walking, wheeling and cycling routes** to connect communities across and beyond our region.
Policy ST2c:	The RTS supports the expansion of the **National Cycle Network** to all parts of the region.

Strategy Theme 2: Connecting our communities	
Policy ST2d	Our active travel infrastructure should be designed to a high standard in accordance with the most up-to-date **best practice and regionally appropriate design standards** (as this evolves) to meet the needs of all users.
Policy ST2e	The RTS supports the **integration of active travel and public transport connections** within our communities.
Policy ST2f	The RTS promotes the adoption of measures outlined in the *Sustainable Travel to Stations Strategy* with respect to access to railway stations.
Policy ST2g	The RTS seeks the implementation of initiatives which widen **access to bicycles and e-bicycles**, including e.g., promoting ownership, expansion of bicycle share and hire and provision of new 'first mile, last mile' cycling opportunities.
Policy ST2h	The RTS supports the upgrade and new provision of **bicycle parking and facilities** at all public buildings, transport interchanges and key on-street locations within the region.
Policy ST2i	Our **active travel network** should be developed, presented and promoted in a more coherent, recognisable and integrated way for regular, occasional and new users of the network, including visitors.

Strategy Theme 3: Enhancing public transport connectivity to / from: (i) Inverness; (ii) our sub-regional centres; and (iii) Scotland's other cities and beyond	
Distance, topography, geography and low population density currently limit public transport connectivity within much of the region. This Strategy Theme is focused on improving public transport connectivity for journeys within, to and from the region through expanding the transport network, providing additional connections and making journeys quicker.	
Policy ST3a	The RTS supports measures to reduce **social exclusion** for those without access to a car.
Policy ST3b	The RTS recognises that the **decline in bus passenger numbers in the region needs to be reversed** and supports measures to extend service coverage, improve frequencies, lengthen the operating day and make the network more integrated.
Policy ST3c:	The RTS supports measures to **reduce bus journey times** both between and within settlements in the region, including through the provision of bus priority measures.
Policy ST3d	The RTS supports innovative **alternatives to fixed route bus services** where these can be affordably provided.
Policy ST3e	The RTS recognises the role which **community transport and Demand Responsive Transport** (DRT) plays in our most rural communities and supports its expansion and integration with timetabled services.
Policy ST3f	The RTS supports measures to widen the **awareness and use of community transport, DRT and EDRT** amongst all members of society.
Policy ST3g	The RTS recognises the **role of taxis** as a key element of transport provision in the region where community transport, DRT and EDRT services are not provided.
Policy ST3h	The RTS recognises that **rail journey times** to, from and within the region are typically longer than elsewhere in Scotland, and therefore supports measures to reduce these journey times.
Policy ST3i	The RTS supports the commitment to **electrify the Highland Mainline** as an opportunity to reduce rail journey times and improve reliability as part of the overall decarbonisation of the network.
Policy ST3j	The RTS recognises that very low rail service frequency often makes rail uncompetitive with the car and therefore supports measures which would facilitate **increased rail service frequency**, particularly between Inverness and Aberdeen, Edinburgh and Glasgow.
Policy ST3k	The RTS promotes and supports the development of **additional local rail services** focused on our regional centres.

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Strategy Theme 3: Enhancing public transport connectivity to / from: (i) Inverness; (ii) our sub-regional centres; and (iii) Scotland's other cities and beyond	
Policy ST3l	The RTS supports **infrastructure measures** which would enable increased service frequency, such as the electrification of the Highland Mainline, Aberdeen to Inverness and improvements to the signalling system.
Policy ST3m	The RTS supports the planning and delivery of **new railway stations**, including innovative solutions proportionate to the location, subject to the development of an appropriate business case.

Strategy Theme 4: Improving the integration, quality of and access to public and shared transport	
Addressing the barriers to travel by public transport, including interchange within and between modes, physical barriers for those less able and poor-quality facilities and travel information	
Policy ST4a	The RTS supports measures that will improve **integration within and between modes of transport** at key locations and transport interchanges in order to provide new travel options and alternatives to the private car, recognising the constraints within which this is possible (e.g., delivering school bus services).
Policy ST4b	The RTS supports **integrated ticketing measures** to simplify travel and improve the passenger experience.
Policy ST4c:	The RTS supports the adoption of contract conditions for tendered and supported services that **encourage operators to work in partnership** to improve integration, timetable planning and coordination.
Policy ST4d	The RTS supports the provision and enhancement of **mobility hubs** across the region, in line with a hierarchy reflecting local requirements.
Policy ST4e	The RTS supports measures which will enable people to **leave their bicycle in a secure environment** at a bus stop / station, railway station, ferry terminal or airfield.
Policy ST4f	The RTS supports, where practical, the provision of increased **bicycle capacity on public transport** services within the region.
Policy ST4g	The RTS supports the simplification of the process of **taking a bicycle** both to and onto a bus or train.
Policy ST4h	The RTS supports more widespread journeys which **combine bicycle and public transport**.
Policy ST4i	The RTS supports the provision of consistent standards of **facilities at bus stations and bus stops** reflecting location and usage.
Policy ST4j	Our bus network should be **safe, secure and fully accessible** to all.
Policy ST4k	Our bus network should provide a high-quality and consistent **onboard experience**.
Policy ST4l	Travel on buses to, from and within the region should, where possible, **enable meaningful working time**.
Policy ST4m	The RTS supports the provision of **more consistent standards** of facilities at railway stations, reflecting station usage.
Policy ST4n	Our railway network should be **safe, secure and fully accessible** to all.
Policy ST4o	The RTS supports the continuation and expansion of the ***Scotland's Railway* Adoption Programme** and other measures to enhance the station environment.
Policy ST4p	Our ferry network should be **safe, secure and fully and easily accessible** to all. This includes both shore-to-vessel access and movement around the vessel itself.
Policy ST4q	The RTS recognises that there is not a short-term solution to the accessibility issues with the Argyll and Bute and Orkney inter-island air services. We will keep abreast of developments in technology and **new aircraft types** and, in the meantime, continue to work with partners to support alternative options such as the Scottish Ambulance Service.

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Strategy Theme 4: Improving the integration, quality of and access to public and shared transport	
Policy ST4r	The RTS supports sufficient provision and better enforcement of **Blue Badge parking** across the region.
Policy ST4s	The RTS recognises the important role of **taxis** as part of the overall transport mix in the region. It supports partnership working with licencing authorities and taxi providers to raise standards of provision where required and to facilitate the expansion of the network.
Policy ST4t	The RTS supports the provision of **taxi services** which are fully accessible in terms of booking and vehicle access.
Policy ST4u	A key component of making travel accessible to all, the RTS supports measures to **remove barriers to travel**, including increased staff training, passenger chaperones and the provision of physical and online travel information in accessible formats.
Policy ST4v	The RTS supports the maintenance and expansion of at-stop / at-station multi-modal **real-time information**.
Policy ST4w	The RTS promotes the **simplification and consolidation of travel planning** and in-journey information to make travel easier for less frequent users.
Policy ST4x	The RTS supports the further development of the **GO-HI travel app**.
Policy ST4y	The RTS supports the provision of up-to-date **physical travel information** at bus stops, and the removal of out-of-date information.
Policy ST4z	The RTS calls for improved **cross-provider digital connectivity** across the region to facilitate access to travel information for all (including in-car information), enable meaningful working time when travelling by public transport and to help reduce the need to travel where possible.

Strategy Theme 5: Providing connectivity that supports our island and peninsular communities	
Improving the connectivity and reducing the peripherality of island and peninsular communities through improved ferry and air services, and potentially fixed links	
Policy ST5a	The RTS supports the provision of longer **daily time on-mainland and on-island** where this is required for the long-term sustainability of a community.
Policy ST5b	The RTS supports the provision of services which minimise the requirement for one or more **overnight stays**.
Policy ST5c:	Where practicable, the RTS supports the operation of **additional sailings** on the supported ferry networks within the region.
Policy ST5d	The RTS supports year-round **seven-day connections** for island and peninsular communities where this is required for the long-term sustainability of a community and enjoys public support.
Policy ST5e	The **booking and ticketing** arrangements for ferry services in the region should support the convenience and efficiency of travel for all.
Policy ST5f	The RTS calls for the earlier opening of **ferry booking systems** and increased transparency around the release and management of vehicle deck space.
Policy ST5g	The RTS supports the principle of **Road Equivalent Tariff** (RET). However, where service frequency permits, controlled use of peak times / surge pricing could be used to help manage demand, recognising that this would need to be at no net detriment to the connectivity of island and peninsular communities.
Policy ST5h	The RTS supports operational measures which maximise the efficient management of **vehicle deck space** on sailings.
Policy ST5i	The RTS supports measures to improve **door-to-door journeys** through enhancing active travel, public transport and shared mobility connections to and from ferry terminals, combined with other measures to reduce the need to take a car onboard.

Strategy Theme 5: Providing connectivity that supports our island and peninsular communities	
Policy ST5j	The RTS recognises the long-term underfunding of vessels and infrastructure in the region and strongly calls for fleet and **infrastructure modernisation** to address issues of reliability and resilience.
Policy ST5k	The RTS calls for the development of a regularly maintained ***Vessels and Infrastructure Planning Pipeline*** across all publicly supported ferry networks in Scotland.
Policy ST5l	The RTS supports an increase in the overall **fleet size** and the **inter-operability** of that fleet and supporting infrastructure to strengthen resilience.
Policy ST5m	The RTS supports the principle of **increasing capacity** through frequency rather than larger vessels.
Policy ST5n	The RTS calls for an objective consideration of the **design characteristics of future vessels** for all routes, including hull form and the provision of crew accommodation.
Policy ST5o	The RTS supports the introduction of new **low or zero emissions vessels** to replace life-expired tonnage. This should be done in line with the NTS2 *Sustainable Investment Hierarchy*.
Policy ST5p	With the vessel and infrastructure replacement cycle, the RTS supports measures to **reduce journey times** for our island communities. This includes providing direct sailings rather than via another island (where this is the preference of the local community) and consideration of new ferry terminal locations that reduce crossing distances.
Policy ST5q	The RTS supports **harbour infrastructure** improvements ahead of life expiry where this could contribute to a material improvement in reliability.
Policy ST5r	The RTS supports the **conversion of the remaining Lo-Lo routes** in the region to Ro-Ro where there is community support.
Policy ST5s	The RTS supports the further development of the Highlands and Islands' **air network**.
Policy ST5t	The RTS supports the further development of **commercial external routes**, particularly to London Heathrow and other international hub airports, that support the economic competitiveness of the region.
Policy ST5u	The RTS supports the retention of the **PSO air network** within the region and, where alternative travel choices are inadequate, its further expansion. 'Adequate' in this context refers to the ability to achieve an affordable daily return to / from a national centre.
Policy ST5v	The RTS supports the operation of **additional connections and flights** on the PSO air networks within the region, whether delivered by existing, additional or new low emission aircraft.
Policy ST5w	The RTS supports more **direct flights** rather than via another island.
Policy ST5x	The RTS supports the adoption of **technological and infrastructure solutions** which would improve the reliability and frequency of inter-island air services.
Policy ST5y	The RTS supports the principle of **fixed links** where they represent value for money and are supported by the island or peninsular community. Any fixed link should be implemented in conjunction with improved public transport connectivity and incorporate provision for active travel.
Policy ST5z	The RTS supports the consideration of **tolling** where this would assist in making the case for a **fixed link**. The use of vehicle number plate recognition technology could allow local residents to travel for free.

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Strategy Theme 6: Improving the efficiency of transport networks and supply-chains and reducing their impact on our communities	
Many supply-chains in the region are marginal and face challenges not found elsewhere in Scotland, working around ferry connections for example. This Strategy Theme is focused on enhancing the efficiency of supply-chains and identifying means for improving their environmental sustainability.	
Policy ST6a	The RTS supports the principle of new dedicated or high-capacity **freight vessels** on freight intensive routes.
Policy ST6b	The RTS supports the formalisation and extension of the carriage of **unaccompanied trailers** to a wider range of routes.
Policy ST6c:	The RTS supports the operation of dedicated **freight sailings**, either by contracted or commercial operators where there is demand and it is operationally deliverable.
Policy ST6d	The RTS supports moves towards greater simplification and consistency in the setting of **ferry freight fares** across the region, recognising that this would be achieved over the medium-term.
Policy ST6e	The RTS supports **infrastructure measures** which will enable the growth of rail freight to and from the region.
Policy ST6f	The RTS supports infrastructure investment and funding initiatives which will enable the growth of **waterborne and air** freight to, from and within the region.

Strategy Theme 7: Improving the safety, reliability and resilience of our road and rail networks	
Weather, geological instability and very limited diversion opportunities make resilience a key issue in the region, whilst safety is a primary concern on many of the main road routes. This Strategy Theme is therefore focused on improving the safety, reliability and resilience of transport networks within the region.	
Policy ST7a	The RTS restates our support for the full **dualling of the A9 and A96**, with early prioritisation of the Elgin and Keith bypasses to dual carriageway standards, following the already committed Inverness to Wester Hardmuir scheme.
Policy ST7b	The RTS calls for incremental improvements to our **road network** where there are safety, efficiency and environmental benefits, including in relation to single track roads.
Policy ST7c:	The RTS supports the expansion of **50mph HGV speed limits** across the Trunk Road network in the region.
Policy ST7d	The RTS supports the provision of improved **overtaking opportunities** on our roads, especially where there are known problems with vehicle platooning which can cause driver frustration.
Policy ST7e	The RTS calls for investment in our regional road network where there are regular and sustained **periods of disruption** due to weather and / or geological instability.
Policy ST7f	The RTS recognises the increasing vulnerability of our region's **road network** to severe weather events linked to **climate change** and supports capital and revenue measures to mitigate this.
Policy ST7g	The RTS recognises the increasing vulnerability of the **railway network** to severe weather events linked to **climate change** and supports capital and revenue measures to mitigate this.
Policy ST7h	The RTS supports the continued provision and expansion of **real-time travel information** for motorists and public transport users through existing and emerging platforms.
Policy ST7i	The RTS recognises that many parts of our region's road network are in poor condition. It calls for **enhanced preventative and remedial road maintenance** to ensure the safe, reliable and efficient movement of people and goods and the delivery of services across our region.

Strategy Theme 7: Improving the safety, reliability and resilience of our road and rail networks	
Policy ST7j	Investment in our road network should continue to have an overarching focus on **safety** with a view to reducing road traffic casualties in accordance with *Scotland's Road Safety Framework to 2030.*
Policy ST7k	To address **risks which are particular to roads in our region**, the RTS supports: enhanced advisory signage; ongoing public information campaigns around the use of single-track roads; provision of additional safe motorist services and HGV rest areas; and information campaigns for visitors driving left-hand drive vehicles.
Policy ST7l	The RTS specifically supports the improvement or removal of **priority junctions on higher speed trunk roads**, especially for right-turning traffic.
Policy ST7m	The RTS calls for increased provision of **level boarding at stations** across the region, which will reduce station dwell times.
Policy ST7n	The RTS supports the provision of additional **sections of double track** (or static or dynamic passing loops where double track does not represent value for money) to improve punctuality.
Policy ST7o	The RTS supports infrastructure and timetable improvements external to the region which will improve the **reliability of services** to / from Inverness, Fort William, Oban and Mallaig.

Strategy Theme 8: Facilitating sustainable visitor travel demand	
Responding to the challenges arising from the significant seasonal influx of tourists to the region, often in the areas least well-placed to accommodate it	
Policy ST8a	The RTS supports the further development of **long-distance walking, wheeling and cycling** routes (including the National Cycle Network), recognising the visitor, economic and local benefits offered.
Policy ST8b	The RTS supports the development of **active travel connections** to our ports, airports and regionally important railway stations.
Policy ST8c:	The RTS supports the development of **active travel connections** to our key tourism destinations where this would be a realistic option for some visitors.
Policy ST8d	Where there are concentrations of international tourists, including cruise passengers, the RTS supports the provision of enhanced local travel information and coordination to **improve visitor experience** and reduce impacts on local networks.
Policy ST8e	The RTS supports the operation and promotion of **additional local rail services** to key tourism destinations.
Policy ST8f	The RTS supports the provision of **additional rail carriages** on existing services in peak season, where feasible.
Policy ST8g	The RTS supports the principle of **flexible timetabling** where this can co-exist with regular services for local residents.
Policy ST8h	The RTS supports the principle of expanded **open access rail services** where these can be accommodated at no disadvantage to scheduled services.
Policy ST8i	The RTS supports the principle of **sustainably accommodating visitor demand** whilst maintaining or increasing visitor numbers.
Policy ST8j	The RTS supports the introduction of additional **parking restrictions** and greater enforcement of existing traffic orders at tourist honeypots as a tool to encourage improved access to these locations by public transport or active modes and to address indiscriminate and dangerous parking.
Policy ST8k	Where new or increased **parking charges** are introduced, this should be done in combination with improved visitor facilities, including e.g., parking provision, public toilets etc.

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Strategy Theme 8: Facilitating sustainable visitor travel demand	
Policy ST8l	Whilst recognising the benefits of **motorhome and campervan-based tourism** in our region, the RTS acknowledges that it can impact negatively on our communities at certain times of the year. The RTS therefore supports measures to ensure that this demand is sustainably accommodated.
Policy ST8m	Whilst recognising the benefits of **cruise tourism** in our region, the RTS recognises that catering for this demand can negatively impact on our communities. The RTS therefore supports measures to ensure that this demand is more sustainably accommodated.
Policy ST8n	The RTS supports measures which would allow the benefits of **cruise tourism** to be more evenly distributed around the region.
Policy ST8o	The RTS supports the principle of **bespoke bus services** aimed at tourists to address excessive car-based demand at honeypot locations.
Policy ST8p	The RTS recognises that high volumes of tourist traffic are impacting the **condition of some roads** in our region and that increased central government funding is required that reflects this increased pressure on local transport infrastructure, to support an enhanced repair and maintenance programme.
Policy ST8q	The RTS recognises that **high volumes of tourist traffic** can lead to slow and inefficient journeys and therefore supports measures to address this.

Strategy Theme 9: Decarbonising our transport, mitigating the effects of climate change	
Supporting the decarbonisation of transport through the adoption of zero emission vehicles, vessels, and aircraft	
Policy ST9a	The RTS supports the implementation of measures which facilitate the **decarbonisation of the public transport vehicle fleet** within the region, including commercial vehicles, buses and community transport, rail rolling stock, aircraft and ferries.
Policy ST9b	The RTS recognises the opportunities brought about by the **availability of renewable energy** in our region, including locally produced green hydrogen. The transport fleet mix and associated infrastructure should reflect this.
Policy ST9c:	The RTS supports the development of **vehicle pooling and vehicle sharing services** across the region to reduce the need for personal car ownership.
Policy ST9d	The RTS calls for the **expansion of EV charging infrastructure** to support the decarbonisation of all vehicle based travel in our region.
Policy ST9e	The RTS recognises the challenges of distance, topography, climate and short winter daylight hours to the rollout of battery electric powered commercial vehicles and seeks **low or zero emission solutions appropriate to our region**, and which capitalise on the surplus energy production within our region.
Policy ST9f	The RTS supports the roll-out of other **alternative fuels** to promote the decarbonisation of our transport networks, ports, ferry terminals, airports and airfields.

Strategy Theme 10: Embracing new technologies	
Capitalising on innovations in new technology	
Policy ST10a	The RTS embraces the opportunities provided by **new technologies** to improve the provision of transport infrastructure and services across the region.
Policy ST10b	The RTS supports consideration of the provision of future **innovative personal transport** within the design of our active travel network and mobility hubs.
Policy ST10c:	The RTS supports the principle and further development of **Mobility-as-a-Service** as the technology evolves, particularly through our Go-HI app.
Policy ST10d	The RTS supports opportunities for the more widespread adoption of **Connected and Autonomous Vehicles** and autonomous buses, whilst recognising the challenges posed in our region.

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Strategy Theme 11: Reducing the cost of travel, particularly for those most in need	
Improving the connectivity and reducing the peripherality of island and peninsular communities through improved ferry and air services, and potentially fixed links	
Policy ST11a	**Transport poverty** is a complex, dispersed and often hidden problem in our region. The RTS commits to define and evidence this problem and identify appropriate actions to be delivered by HITRANS and our partners.
Policy ST11b	Recognising that, for many in our region (and especially those living in our island communities), transport costs account for a high proportion of household income, the RTS supports a **reduction in public transport fares** and the introduction of payment plans for multi-journey tickets.
Policy ST11c:	The comparative costs of public transport mean that residents and visitors to the region often **choose to travel by car**. The RTS therefore supports a reduction in the cost differential between travelling by public transport and car.
Policy ST11d	The RTS supports in principle the roll-out of **Road Equivalent Tariff** to any ferry routes on which it does not currently apply, including local authority services.
Policy ST11e	The RTS calls for greater cross-industry partnership working and regulatory reform to reduce the **cost penalty for interchange** within or between modes of transport.
Policy ST11f	The RTS calls for the extension of the **National Concessionary Travel Scheme** and Under-22s Concessionary Travel Scheme to rail, ferry and air services where these are the main or only mode of public transport in an area.
Policy ST11g	The RTS calls for the retention and expansion of the **Air Discount Scheme**, including to businesses in the region.
Policy ST11h	**National road pricing proposals** may emerge in response to the reduction in fuel duty and Value Added Tax as a result of the mass adoption of electric vehicles. If this eventuality materialises, the RTS calls for a road pricing system that recognises the unique characteristics of our region.

RTS Action Plan

Subsequent to the adoption of the RTS, an accompanying **Action Plan** will therefore be developed. This will state the actions that we will take to progress the RTS and the timeframes within which each action will be progressed. The Action Plan will contain a combination of proposed appraisals / business cases, research studies, projects and programmes. It will focus on **actions that are regionally significant in nature** - i.e., those which are large scale or cross-boundary, either between authorities within our region or between our region and other RTP areas. Local issues will be a matter for the Local Transport Strategies of our constituent members.

Unlike the RTS itself, which provides a circa 20-year strategic framework, the **Action Plan will be regularly reviewed and updated** to reflect the changing status of projects, their differing stages in the project lifecycle and the need for new or amended actions to support a policy (e.g., in response to the emergence or development of new technology).

Governance

An early action upon adoption of our RTS that we would like to pursue is to undertake a regional governance review, in partnership with our constituent local authorities Transport Scotland and other key regional partners. This will build on our submissions to the Local Governance Review and consider both how we deliver the RTS and how funding is allocated to the region and disbursed. Once complete, we will submit our analysis to Scottish Ministers for consideration and, subject to approval, seek to implement the recommendations over the first RTS Action Plan period.

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1   Introduction

1.1   Highlands and Islands Transport Partnership

1.1.1   The Transport (Scotland) Act 2005 created the framework for Regional Transport Partnerships (RTPs), recognising the need for cross-boundary transport strategy, planning and delivery. This was intended to address the long-running issue whereby, following the abolition of the regional tier of government, there was a gap between national and local transport planning, leading to inconsistencies and inefficiencies at the regional level.

1.1.2   We, the Highlands and Islands Transport Partnership (HITRANS), are the statutory RTP for much of the Highlands and Islands covering the council areas of Comhairle nan Eilean Siar, Moray Council, Orkney Islands Council, The Highland Council and much of Argyll and Bute Council (Helensburgh and Loch Lomond excepted, which are covered by Strathclyde Partnership for Transport, SPT). A map of our region is shown below in which it is divided into **18 'travel-to-work areas'** (TTWAs) defined by the Office of National Statistics, together with the main localities in the region in gradations from **500 persons** upwards:
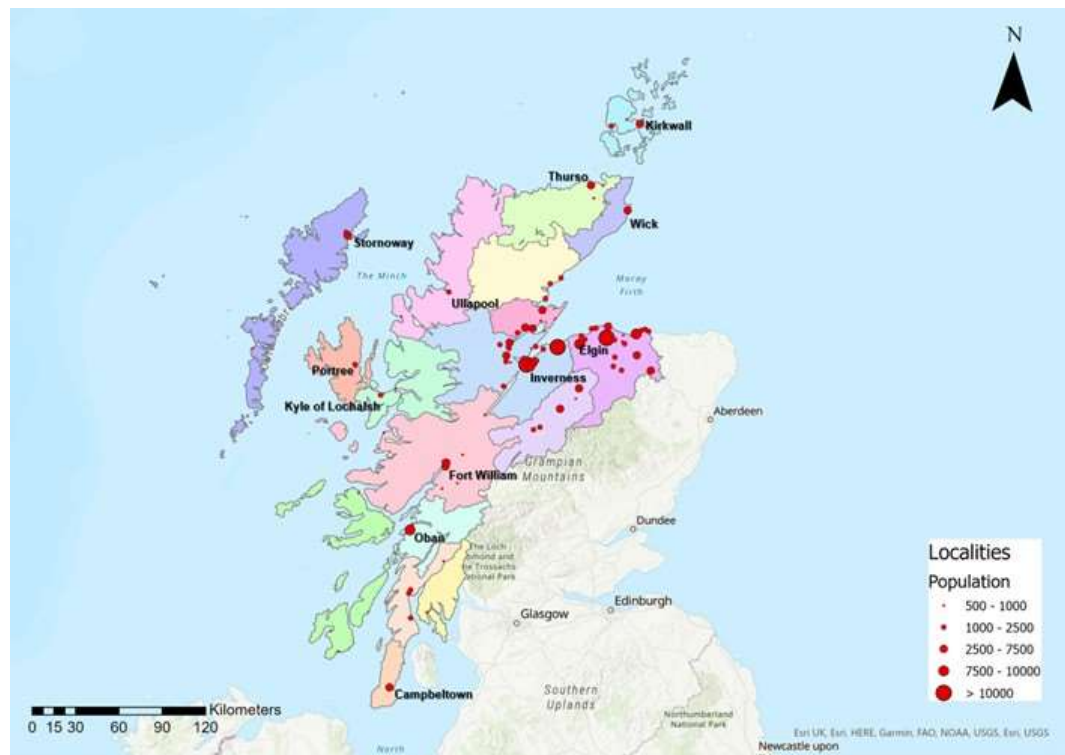
Figure 1.1: Our geographic coverage – TTWAs and localities populations (Source: Office for National Statistics)

1.1.3   The concentration of the largest settlements around the Inner Moray Firth and the Cromarty Firth is very clear from this graphic. However, even with this higher overall concentration, the only localities with a (2020) population of greater than 10,000 are Inverness including Culloden (63,730), Elgin (25,040) Fort William (10,260) and Nairn (10,190). Indeed, the **distances from major population centres of much of our region is one of its defining features**. Our region is also highly diverse, containing a mixture of islands, remote mainland, rural and urban areas. It includes the fast-growing city of Inverness and other major administrative centres such as Elgin and Oban, island 'capitals' such as Kirkwall and Stornoway, larger islands with their own service centre (e.g., Mull) and remote islands with populations of fewer than 100 people.

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1.1.4 Our **region is large**, accounting for around half of Scotland's land mass. It includes long indented coastlines as well as mountainous areas. It also has over 50 permanently inhabited islands. These physical features act as barriers to the movement of people and goods. Routes can be slow and / or circuitous, increasing the time and cost of travel.

1.1.5 Delivering a safe, efficient and reliable transport network requires partnership working and a recognition of the unique challenges posed by geography, topography, weather and low population density. Our role is to foster such partnership working, drawing together our constituent members and other partners to develop, maintain and deliver a coherent transport strategy for our region.

1.2 Our Regional Transport Strategy

1.2.1 The core function of Scotland's seven RTPs is to produce a Regional Transport Strategy (RTS). The guidance for the development of an RTS states, in summary, that the RTP must *seek to identify the present and future transport needs of the region, practical means of addressing these needs, and set out how transport in the region will be provided, developed, improved and operated so as to: promote safety; enhance social and economic well-being; promote sustainability; conserve and enhance the environment; promote social inclusion and equal opportunities; improve access to healthcare; and foster integration between modes and with cross-boundary routes*.

1.2.2 Our **current RTS was first published in 2008 and was refreshed in 2018**, although the refresh was never formally adopted due to changes in the wider policy environment. The Transport (Scotland) Act 2005 states that RTPs should keep their RTS under review and modify or create a new one as necessary. In our view, several factors have combined to make it the right time to produce a new RTS – these include:

- The publication of the new **National Transport Strategy 2** (see Chapter 2) in 2020 has refocused transport policy at the Scotland-level, and our RTS must align with this

- Alongside this, the **Climate Change (Emissions Reduction Targets) (Scotland) Act 2019** has committed to the delivery of net zero emissions by 2045. In particular, the Climate Change Plan Update published in December 2020 outlined that, by 2030: (i) *our roads will contain no new petrol or diesel cars or vans*; and (ii) *car kilometres will have reduced by 20%* (relative to 2019 base). In a region such as ours, where travel distances are often long and public transport connectivity limited, it is necessary for our RTS to set out how we can respond to these ambitious targets.

- Whilst our region is particularly vulnerable to climate change, **climate mitigation measures also present an important economic opportunity**. Our region is rich in both established and emerging renewable energy, including offshore and onshore wind, pumped storage hydro and green hydrogen amongst others. It is essential that our transport networks support the construction of renewable energy infrastructure in a manner that does not negatively impact our communities, whilst also connecting labour to the employment generated in both its construction and operation. A key opportunity in this respect is the **Inverness and Cromarty Firth Green Freeport**, which aims to create over 10,000 local jobs and generate over £3 billion in investment in the region.[2]

- The **emergence of new technology** is changing the way that we live and work. This will have consequential impacts on travel both in terms of the **journeys that we make** (e.g., increased remote working and a reduction in business travel) and **how these journeys are made**.

- Our **region has also changed significantly since the publication of the previous RTS**. Technological improvements, a major increase in remote working (particularly post-

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[2] https://greenfreeport.scot/green-freeport-forecasts-more-than-10000-new-jobs-and-3billion-investment-for-the-highlands/

COVID-19) and the evolution of policy have created new business opportunities and promoted in-migration in some locations, whilst domestic and international tourism has grown hugely over this period. This has delivered increased economic benefits overall, but these trends have created new problems such as, for example, a shortage of labour in certain areas and seasonal pressures for those communities most popular with visitors.

- Whilst much has changed, **we also continue to wrestle with many of the long-term challenges which our region faces**, including population decline in many parts of the region, an ageing population and the difficulties and costs associated with delivering services (particularly health, social care and education) to such a geographically dispersed population.

1.2.3 Recognising both the new and long-term transport challenges in our region, **our new RTS sets the strategic framework for the development of transport in our region over the next 20 years**, with the aim of delivering a transport system that reduces inequalities, takes climate action, helps deliver inclusive economic growth, and improves health and wellbeing.

How have we approached the preparation of our new RTS?

1.2.4 Our new RTS has been prepared in accordance with the Transport Scotland RTS development guidance (2006), the revised (2022) Scottish Transport Appraisal Guidance (STAG) and all relevant legislative and policy requirements. The RTS itself marks the final step in a three-stage process which involved the delivery of a:

- **'Case for Change Report'**, published in early 2023, which detailed the transport problems that need to be considered in the RTS and which the RTS Strategy Objectives which will underpin it.

- **Preliminary Options Appraisal Report**, produced in summer 2023, which generated, developed, packaged and appraised options which could address the identified transport problems.

1.2.5 The outputs from the 'Case for Change' and Preliminary Options Appraisal have been directly incorporated into this RTS, as shown in the figure below:

Figure 1.2: RTS development process and timeline

1.2.6 The preparation of our new RTS has also been informed by a multi-stage **Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA), Equalities Impact Assessment (EqIA) and Island Communities Impact Assessment (ICIA)**. These standalone and independent processes set out how relevant environment, equalities and islands considerations were considered within the RTS development process. SEA, EqIA and ICIA assessments of the Draft RTS accompany this document.

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Structure of RTS

1.2.7 The remainder of our RTS is structured as follows:

- **Chapter 2** establishes the policy and planning context within which our RTS has been developed
- **Chapter 3** summarises the main transport problems in our region, drawing on the RTS 'Case for Change' Report
- **Chapter 4** sets out our RTS Vision, Strategy Objectives and Themes
- **Chapters 5-15** describe each of the eleven RTS Themes in detail, setting out the policies which we will be pursue over the lifetime of the RTS
- **Chapter 16** outlines how we will deliver our RTS
- **Chapter 17** outlines how we will monitor the performance of our RTS and evaluate its success over its lifetime

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2 Policy and Planning Context

2.1 Overview

2.1.1 As a bridge between national and local transport policy, our RTS should align with the policy priorities of national government but ensure that these are tailored to our regional and local circumstances. Indeed, as alluded to in Chapter 1, the recent evolution of the policy context has been a principal driver of our decision to develop a new RTS (see **Section 2.2)**.

2.1.2 Allied to the evolving policy environment is the need to ensure that our new RTS reflects the **unique demographic, spatial and socio-economic characteristics** of our region (i.e., the planning context) (see **Sections 2.3 and 2.4 and 'Case for Change' for detail)**.

2.2 Policy context

National policy context

2.2.1 Our new RTS must therefore reflect the prevailing national policy context, most notably **National Transport Strategy 2 (NTS2)**. The NTS2 was published in February 2020 and set the following 'Vision' for Scotland's transport system over the 20-year period to 2040:

"We will have a sustainable, inclusive, safe and accessible transport system, helping deliver a healthier, fairer and more prosperous Scotland for communities, businesses and visitors."

2.2.2 The NTS2 Vision is underpinned by **four** 'priorities', which are shown in the figure below:

Figure 2.1: NTS2 priorities

2.2.3 The NTS2 also established two hierarchies which define how transport investment decision making and services should be planned. These are the *Sustainable Travel Hierarchy* and *Sustainable Investment Hierarchy* and are summarised in the figure below:

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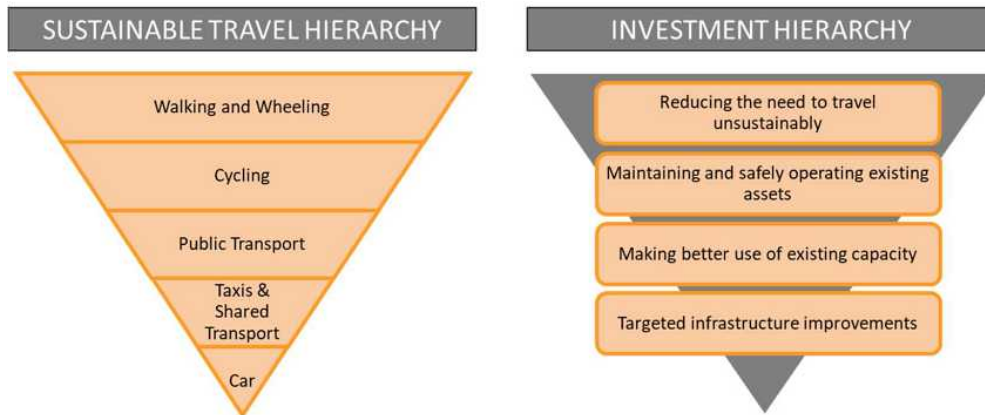
Figure 2.2: NTS2 *Sustainable Travel Hierarchy* and *Sustainable Investment Hierarchy*

2.2.4 Two key points emerge in relation to our RTS:

- In accordance with the **NTS2 *Sustainable Travel Hierarchy***, the RTS themes and their inherent policies should prioritise **active travel and accessible public transport connections** whilst at the same time **discouraging short, single car occupant journeys**

- The **NTS2 *Sustainable Investment Hierarchy*** dictates that investment in new infrastructure should only be considered once a wider package of options to reduce the need to travel, reduce the need to travel unsustainably, optimise use of existing infrastructure and influence travel behaviour or manage demand have been explored

2.2.5 The approach adopted in the NTS2 is focused on delivering Scotland's **legal commitment to deliver net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2045**, but in a manner that reduces inequalities, improves public health and supports a strong and resilient economy. The commitment to net zero allied with NTS2 has in turn generated a number of policies and associated strategies which our RTS must take cognisance of, including:

- The recommendations of the **Strategic Transport Projects Review 2 (STPR2)**, which is the 'delivery plan' for NTS2 with respect to nationally funded strategic infrastructure. Of relevance to our region is the desire to increase active travel provision, reduce the movement of freight on roads and redesign travel to some island communities.

- The policy to **reduce car kilometres by 20% by 2030.** Regional targets have not yet been set but there is an acknowledgement that urban and rural targets and approaches may vary.

- The adopted National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4) sets out plans to increase connectivity through the development of new **20-minute neighbourhoods and improvement of strategic connections between all modes of transport**, adhering to the **'Place Principle'[3]** as far as possible

- Our region covers most of Scotland's islands and our RTS will therefore reflect and, where appropriate, challenge the **National Islands Plan** and provide inputs to future iterations of this Plan

2.2.6 Our RTS will act as a bridge between national and local transport and land-use planning policy. Of particular importance in this respect will be ensuring that the RTS provides a

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[3] The 'Place Principle' requires that all those responsible for providing services and looking after assets in a place need to work and plan together, and with local communities, to improve the lives of people, support inclusive and sustainable economic growth and create more successful places. *National Planning Framework 4* (Scottish Government, 2022), p. 154.

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framework for and contributes positively to the **Local Transport Strategies** and **Local Development Plans** produced by our constituent members.

2.3   The demographic and spatial characteristics of our region

2.3.1   As outlined in the introductory chapter, our region is **unique within the UK**, with long distances from major population centres being one of its defining features for many. However, it is also diverse, containing a mixture of island, remote mainland, rural and urban areas.

2.3.2   For context, the figure below shows the distribution of population across our constituent local authorities in 2021.[4]
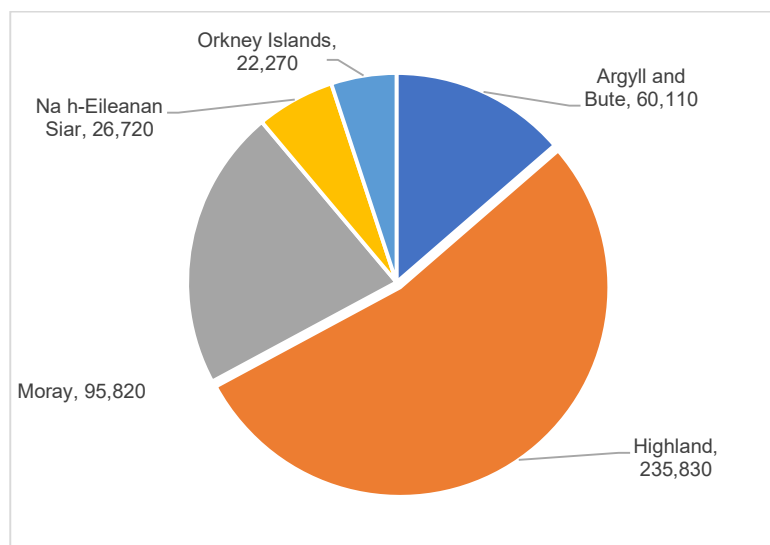
Figure 2.3: HITRANS local authorities' populations (Source: NRS mid-year population estimates)

2.3.3   The estimated total population of the region in 2021 was **440,750** (8% of the Scottish total - living in approaching half of the Scottish landmass), **54%** of whom lived in The Highland Council area. Some **11%** of our residents live in the island groups of the Outer Hebrides (Na H-Eileanan) and Orkney. **Population is heavily concentrated in the Inverness and Elgin TTWAs** (introduced in Figure 1.1), which account for **over 50%** of the total population of the region. All other TTWAs have populations of around 20,000 or less.

2.3.4   Chapter 2 of the 'Case for Change' Report provides an extensive commentary on the demographic and spatial characteristics of our region - key demographic and spatial considerations can be summarised as follows:

- Our region has a higher proportion of **older age groups** and a **lower proportion of working age adults** compared to Scotland as a whole. This is though typical of rural Scotland and implies a greater demand for access to health and care services in particular. There are areas within the region where this is particularly pronounced, such as the 'Dunoon and Rothesay' and 'Golspie and Brora' TTWAs.

- Highland, Moray and mainland Orkney saw significant **in-migration** in the decade prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, a trend which accelerated with changing working patterns post-pandemic (although the permanence of this effect remains to be established). Transport connections are likely to be a factor in determining the **future pattern of in-migration** and will be important in retaining those moving into our region in the longer-term.

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[4] Estimate of HITRANS part of Argyll and Bute (70%)

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- The **population of our region is projected to decline in the medium-term**, with fewer young and working-age people, and more people of pensionable age. This will increase the need to **access health and social care services** and also generate **labour market issues**, potentially with insufficient workers to fill posts in certain areas. The **geography of our region largely precludes 'in commuting'** to fill these posts in some areas. The provision of improved connectivity within and to / from our region will be important in retaining young people and attracting in-migrants.

- **Over half of our region's population is classed by Scottish Government as 'remote' or 'very remote'** whilst around a quarter live in larger settlements (10,000+). Our region is therefore very diverse and our RTS needs to address the needs of some of Scotland's most geographically remote communities through to those living in the city of Inverness.

- Inverness is the **primary employment, retail and service centre for much of our region**, albeit there are several regionally important service centres such as Lochgilphead, Kirkwall, Elgin and Stornoway.

2.4 The socio-economic characteristics of our region

2.4.1 Geography is again a defining factor in shaping the economy of our region – key socio-economic characteristics can be summarised as follows (and are detailed at length in the 'Case for Change' Report):

- Reflecting the rural nature of much of our region, **car ownership rates are higher than the Scotland average**. This implies a high degree of **car dependence** for many and the requirement to own and run a car **('forced' car ownership)** will undoubtedly have a significant negative impact on some households' finances. Moreover, some households will require a second car if the primary car is away from the property for most or all of some days, given the absence of alternatives in many places.

- Despite its size, our **region is home to less than 10% of Scotland's population**. Many businesses therefore have **a strong outward focus**, selling goods and services externally, ranging from whisky to textiles. Moreover, our region is rich in **natural resources** such as timber and has a significant primary sector, particularly agriculture, forestry and fishing. This means that **transport links with other parts of Scotland and beyond are as important as those within the region itself**. Moreover, our region experiences **high volumes of inbound domestic and international seasonal tourism travel**, particularly post-COVID-19.

- Our region sees **less in the way of extremes of wealth and deprivation than other parts of Scotland**. Nevertheless, there are areas with **pockets of multiple deprivation** in Dunoon, Rothesay, Alness, Balintore, Inverness, Oban and Wick. Deprivation in rural areas is also more dispersed compared to urban areas and frequently 'hidden', in that standard indices often do not fully capture the impact of the higher cost of living and geographic isolation on these communities.

- Large parts of rural HITRANS have some of the highest rates of **second home ownership** in the country. As well as sometimes being an issue for local communities, these houses are likely to generate many mostly car-based trips to and from the area either through the owners' use or as holiday lets. **Car-based tourism is a major contributor to traffic in our region**.

- Even prior to the pandemic, working from home was more common in our region compared to the rest of the country. The **travel-to-work areas generally show high degrees of self-containment**. Inverness is the focus of in-commuting, with nearly 12,000 living outside the area and travelling to work there.

- Providing **access to healthcare** is already a key issue in our region and will become increasingly important as the population profile is projected to age and there is a trend towards service centralisation. This is an issue across many communities in the region

(even in large settlements such as Wick) but those in some island and very remote mainland locations face particular difficulties.

3 Transport problems in our region

3.1 Overview

3.1.1 This chapter briefly profiles the transport network in our region and key recent trends. It thereafter summarises the **transport problems** experienced in our region, which are the building blocks of our new RTS. The transport network and services are profiled in Chapter 4 of the 'Case for Change' Report, where additional detail can be found.

3.2 Transport networks in our region

3.2.1 Our region is unique in the UK in terms of its mix and extent of transport services, ranging from small community operated passenger only ferries and single pilot aircraft through to inter-city rail connections and trunk roads. The two maps which follow show the primary road and rail networks, in both cases also showing ferry connections and airports / airfields[5].

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[5] Note that there is some overlap on the Orkney inter-island air service airfields due to the scale of the map. In summary, there are six island airfields – Eday, North Ronaldsay, Papa Westray, Sanday, Stronsay and Westray.

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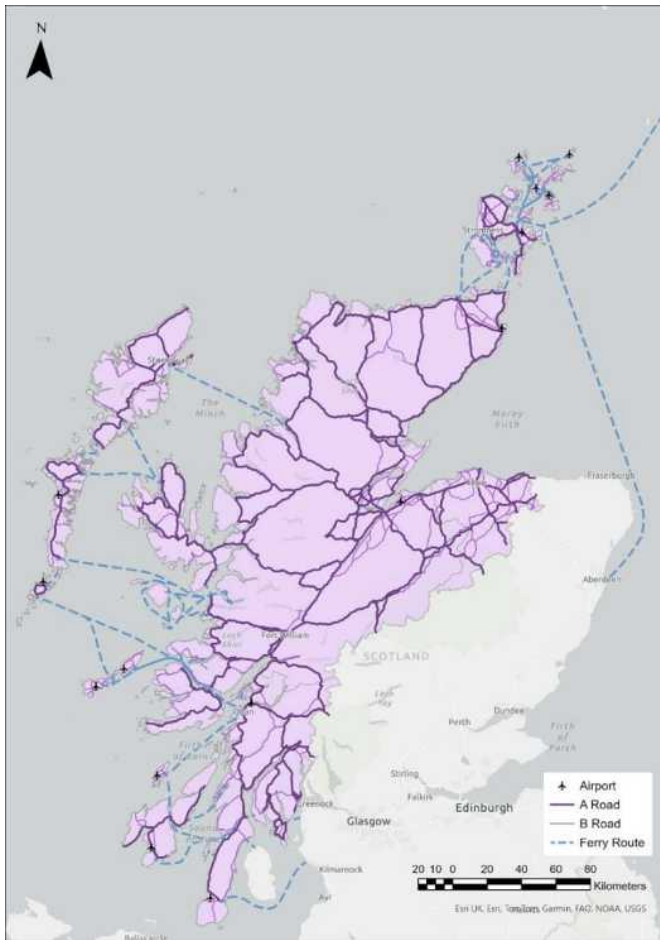
Figure 3.1: HITRANS region road network, ferry connections and airports / airfields
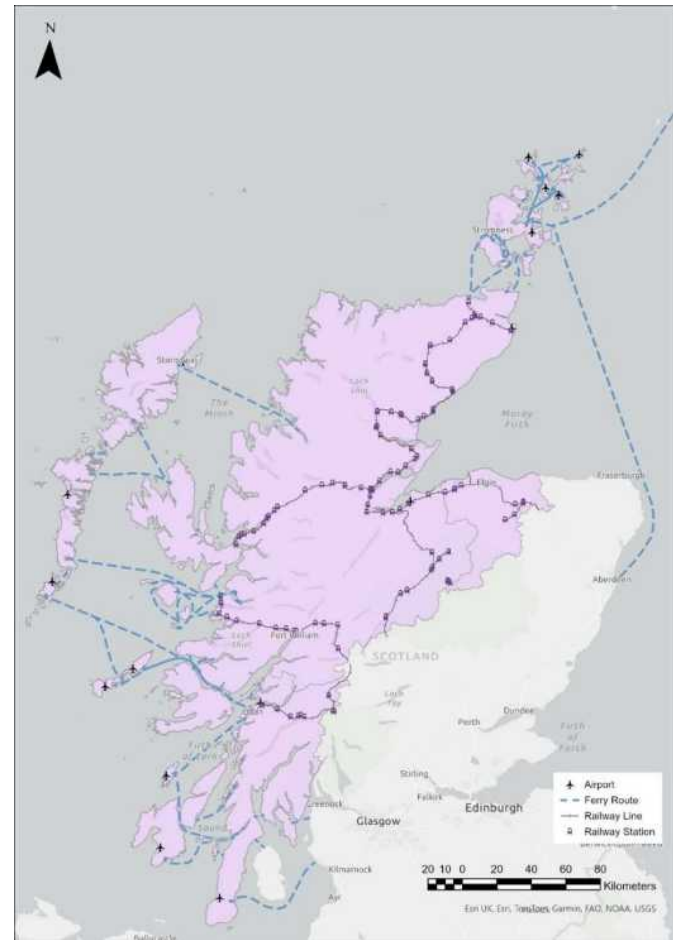
Figure 3.2: HITRANS region railway network[6], ferry connections and airports / airfields

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[6] Includes heritage lines

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3.3 Recent trends

3.3.1 The chart below provides an overview of travel volumes by mode in the decade prior to the COVID-19 pandemic and the years since, all indexed to 2019 for comparative purposes.[7]
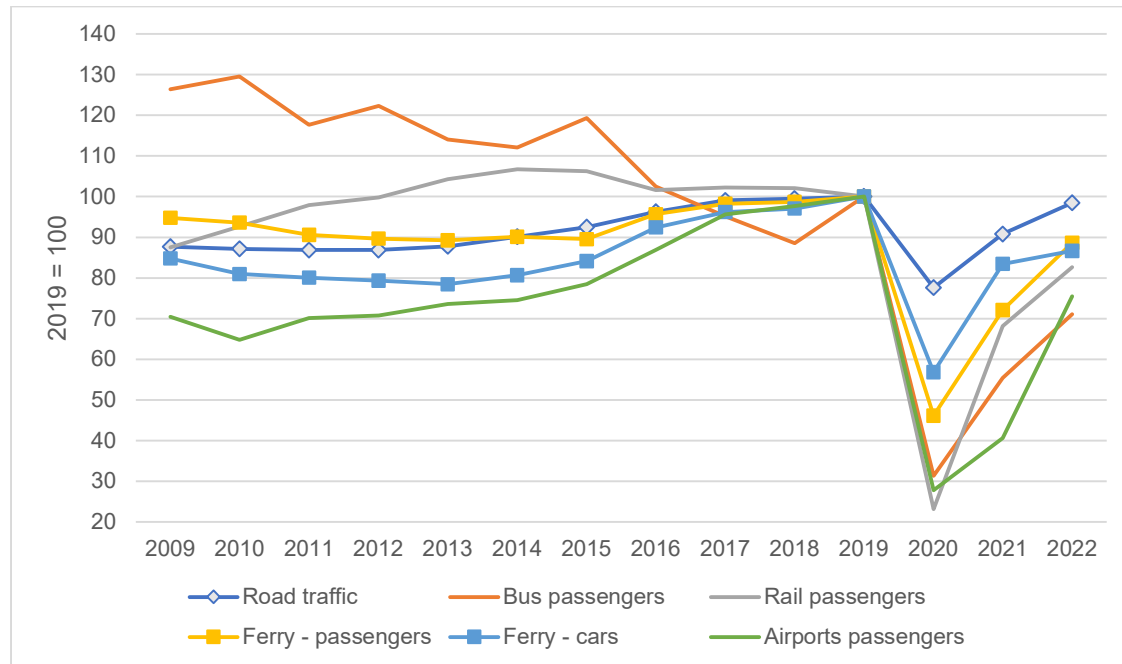
Figure 3.3: Trend in travel by mode in the HITRANS region (2019=100)

3.3.2 The first few years after 2009 saw the aftermath of the financial crash and associated UK recession which explains the dip in most travel. From 2013, road traffic grew steadily until 2019, the last full year prior to the pandemic. Bus travel fell throughout this period though and was **20%** below its 2009 level in 2019. As is common for most trend-based analysis in our region, there is significant variation between and within local authorities. For example, bus patronage in the Orkney Islands has increased slightly over the same period despite the overall decline across our region.

3.3.3 After air travel, car-based ferry travel grew the most over this period at **18%**. It is notable that the growth in car carryings significantly outpaced the growth in passenger carryings at **6%**. Much of this is down to the introduction of Road Equivalent Tariff (RET) across the Clyde and Hebrides Ferry Services (CHFS) network. In air travel, passenger numbers at Inverness Airport grew rapidly by **61%** between 2009 and 2019.

3.3.4 The pandemic of course had a major impact on travel and this is easily seen in the graph. In 2020, road traffic reduced by **22%,** public transport (affected by both lockdowns and social distancing policies / concerns over infection) saw bus travel reducing by **66%** and train by **93%**. Ferry travel was less affected than bus and rail reflecting the 'lifeline'[8] nature of much of

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[7] Road traffic – Vehicle kms in HITRANS local authorities, including all of Argyll and Bute (Scottish Transport Statistics, STS); Bus passengers – Eilean Siar, Highland, Moray, Orkney Islands, Shetland Islands, Argyll & Bute (STS); Rail passengers – ORR Station data (all stations in HITRANS area); Ferry – Argyll and Bute services, CalMac, Highland Council services, Orkney Ferries, NorthLink (excluding Shetland), Western Ferries (STS); Air – terminal passengers at Barra, Benbecula, Campbeltown, Inverness, Islay, Kirkwall, Stornoway, Sumburgh, Tiree, Wick John O'Groats (STS)

[8] 'Lifeline' transport infrastructure is often a single route that connects a community with key destinations. These are ones that need to be accessed for health, employment, education, shopping and leisure; plus services

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this travel, with much of the reduction being attributable to reduced visitor / tourist travel, particularly at Easter and at least the early part of the summer holidays.

3.3.5   By 2022, when all COVID-19 restrictions were being lifted in the early part of the year, rail passenger numbers were **83%** of pre-pandemic levels, bus passenger numbers **71%** and road traffic had fully recovered (although car traffic is down somewhat with commercial vehicle traffic now above pre-pandemic levels). Ferry tarvel was around **90%** of 2019 levels with air travel at **75%**. The long-term impact of the pandemic on travel is therefore still being keenly felt and post-pandemic reductions in public transport services have the potential to particularly impact on groups with protected characteristics.[9]

3.3.6   The Scottish Household Survey (SHS) publishes a range of statistics about travel in Scotland, some of which are disaggregated by RTP area. Analysis of recent trends (between 2012/13 to 2019 (pre-pandemic)) for our region shows:

- **Commuting to work:** an increase in car use and active travel, and a reduction in public transport usage

- **Place of work:** an increase in working from home

- **Travel to school:** a reduction in walking and bus use and an increase in car-based travel

- **Main mode of travel:** an increase in car use and a reduction across all other modes

- **Car availability:** an increase in the proportion of households with two or more cars and a reduction in zero-car households

- **Car use:** an increase in car use and driving licence holding

- **Bicycles:** a small increase in rates of bicycle ownership

- **Walking:** a reduction in walking as a means of transport but an increase in walking for leisure

- **Use of buses and trains:** a reduction in bus and train use

- **Satisfaction with public transport:** a reduction in levels of satisfaction with public transport

- **Concessionary fares:** an increase in the proportion of people with a National Entitlement Card but some reduction in usage amongst holders

- **Distance travelled:** an increase in the distance travelled per person

3.3.7   It is therefore clear that **the majority of these indicators in our region are going in the 'wrong' direction from a policy (and equalities) perspective**, albeit there will again be variation across the region. This clearly presents a range of challenges which the RTS will seek to address.

3.4   Summary of transport problems in our region

3.4.1   The 'Case for Change' sets out at some length the transport problems in our region – these can be summarised as follows:

- **Journey times** for trips between settlements within our region and to / from our region to elsewhere in Scotland are **long** and characterised in places by **low average speeds**. This is true of road, rail and bus and impacts on the productivity and economic competitiveness of our region.

provided by those based elsewhere and the movement of freight. If a lifeline route is unavailable, that community will often be cut off, or in some cases face a long diversionary route.

[9] As defined by the Equality Act 2010

- **Journey time reliability by road** is also relatively poor, affected by vehicle platooning, inclement weather, poor network resilience when incidents occur and limited daylight hours in winter. This is a particular issue for **road freight**, which is sometimes moving high-value and time sensitive products to end customers or forwarding depots, which makes journey time reliability essential.

- **Reliability** more generally is becoming a major issue on almost all **ferry networks** in our region, with **ageing vessels and port infrastructure** breaking down more frequently. These issues compound the **underlying reliability challenges** caused by inclement weather.

- **Public transport frequency** is also generally **very low** outwith the larger settlements and, in most cases, operates over a **shorter day** than would be found elsewhere in Scotland. This acts to **limit access to opportunities** and can lead to the need for expensive **overnight stays**, particularly for those travelling from and to our island communities. Even in Inverness, the first **direct trains** of the day from the Central Belt do not arrive until late morning / early afternoon (10:28 from Glasgow Queen Street and 12:01 from Edinburgh Waverley).

- The **long travel distances**, and in some cases the need to **combine an overland trip with a ferry or air service**, makes travel in our region **more expensive** than elsewhere in Scotland. For **ferry travel**, this is compounded by **differential tariff structures** (passenger, car and freight) between networks and even on some islands within the same network.

- Some roads within our region also suffer from a **poor road safety** record and in particular a high proportion of fatal personal injury collisions. Even on trunk and major A-roads, the network is almost exclusively **single carriageway or single track,** often over difficult terrain with few overtaking opportunities and limited lighting. Several **major roads** such as the trunk A96 Inverness – Aberdeen and A82 Inverness – Glasgow via Fort William also **run through numerous settlements** along their route, making walking, wheeling and cycling in these settlements less safe and attractive.

- **Transport resilience** is also a major issue in our region, more so than anywhere else in the UK. The **road and railway networks** are subject to **extremes of weather** (e.g., snow, flooding etc) and **geological instability** in some locations. In the event of road closures, with few alternative routes, this can lead to **very long diversions** and can have **major negative impacts on the emergency services** (e.g., if an ambulance or fire appliance is located on the 'wrong side' of an accident) and in terms of **service delivery**, such as social care, district nursing etc. The **ferry networks** around our region are also generally operated on fine margins, with **few spare vessels** to cover for increasingly frequent breakdowns, particularly during refit / drydock periods, which themselves are becoming longer.

- With **Inverness acting as our major regional centre** to a widely dispersed hinterland, this generates significant vehicle kilometres and a demand for parking in the city. Moreover, for those travelling from the remotest settlements, public transport journey times are long and services can be infrequent and expensive, particularly given fuel price differentials in more remote areas. Allied to this, many people have to travel increasing distances to access key services as a result of the **centralisation of provision** of facilities, branches e.g., banking, post offices but most evidently healthcare.

- Many of the settlements in our region are **rural**, and our region includes some of Scotland's **most remote communities**. The impact of this is fourfold: (i) **labour markets** are limited in size and in most cases largely self-contained within discrete travel-to-work areas – this can lead to **labour shortages and challenges in matching skills to jobs**; (ii) there is a reliance on the transport network to **connect people to services** (e.g., retail) and vice versa (e.g., social care), but the limitations of the network make such journeys long and expensive; (iii) very low travel volumes make the **delivery of transport services expensive** and, with respect to bus services, **subject to short notice**

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reduction and withdrawal; and (iv) the scope for **active travel journeys** between settlements is limited.

- Connected to the above point is the issue of **transport poverty**, where low service frequency and / or short operating days can act to **limit the ability to access essential services**. Indeed, in some parts of our region, there are no scheduled public transport services at all, leading to **'forced car ownership'**. This can be a '**push' factor in out-migration** in communities which are already fragile.

- The above challenges are compounded by the **extreme winter-summer differentials in travel in Argyll and the Highlands and Islands**. In the summer months, the network has to accommodate day-trippers, staying visitors, motorhomes and cruise passengers, whilst traffic has to be managed at 'honeypot' locations such as Skara Brae in Orkney. A particular feature of tourism in our region is that much of it is drawn towards where the transport infrastructure is least well-placed to support it, e.g., the North Coast 500; the islands, where visitors can consume a significant amount of ferry vehicle capacity; and 'honeypot' locations such as Glenfinnan and the Fairy Pools on Skye. This can lead to **deteriorating road conditions** and the need for increased maintenance.

- A consequence of low population density and public transport frequency is that our region derives a proportionally lower benefit from **national policies and funding streams**, e.g., the National Concessionary Travel Scheme – this is a clear inequality. Moreover, there are **inequalities between areas** within our region associated with anomalies in historic funding and delivery arrangements, the existence of which have little evidential basis. For example, all ferry services in the CHFS network are entirely funded by the Scottish Government, whereas the additional cost of local authority funded ferry services over and above the Grant Aided Expenditure (GAE) settlement from the Scottish Government must be met by local authorities from their own resources (although there are examples of additional government 'top-up' funding being provided).

- The very different nature of the supply of and demand for transport in our region also raises a **question as to how national government policy aspirations should be delivered**. For example, for many essential journeys, there is no realistic alternative but to use the private car, which presents a challenge in terms of delivering the 2045 net zero commitment and the proposed 20% reduction in vehicle kilometres by 2030.

3.4.2   Despite these transport challenges, our region is in many respects thriving like never before. Headline long-term population decline has been checked although this is still an issue in many communities and forecast population loss and ageing remains an issue. There are significant concentrations in growth industries from traditional staples such as, food and drink and tourism to renewables and spaceports. Improved connectivity is providing the opportunity for more people to reduce travel by working from home and enable creative industries to locate within the region; and our region is also at the forefront of piloting renewable fuels, the use of hydrogen fuel cells on the Orkney Ferries' vessel MV *Shapinsay* for example. Continued development and growth are however dependent on the **provision of fast, reliable, safe and resilient transport connections between communities in our region and between our region and elsewhere in Scotland**. Supporting the delivery of these connections is the focus of our RTS.

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4   Our Vision and RTS Strategy Objectives

4.1   Our RTS Vision

4.1.1   Our RTS Vision is an expression of the type of region that we want the Highlands and Islands and Argyll to be and how transport can contribute to achieving that for everyone. It has been developed to reflect national policy and legislation, most notably the commitment to net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2045, but at the same time reflects the very distinctive character of our region. The Vision provides an overarching context within which our RTS Strategy Objectives can sit and provides a long-term focus for HITRANS and our constituent members.

Our transport networks and services will act to realise the economic potential of our region through reducing the actual and perceived impacts of distance, poor resilience and low population density. By doing this, they will facilitate economically and socially valuable activities for all, provide equality of opportunity, enable people to live active and healthy lives and allow our region to contribute fully to the national net zero emissions target.

4.2   Our RTS Strategy Objectives

4.2.1   The RTS Strategy Objectives: (i) provide the bridge between the transport problems in our region and the outcomes that we are seeking through our RTS; and (ii) express how our RTS Vision will be realised. To ensure that the process of setting RTS Strategy Objectives was both systematic and rigorous, a seven-step bottom-up approach was adopted, as summarised in the figure below:

Step 1: Establish and populate a transport problems framework by mode

Step 6: Define a set of strategy objectives reflecting these transport planning objectives

Step 7: Map Strategy Objectives to National Transport Strategy 2 'priorities'

Step 2: Set out resulting problems and the supply side root causes in each case

Step 5: Define a transport planning objective for each transport problem

Step 3: Set out travel behaviour consequences of transport problem

Step 4: Set out societal consequences of travel behaviour consequences

Figure 4.1: RTS Strategic Objectives development process

4.2.2   A description of each individual step in this process is provided in the 'Case for Change' Report. However, we briefly reflect on the 'Transport Problems Framework' (Step 1), as this is the foundation on which our RTS was built.

Transport Problems Framework

4.2.3   Given the geographic, socio-economic, demographic and modal diversity of our region, it was essential that the approach to setting the RTS Strategy Objectives was rigorous and systematic. To this end, we developed and populated a **'Transport Problems Framework'** at the 'Case for Change' stage. This defined a transport problem as being **a problem experienced by a user, or potential user of the transport network** in our region. These transport problems can be thought of as one or more of:

- Something that **negatively affects a journey which is still made** (people and freight) by that mode of travel – in the main this makes a trip less efficient, more expensive, less comfortable or more stressful in terms of safety and / or wellbeing.

- Something that **stops people or goods travelling by (generally) more sustainable and policy friendly modes** – this primarily leads to more car use and associated negative impacts across a range of policy areas including environment, climate change and safety.

- Something that **stops people making the trips they would like to make, or goods being moved** – impacting on peoples' life chances, wellbeing, and business opportunities.

4.2.4   Transport problems, when defined in this way, are typically associated with a relatively narrow range of parameters which define any trip or travel, and these are set out in the table below.

Table 4.1: Transport problem 'themes'

All Modes of Travel	Public transport specific
Concern over environmental impact of travel	Booking and journey planning (e.g., making connections between services)
Cost of travel and affordability	Capacity – seating / ferry car deck and sleeping accommodation
Fuel / power issues	Comfort, safety and security
Integration of travel between modes	Connectivity and network coverage (availability of services)
Journey information, including for protected groups who may find accessing information particularly difficult	Ease of use / convenience
Journey quality	Integration between services (within mode, e.g., bus-to-bus and between modes, e.g., ferry-to-train, active travel to bus etc), including for people with disabilities or other protected characteristics which affect accessibility
Journey times	Service reliability (cancellations and punctuality)
Journey time reliability (including public transport service punctuality)	Timetables (first and last / frequency / days of the week etc.) and their accessibility for all groups
Lack of awareness of travel options	
Personal accessibility – being able to access transport networks and public transport services specifically including people with disabilities or other protected characteristics which affect accessibility	
Personal security (fear of crime)	
Travel safety (collisions, personal injury)	

4.2.5   The above list was used as a 'checklist' to develop a set of transport problems for each mode of transport in the context our region, drawing in the evidence developed for and presented in the 'Case for Change'.

RTS Strategy Objectives

4.2.6   The RTS Strategy Objectives define the outcomes that we are trying to achieve through the RTS. Emerging from 'Step 6' of the above referenced process, they are an aggregation of individual Transport Planning Objectives set in relation to each transport problem identified in the Transport Problems Framework. The Strategy Objectives are therefore:

Strategy Objective 1: To make a just transition to a post-carbon and more environmentally sustainable transport network.

4.2.7   *Why?* – Scotland has a target to achieve net zero carbon emissions of all greenhouse gases by 2045 and transport is a key sector in terms of such emissions. Our transport networks and services must adapt to fulfil this target in a fair and equitable way whilst also being developed in as environmentally sustainable a way as possible. The process must also recognise the needs of all groups through a 'Just Transition'.

Strategy Objective 2: To transform and provide safe and accessible connections between and within our city, towns and villages, to enable walking, wheeling and cycling for all.

4.2.8   *Why?* – to allow everyone to walk, wheel and cycle more, leading to more local living patterns, greater inclusion, affordable transport, healthier lifestyles, and reduced car use – the latter leading to reduced emissions / noise etc and improved road safety.

Strategy Objective 3: To widen access to public and shared transport and improve connectivity within and from / to the region.

4.2.9   *Why?* – to give people new travel choices, allowing them to: (i) use accessible and affordable public or shared transport options to make journeys they previously could not make; or (ii) to use public or shared transport instead of the car - this leading to lower levels of car use and reduced emissions / noise etc., as well as improved road safety. This objective is also important in encouraging inclusive economic growth by widening labour markets and providing improved accessibility to employment opportunities by public transport.

Strategy Objective 4: To improve the quality and integration of public and shared transport within and from / to the region.

4.2.10   *Why?* – to make public and shared transport more attractive and competitive with car-based travel and to ensure the accessibility needs of all groups are accommodated. This will improve the travel experience for existing public transport users and encourage people to use public or shared transport instead of the car, leading to lower levels of car use and reduced emissions / noise etc, improved road safety and will support the social benefits associated with shared transport.

Strategy Objective 5: To ensure reliable, resilient, affordable and sustainable connectivity for all from / to our island, peninsular and remote communities.

4.2.11   *Why?* – some of our island and peninsular communities have suffered from pronounced connectivity difficulties in recent years. This has had wide-ranging impacts on these communities and this objective recognises the need to tackle this issue, in tandem with Strategy Objective 4. Delivering this objective will provide the foundation for the long-term sustainability and success of these vulnerable communities, including through helping meet

the needs of people with protected characteristics and by tackling socio-economic disadvantage.

Strategy Objective 6: To improve the efficiency, safety and resilience of our transport networks for people and freight and adapt to the impacts of climate change.

4.2.12 *Why?* – our transport systems must be safe and able to adapt to changing demands (e.g., tourism patterns, trade etc) and be resilient in the face of climate change. This objective is important in allowing the society and economy of our region to prosper and to reduce inequalities of outcome associated with socio-economic disadvantage.

Alignment of our Strategy Objectives with NTS2

4.2.13 As our new RTS reflects national transport policy, it is important to ensure alignment between our RTS Strategy Objectives and the NTS2. The table below therefore maps the RTS Strategy Objectives to the four NTS2 Priorities:

Table 4.2: Map of Strategy Objectives to NTS2 priorities

Strategy Objective	NTS2 Priorities			
	Reduces inequalities	Takes climate action	Helps deliver inclusive economic growth	Improves our health and wellbeing
1: To make a just transition to a post-carbon and more environmentally sustainable transport network.	✓	✓		✓
2. To transform and provide safe and accessible connections between and within our city, towns and villages to enable walking, wheeling and cycling for all	✓	✓	✓	✓
3. To widen access to public and shared transport and improve connectivity within and from / to the region	✓	✓	✓	
4. To improve the quality and integration of public and shared transport within and from / to the region	✓	✓	✓	
5. To ensure reliable, resilient, affordable and sustainable connectivity for all from / to our island, peninsular and remote communities	✓		✓	✓
6. To improve the efficiency, safety and resilience of our transport networks for people and freight, and adapt to the impacts of climate change		✓	✓	✓

4.2.14 As can be seen from the above table, there is clear alignment between our RTS Strategy Objectives and national transport policy, as expressed in the NTS2.

4.3 RTS Themes

4.3.1 Following the completion of the Preliminary Options Appraisal, the shortlisted options were aggregated into **11 Strategy Themes**, which are summarised in the table below:

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Table 4.3: RTS Strategy Themes

	Theme	Description
1	Transforming our communities and reducing the impact of transport upon them	Improving the public realm and mobility within settlements by reducing the dominance of the private car and maximising opportunities for walking, wheeling and cycling.
2	Connecting our communities	Facilitating walking, wheeling and cycling within settlements and improving active travel connections between them.
3	Enhancing public transport connectivity to / from: (i) Inverness; (ii) our sub-regional centres; and (iii) Scotland's other cities and beyond	Distance, topography, geography and low population density currently limit public transport connectivity within much of the region. This Strategy Theme is focused on improving public transport connectivity for journeys within, to and from the region. Widening the network, providing more connections, making journeys quicker
4	Improving the integration, quality of and access to public and shared transport	Addressing the barriers to travel by public transport, including interchange within and between modes, physical barriers for those less able and poor-quality facilities and travel information.
5	Providing connectivity that supports our island and peninsular communities	Improving the connectivity and reducing the peripherality of island and peninsular communities through improved ferry and air services, and potentially fixed links.
6	Improving the efficiency of transport networks and supply-chains and reducing their impact on our communities	Many supply-chains in the region are marginal and face challenges not found elsewhere in Scotland, working around ferry connections for example. This Strategy Theme is focused on enhancing the efficiency of supply-chains and identifying means for improving their environmental sustainability.
7	Improving the safety, reliability and resilience of our road and rail networks	Weather, geological instability and very limited diversion opportunities make resilience a key issue in the region, whilst safety is a primary concern on many of the main road routes. This Strategy Theme is therefore focused on improving the safety, reliability and resilience of transport networks within the region.
8	Facilitating sustainable visitor travel demand	Responding to the challenges arising from the significant seasonal influx of tourists to the region, often in the areas least well-placed to accommodate it.
9	Decarbonising our transport, mitigating the effects of climate change	Supporting the decarbonisation of transport through the adoption of zero emission vehicles, vessels, and aircraft.
10	Embracing new technologies	Capitalising on innovations in new technology.
11	Reducing the cost of travel, particularly for those most in need	Reducing the cost of travel for residents of the region, which is a primary contributor to 'transport poverty'

4.3.2   The RTS Themes have been used to shape the content of the RTS, with each subsequent chapter of this document focusing on a separate theme and relevant **policies** therein. The table below maps the RTS Themes to the Strategy Objectives. As is evident from the table, the RTS Strategy Themes are well-aligned to our RTS Strategy Objectives and thus form a robust basis for our RTS.

Table 4.4: Mapping of RTS Themes to Strategy Objectives

Strategy Theme	SO1: To make a just transition to a post-carbon and more environmentally sustainable transport network	SO2: To transform and provide safe and accessible connections between and within our city, towns and villages, to enable walking, wheeling and cycling for all	SO3: To widen access to public and shared transport and improve connectivity within and to / from the region	SO4: To improve the quality and integration of public and shared transport within and from / to the region	SO5: To ensure reliable, resilient, affordable and sustainable connectivity for all from / to our island, peninsular and remote communities	SO6: To improve the efficiency, safety and resilience of our transport networks for people and freight and adapt to the impacts of climate change.
1. Transforming our communities and reducing the impact of transport upon them	✓	✓				
2. Connecting our communities	✓	✓		✓		
3. Enhancing public transport connectivity to / from: (i) Inverness; (ii) our sub-regional centres; and (iii) Scotland's other cities and beyond	✓		✓	✓	✓	
4. Improving the integration, quality of and access to public and shared transport	✓		✓	✓	✓	
5. Providing connectivity that supports our island and peninsular communities	✓		✓	✓	✓	
6. Improving the efficiency of transport networks and supply-chains and reducing their impact on our communities	✓				✓	✓
7. Improving the safety, reliability and resilience of our road and rail networks					✓	✓
8. Facilitating sustainable visitor travel demand	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
9. Decarbonising our transport, mitigating the effects of climate change	✓		✓		✓	✓
10. Embracing new technologies	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
11. Reducing the cost of travel, particularly for those most in need	✓		✓	✓	✓	

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5 Strategy Theme 1: Transforming our communities and reducing the impact of transport upon them

5.1 Overview

5.1.1 The transport networks in our region play an essential role in facilitating the movement of residents, freight and visitors in our region. It is also integral to the delivery of essential services such as health and social care, more so than elsewhere in Scotland. However, transport can also imposes significant 'costs' on our communities, including road traffic collisions, noise, vibration, poorer air quality, greenhouse gas emissions, limitations of being able to walk, wheel and cycle, poor quality public realm and community severance.

5.1.2 The first theme of our RTS is therefore focused on transforming our communities and reducing any negative impacts of transport upon them. We will do this through improving the public realm and mobility within our settlements, reducing the dominance of the private car in particular, and maximising opportunities for walking, wheeling and cycling.

5.1.3 The figure below sets out the policy areas (i.e., the headings under which the respective policies are grouped) covered under this theme:

Reallocating road space to active travel	Reducing the impact of traffic on our communities
Managing the impact of parking	Facilitating sustainable land-use development

Figure 5.1: Strategy Theme 1 – policy areas

5.2 Reallocating road space to active travel

5.2.1 The dominance of vehicular traffic in our settlements means that walking, wheeling and cycling is often unattractive, with opportunities to travel in this way interrupted by busy road crossings and the absence of footways (or very narrow footways), whilst there is also a general lack of dedicated, segregated cycle infrastructure, including both on-road and segregated provision. This issue also diminishes the liveability of our communities.

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5.2.2   Increasing rates of walking, wheeling and cycling in our communities will contribute to reducing emissions, supporting healthier lifestyles, reducing inequalities and supporting sustainable economic growth. To help overcome safety concerns, minimise traffic intimidation and improve placemaking, **road space should be reallocated** away from general traffic to walking, wheeling and cycling. This can be done through:

- The **widening of walking and wheeling routes** and the **provision of additional footways** through the reallocation of existing road space from general traffic and parking

- **Reducing road widths at junctions** in settlements, tightening turning radii and slowing down traffic

- The provision of **new dedicated on-road cycle lanes**, ranging from unprotected cycle lanes through to fully segregated cycleways reflecting *Cycling by Design*

- The **designation of Low Traffic Neighbourhoods**, where motor vehicle traffic in residential streets is greatly reduced

5.2.3   As well as our commitment to this principle, we consider it essential that, where traffic in settlements is reduced by investment in road infrastructure (for example the proposed settlement bypasses as part of the A96 dualling), road space reallocation should be undertaken as an integral component of that investment.

5.2.4   We do however recognise the importance of ensuring that **road space reallocation does not have a negative impact on bus services**, given our aspiration to increase public transport mode share for journeys beyond settlements.

> **Policy ST1a:** The RTS supports the principle of reallocating road space, including parking, from general traffic. This should support placemaking to shape improved walking, wheeling and cycling opportunities in our communities as a means to promote safe active travel and encourage use of active travel modes. Reallocation of road space should avoid any negative impacts on bus services.
>
> **Policy ST1b:** Where traffic in settlements is reduced by investment in road infrastructure, road space reallocation should be undertaken as an integral component of that investment.

5.3   Reducing the impact of traffic on our communities

5.3.1   Trunk and major A-roads often **run through the heart of our communities**, for example the A9 through Golspie and Brora, the A82 through Inverness, Fort Wiliam and Fort Augustus and the A96 through Nairn, Elgin and Keith. Our settlements therefore accommodate a higher proportion of through / strategic traffic, including commercial vehicles and abnormal loads, than is the case in some other parts of Scotland where the strategic network usually bypasses settlements. Moreover, visitors to our region are often attracted to communities that are least well-placed to accommodate them, Glenfinnan and the Quiraing on Skye for example, impacting on local communities.

5.3.2   Vehicular traffic therefore has a pervasive effect on some of our communities, imposing negative impacts such **as accidents, noise, vibration, intimidation and community severance**. Major settlements such as Elgin, Oban and Fort William experience significant challenges in this respect, but it is common across the region. Outwith these larger settlements, traffic speeds through towns and villages can be an issue, particularly on strategic routes and also on routes to ports, where drivers can be 'racing' to catch a ferry.

5.3.3   We recognise the importance of mitigating and reducing the impact of this traffic on our communities. There are different ways in which this objective can be achieved, including traffic speed enforcement and traffic calming measures such as speed cushions, road humps, road

narrowing, pedestrianisation, speed limit reductions and the establishment of 20mph zones in settlements. The most appropriate actions will vary by settlement – e.g., what works for Campbeltown may not work for Benbecula – but we recognise overall the imperative of reducing any negative impacts of traffic on our communities.

Policy ST1c: The RTS supports the principle of traffic calming and speed limit reductions and enforcement where this is the wish of our communities, including on the Trunk Road network.

Policy ST1d: The RTS supports measures to reduce road-based severance in our communities.

Policy ST1e: The RTS recognises the challenges presented by the impacts of increasing abnormal load movements across the region. It calls for a coordinated approach to be taken to ensure that appropriate planning and mitigation is put in place as part of the planning process for new developments that will generate such movements.

5.4   Managing the impact of parking

5.4.1   Parking provision and enforcement varies across our region and between authorities with a range of policies in place to manage local demand. In many smaller settlements, much of the provision is on-street or indeed informal. The ready availability of free or low-cost parking can encourage car use for some shorter journeys which could potentially be undertaken by active modes, with resultant negative impacts such as traffic intimidation, emissions and noise.

5.4.2   However, as with most other elements of the transport system in our region, there exists the dual challenge of managing day-to-day parking requirements and **peak season visitor parking, particularly at 'honeypot' sites** such as Skara Brae and the Fairy Pools. Traffic management around ferry terminals can also be an issue (e.g., at Port Ellen and Oban), particularly in peak season.

5.4.3   A mixed approach to both provision and enforcement can lead to inappropriate parking. Consequences of this include degradation of the public realm, lost trade for local businesses and footpaths being blocked, a particular issue for certain protected groups such as those in wheelchairs or pushing a pram. There are also particular risks associated with indiscriminate, illegal and dangerous parking around our schools.

5.4.4   We acknowledge the delicate balance between parking provision and enforcement and how this varies across our region. However, we also recognise that illegal and indiscriminate parking **negatively impacts on our communities and the experience of visitors to our region**, and therefore support improved management of parking. We again recognise that the most appropriate actions will vary by settlement and moreover that parking policy is a matter for our constituent members. However, through the RTS, we see an opportunity to work with our partner local authorities to develop more consistent approaches to some common challenges, such as the provision of parking and facilities for motorhomes, solutions for reducing private vehicle at 'honeypot' tourist attractions and payment mechanisms.

Case Study: School Streets – Holy Family Catholic Primary School, Ealing

'School Streets' are roads outside of a school with a temporary restriction on motorised traffic at school drop-off and pick-up times. The restriction is applied to school traffic and through traffic and is a proactive solution to tackling local air pollution, poor health and road safety risks.

The use of School Streets is already widespread in London, and is growing in popularity in Scotland, particularly in Edinburgh. Transport for London evaluated the impact of five School Streets projects in 2022, one of these being Holy Family Catholic primary school, located in

the Acton area of Ealing. The school is in close proximity to the busy North Circular Road and acts as a shortcut for vehicles avoiding the North Circular and the busy Western Avenue.

At this 474-pupil school, an extensive 'School Street zone' was established – all vehicles are banned from this zone Monday – Friday during term time from 08:15-09:15 and 15:00-16:00 with the exception of: (i) residents and businesses located within the zone; (ii) emergency and service related vehicles; (iii) Blue Badge holders who work at the school or a business within the closure, or who are dropping off at the school or a business; and (iv) parents or guardians of a child with a Blue Badge attending the school, for whom an exemption can be applied for.

The scheme was originally introduced using physical barriers manned by staff and parent volunteers. However, due to some hostility from drivers, parents and residents, 'volunteer fatigue' set-in, making recruitment more difficult and the Council therefore chose to introduce enforcement by ANPR cameras.

The initiative has been highly successful:

- *Half of all school staff agreed that the School Street reduced vehicle speeds, improved safety, encouraged more walking and cycling and addressed issues such as congestion and parking*

- *The average number of motorised vehicles per hour driving through the School Street was 87% lower during the closure period than outside of it*

- *The average speed of motor vehicles during the morning and afternoon drop-off period was circa 1mph lower than outwith the closure period*

- *An increased number of pedal cycles were observed during the closure period*

Policy ST1f: The RTS supports greater consistency (in 'like-for-like' locations) of parking management across our region, including payment mechanisms, parking information and enforcement.

Policy ST1g: The RTS supports the principle of improving the management and enforcement of traffic and parking around schools, including *School Streets* (a road outside a school with temporary restriction on motorised traffic at school drop-off and pick-up times).

5.5 Facilitating sustainable land-use development

5.5.1 At the heart of our RTS is our commitment to reduce transport-related greenhouse gas emissions in our region, supporting the national 2045 net zero target. However, this should be achieved in a manner which reflects the characteristics of our region, including its geography and the spatial distribution of its population. In general, we **support the concept of 'Triple Access Planning' (TAP)** where the transport system (physical mobility), the land-use system (spatial proximity) and the telecommunication system (digital connectivity) are delivered in an integrated manner known as a Triple Access System (TAS).[10]

5.5.2 For many years, transport and land-use planning in our region has been largely predicated on the ability to access employment, services and leisure opportunities by car, particularly in Inverness but also in other major settlements such as Elgin, Fort William, Oban, Campbeltown, Kirkwall and Stornoway. This has been compounded by a model of public service delivery increasingly built on centralisation, particularly in health and education. We therefore start from a position where a **high proportion of journeys undertaken by car** in our region are essential rather than discretionary. Over the lifetime of the RTS and indeed beyond, it is our aspiration that this need to travel is reduced through a growth in localism,

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[10] Triple Access Planning for Uncertain Futures (tapforuncertainty.eu)

where employment, service and leisure opportunities can be accessed locally or, where a journey is required, by active travel or public transport.

5.5.3 Planning for transport as part of new developments is essential if we are to ensure that an **'infrastructure first'** approach (i.e., identifying and addressing the infrastructure capacity and requirements arising from a development) is adopted and that such developments are created in a manner that embeds **sustainable transport provision** from the outset and prevents car dependency from becoming entrenched. The concept of **Transit Orientated Development (TOD)** should be used where practicable to provide sufficient population density to make high quality and regular public transport services viable. This requires the concentration of major trip generating developments around public transport corridors (e.g., the A96), stops and stations to be effective.

5.5.4 Placemaking and the development of a high-quality public realm are also essential to creating spaces that people want to spend time in and feel safe walking, cycling and wheeling to get around. This is integral to the concept of 'Living Well Locally' which aim to create attractive, safe and walkable environments which connect people to the facilities and services for their everyday needs via short walking, wheeling or cycling journeys. By designing around this concept, planning focuses on walking, cycling and wheeling rather than car travel, helping to align spatial planning and transport planning at a local scale. It can also enhance the inclusivity of areas through improving connectivity to services which may not previously have been readily accessible to some people who do not own or have access to a car. Once again, we recognise that the concept of Living Well Locally will be more suited to more concentrated settlements than outlying rural areas and thus there should be flexibility in the application of the concept across our region, with active travel links from outlying areas into local hubs.

5.5.5 In some instances, the application of TOD and Living Well Locally principles may make it possible to explore the implementation of **zero car developments**, particularly in the Inner Moray Firth area. These can be supported by **shared mobility** solutions which depart from traditional car ownership models and allow people to access transport, including cars, on an on-demand basis. This has the potential to reduce or remove the need for vehicle ownership and provides people with a wider range of sustainable transport options than they would have had under a traditional ownership-based approach.

5.5.6 Shared mobility should be an integral part of all significant new developments. It will provide scope to reduce parking provision and create an opportunity to increase density and / or create additional green or blue space within new developments. Electric vehicle (EV) charging provision will also be a fundamental requirement in all new developments.

Case Study: Tornagrain

Tornagrain is a new town being developed between Inverness and Nairn, just to the west of Inverness Airport. It is an exemplar of a sustainably planned new settlement which will be realised over the long-term. The planning permission, granted in 2012, allows for 5,000 new homes, three primary schools, a secondary school, shops, employment space, parks and other services. Tornagrain will have a town centre focussed on a High Street, with squares at either end, together with surrounding neighbourhoods. Each neighbourhood will have a centre, including a primary school, within five-minutes walk of the residents of that area. All of the town's residents will be within 10-minutes walk of the town centre.

Whilst a long-term project (50-years), it is founded on sustainable development with local employment, amenities and services. Within the town, the emphasis will be on walking and cycling to local services and shops. For journeys beyond the town, there are bus services to Inverness and Nairn, whilst rail services are available from the recently opened (2nd February 2023) Inverness Airport railway station.

Policy ST1h: The RTS supports the prioritisation of new development in locations that are in proximity to key services and already well-served by active travel and public transport.

Policy ST1i: The RTS supports the local delivery of public services, including health and education, and other day-to-day retail and personal services (e.g., banking) which minimise the need to travel.

Policy ST1j: The RTS supports the integration of active travel, public transport and shared mobility into the planning of all new developments. New development proposals should be required to outline how they will connect into the local active travel and public transport networks.

Policy ST1k: The RTS supports the concept of 'infrastructure first' in relation to major developments across our region.

Policy ST1l: The RTS recognises the centrality of environmental considerations, particularly biodiversity enhancements and nature networks, within the planning and decision-making process.

5.6 How does this Strategy Theme contribute to our RTS Objectives?

5.6.1 The table below summarises how this Strategy Theme contributes to our RTS Objectives:

Table 5.1: Contribution of Strategy Theme 1 to our RTS Objectives

RTS Strategy Objectives	
SO1: To make a just transition to a post-carbon and more environmentally sustainable transport network	✓✓
SO2: To transform and provide safe and accessible connections between and within our city, towns and villages, to enable walking, wheeling and cycling for all	✓✓✓
SO3: To widen access to public and shared transport and improve connectivity within and to / from the region	O
SO4: To improve the quality and integration of public and shared transport within and from / to the region	O
SO5: To ensure reliable, resilient, affordable and sustainable connectivity for all from / to our island, peninsular and remote communities	O
SO6: To improve the efficiency, safety and resilience of our transport networks for people and freight and adapt to the impacts of climate change.	O

5.6.2 This Strategy Theme makes a highly positive contribution to our RTS Strategy Objectives in two ways:

- At the settlement level, it prioritises active travel and reduces the impact of vehicular traffic on communities, thus contributing to **SO1**. As well as supporting a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions, it offers several wider environmental benefits including improved local air quality, reduced noise, reduced severance and an improved public realm.

- By supporting road space reallocation, improved parking management, traffic impact reduction measures and positive land-use changes, this Strategy Theme will provide safe and accessible connections within our settlements, contributing to **SO2**.

6 Strategy Theme 2: Connecting our communities

6.1 Overview

6.1.1 This Strategy Theme is focused on improving and **expanding opportunities for walking, wheeling and cycling within and between our communities**. Enabling more safe active travel in our region requires the provision of integrated and high-quality routes for active travel combined with measures to widen bicycle availability and promote walking, wheeling and cycling as a means of travel. This is essential in enabling our residents to make healthy journey choices and in creating places that are more accessible, inclusive and prosperous.

6.1.2 We recognise that in parts of the region, factors like the geography, topography, climate and low population density can make it both challenging and expensive to deliver active travel infrastructure and promote journeys made by active modes. Transformational investment in active travel infrastructure in our region will therefore be required if significant modal shift is to be achieved, and **any funding settlement must specifically recognise the challenges posed by distance and our spatially dispersed population**.

6.1.3 The figure below sets out the policy areas covered under this theme:

Improving and expanding walking, wheeling and cycling routes	Widening the availability of cycling

Promoting walking, wheeling and cycling

Figure 6.1: Strategy Theme 2 – policy areas

6.2 Improving and expanding walking, wheeling and cycling routes

6.2.1 There is significant variation in the provision, scale and quality of walking, wheeling and cycling infrastructure across our region. Where provision is poor or non-existent, it can directly reduce access for certain groups, including disabled people, the elderly, young people and women.

6.2.2 Regular **walking and wheeling** trips will by and large be local in nature, and thus our focus will therefore be on improving the walkability (and 'wheelability') within or between proximate settlements. Enhancements could include but are not limited to: improved crossing facilities; improvements to existing routes to make them more direct, coherent, comfortable and

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attractive; new or enhanced signage, lighting, surfacing etc; rationalisation of street furniture and other obstructions; and the implementation of physical accessibility improvements on existing routes (including the enforcement of pavement parking).

6.2.3 Many **cycling** routes in our region (at least where these are formalised) are on or alongside major roads, including high-speed Trunk Roads and A-roads, or, at the other end of the scale, narrow single-track roads, many of which have poor sightlines and still carry significant volumes of traffic including commercial vehicles. Design standards implied by Cycling by Design[11] are not widely met – this is reflected in the sparse nature of the National Cycle Network in our region. This gives rise to a range of issues such as safety risks, traffic intimidation, noise etc., creating an unattractive environment for cycling journeys, particularly for occasional or infrequent cyclists. These issues are significantly amplified during the winter months with reduced daylight and more inclement weather. Upgrades to and the formalisation of existing cycle routes, in addition to new routes are therefore necessary to expand the number of journeys made by bicycle.

6.2.4 Many **walking and wheeling, and some cycling trips will be to access public transport**, be that the local bus service, railway station, ferry terminal or, in some island communities, airfields. Promoting high quality 'first mile / last mile' walking, wheeling and cycling routes to transport interchanges is a clear and obvious means through which our RTS can contribute to reducing vehicle kilometres and transport-related emissions. It is important that such routes are safe and secure, direct and regularly treated during the winter months. In island and rural communities, a locally appropriate solution would be to provide safe walking routes to bus stops within townships. For many households in rural locations where there is no footpath and the road adjacent to the house is unsafe for walking, wheeling or cycling due to traffic volumes and speed, then residents effectively have no option to travel sustainably from their own home.

6.2.5 In addition to improving existing walking, wheeling and cycling infrastructure, there would be benefit in investing in **new 'greenfield' active travel routes.** We will also look to expand the number of **'quiet roads'**[12] on minor rural roads following pilots at Glencoe and on Skye. It is essential that such routes are designed to the current standards and apply the principles of inclusive design, whilst minimising or eliminating conflicts with vehicular traffic. The development of new routes of this nature would be particularly beneficial for journeys between settlements, creating a regional network that facilitates longer-distance active travel journeys.

6.2.6 We also recognise that many active travel journeys in our region are made for leisure purposes. This includes journeys on designated routes such as the Great Glen Way and Hebridean Way but also circular walking, wheeling and cycling journeys in and around our settlements. We recognise the importance of these routes to the visitor economy, but also as dual use facilities which provide residents of our region with the opportunity to make functional active travel trips between settlements.

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[11] https://www.transport.gov.scot/media/50323/cycling-by-design-update-2019-final-document-15-september-2021-1.pdf

[12] Quiet roads are designated rural roads where traffic volumes and vehicle speeds are already low, and are aimed at encouraging people to travel by foot, by bike and on horseback.

Policy ST2a: The RTS supports transformational investment in the improvement of our existing active travel networks to make these accessible to all.

Policy ST2b: The RTS supports the reinstatement and expansion of a network of strategic and local traffic free / quiet walking, wheeling and cycling routes to connect communities across and beyond our region.

Policy ST2c: The RTS supports the expansion of the National Cycle Network to all parts of the region.

Policy ST2d: Our active travel infrastructure should be designed to a high standard in accordance with the most up-to-date best practice and regionally appropriate design standards (as this evolves) to meet the needs of all users.

Policy ST2e: The RTS supports the integration of active travel and public transport connections within our communities.

Policy ST2f: The RTS promotes the adoption of measures outlined in the *Sustainable Travel to Stations Strategy* with respect to access to railway stations.

6.3   Widening the availability of cycling

6.3.1   Our region has **one of the highest household bicycle availability rates in Scotland**, with **46%** of households having access to at least one bicycle. And while cycling levels vary across the Highlands and Islands, the HITRANS region as a whole has a higher share of people cycling to work than any other region in Scotland. However, there is a significant body of literature which highlights differential access to cycling amongst those with protected characteristics. Whilst in some cases this is due to limited cycling infrastructure (i.e., it is a function of supply), for others, and particularly those on low incomes, the main issue is the cost of owning and maintaining a bicycle. his is particularly the case for electric bicycles (e-bikes) which cost significantly more to purchase and also cost money to charge.

6.3.2   Encouraging the uptake of cycling will therefore depend on increasing access to bicycles, and 'normalising' cycling across the region. This can be done both through supporting the cost of purchasing a bicycle or by expanding the coverage of our existing Hi-Bike electric bike share schemes (and other schemes of this nature). We consider it essential that cycling opportunities are accessible to all and, to this end, adaptive bicycles should be available as part of any bike hire or share schemes. Through the evolving picture with respect to funding and delivery we will also work with employers and developers within our region to encourage

and support them to provide secure bicycle parking and suitable changing facilities at their premises.

Case Study: Hi-Bike

Promoted and supported by HITRANS, the HI-Bike system launched in Inverness in October 2021 and has expanded within the city and was also introduced to Fort William in 2022. The introduction of Hi-Bike was funded with support from Transport Scotland's Regional Active Travel Grant, e-Bike Grant Fund and two EU programmes (North Sea Region Stronger Combined Project for Inverness and Low Carbon Transport and Travel ERDF Funding for Fort William). The implementation was led by HITRANS and Lochaber Environment Group, with HITRANS now responsible for the continued operation of the scheme.

Since the scheme was launched in late 2021 there has been steady growth in regular users. As of January 2024, there were nearly 1,000 regular users who have purchased 2,700 memberships. Additionally, there has been 12,000 single use users purchasing either a 3-hr pass which is common for tourists and visitors, or a pay-per-ride pass. This equates to a total of almost 13,000 users of the Hi-BIKE scheme since it launched. Furthermore, there have been almost 48,000 individual unlocks and 220,000 km travelled which can be calculated as 30,448 kilograms of CO_2 saved by traveling by Hi-BIKE. Evidence of existing users also demonstrates that it is already supporting members to both obtain and maintain employment opportunities.

Additional bikes and docks are to be introduced in Inverness in 2024 and further expansion is planned to other parts of the Highlands and Islands including Elgin.

Policy ST2g: The RTS seeks the implementation of initiatives which widen access to bicycles and e-bicycles, including e.g., promoting ownership, expansion of bicycle share and hire and provision of new 'first mile, last mile' cycling opportunities.

Policy ST2h: The RTS supports the upgrade and new provision of bicycle parking and facilities at all public buildings, transport interchanges and key on-street locations within the region.

6.4 Promoting walking, wheeling and cycling

6.4.1 There is a significant body of evidence highlighting the health and wellbeing benefits of active travel, which are supplementary to the environmental benefits offered. However, **a prominent barrier to encouraging walking, wheeling and cycling is perception and a lack of information**. Moreover, many visitors to our region are interested in outdoor pursuits and thus ensuring that they have the information on available walking, wheeling and cycling possibilities provides an opportunity for modal shift amongst visitors.

6.4.2 Promoting the benefits of active travel and highlighting options for engaging in walking, wheeling and cycling journeys is important to increasing uptake. Our GO-HI app provides a platform through which mapping and other information can be provided. However, encouraging increased walking, wheeling and cycling requires the input of a much wider range of partners including our constituent local authority members and public transport operators in the region. Each of these organisations have their own plans and targets of increasing active travel uptake, making coordinated, consistent and coherent messaging and information essential. The evolving funding and delivery picture will enable us to develop coordinated proposals with our partner councils for encouraging behaviour change with consistent messaging and a series of initiatives promoting walking and cycling that focuses of daily trips to work and school.

Policy ST2i: Our active travel network should be developed, presented and promoted in a more coherent, recognisable and integrated way for regular, occasional and new users of the network, including visitors.

6.5 How does this Strategy Theme contribute to our RTS Objectives?

6.5.1 The table below summarises how this Strategy Theme contributes to our RTS Objectives:

Table 6.1: Contribution of Strategy Theme 2 to our RTS Objectives

RTS Strategy Objectives	
SO1: To make a just transition to a post-carbon and more environmentally sustainable transport network	✓✓✓
SO2: To transform and provide safe and accessible connections between and within our city, towns and villages, to enable walking, wheeling and cycling for all	✓✓✓
SO3: To widen access to public and shared transport and improve connectivity within and to / from the region	O
SO4: To improve the quality and integration of public and shared transport within and from / to the region	✓
SO5: To ensure reliable, resilient, affordable and sustainable connectivity for all from / to our island, peninsular and remote communities	O
SO6: To improve the efficiency, safety and resilience of our transport networks for people and freight and adapt to the impacts of climate change.	O

6.5.2 This Strategy Theme makes a highly positive contribution to our RTS Strategy Objectives in two key ways:

- By focusing specifically on policies which will grow both the absolute number of active travel journeys and its percentage mode share, our RTS will support a just transition to a post-carbon and more environmentally sustainable transport network for all **(SO1)**

- It will also make a highly positive contribution to **SO2**, through providing safe and accessible walking, wheeling and cycling connections within and between our settlements

- When integrated as part of wider mobility planning, the policies set out in this theme will also contribute to **SO4**

7 Strategy Theme 3: Enhancing public transport connectivity

7.1 Overview

7.1.1 Public transport connectivity is fundamental to the functioning of our region and its interactions with other regions of Scotland and beyond – it plays several key roles including:

- Connecting **residents to employment**, particularly in Inverness, our larger settlements such as Elgin, Fort William, Oban and Thurso and our main island settlements such as Kirkwall, Stornoway and Tobermory

- Connecting **our businesses to labour and to other businesses** in the region, elsewhere in Scotland and beyond

- Facilitating **access to public and personal services such as health, education, retail and banking**. Access to **healthcare facilities** is particularly important in this respect given the pressure on, and challenges in, the delivery of patient transport.

- Providing connectivity for those **without access to a car** and / or who would **prefer not to drive**

- Underpinning the **social fabric of communities**, where the above factors combine to support **community viability** in the first instance, and thereafter in providing a **balanced population and economy** and transport options that are **environmentally sustainable and equitable**

7.1.2 There are three components of public transport connectivity in this context:

- **Network geographical coverage:** The bus, community and demand responsive transport, rail, ferry and air services that collectively form a network of connections for our communities

- **Timetables / connections:** The number of days on which a service operates, the frequency at which it operates and the time of the first and last service

- **Journey times and journey time reliability:** How long the journey takes, including the time on-vehicle and 'door-to-door' journey time, and the extent to which the service operates (i.e., is not cancelled) and arrives on time

7.1.3 **Public transport connectivity is one of the fundamental transport challenge facing our region**. Distance, topography, geography and low population density have combined with increasing costs and diminishing budgets to threaten the sustainability of many routes, ranging from local bus services to commercially operated air services.

7.1.4 The figure below sets out the policy areas covered under this theme:

Reducing social exclusion

Bus and coach services

Community and Demand Responsive Transport

Railway services

Railway stations

Figure 7.1: Strategy Theme 3 – policy areas

7.2   Reducing social exclusion

7.2.1   **Inequality is a consequence of our limited public transport network**, both in terms of geographic coverage and service provision. For many households in our region, they have little option but to accept the cost of owning and running a car or a second car (i.e., 'forced' car ownership) if they are to make essential journeys. In some households, those who cannot drive or do not have access to a car face social exclusion. This Strategy Theme is therefore focused on improving land-based public transport connectivity for journeys within, to and from our region by expanding the network, providing more connections and making journeys quicker and more reliable. Air and ferry services are considered separately in Strategy Theme 5, and the cost of travel is covered in Strategy Theme 11.

Policy ST3a: The RTS supports measures to reduce social exclusion for those without access to a car.

7.3   Bus and coach services

7.3.1   Buses are the backbone of the public transport network in our region – services vary from commercial long-distance coach services to conventional urban and suburban services in areas such as the Inner Moray Firth and Lochaber to small minibus operations that serve the most geographically remote parts of our region, sometimes with only one bus per day in each direction.

7.3.2   There has been a **long-term decline in bus passenger numbers in our region, despite the operation of a broadly stable number of bus kilometres**, as is shown in the figure below.
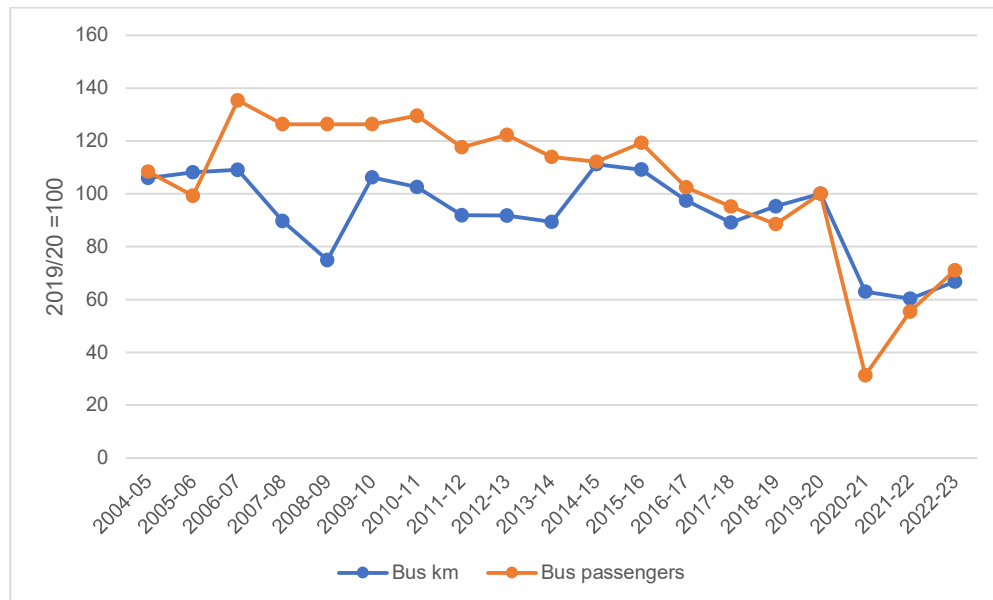
Figure 7.2: Bus kilometres and passenger numbers in the HITRANS region (2019-20 = 100) (Source: Scottish Transport Statistics 2022)[13]

7.3.3   In 2018-19, bus passengers caried in the region were around **80%** of their 2004-05 level and reduced to circa **30%** of that level during the COVID-19 pandemic.[14] Whilst bus networks across Scotland are facing an uncertain future, this is particularly true in rural areas. An increase in bus travel by those under 22 has not offset a decline in bus use by those 60+ since the pandemic. By 2022-23, passenger numbers were still 29% down on pre-pandemic levels and the withdrawal of COVID-19 support grants has made some routes unviable. Moreover, the bus industry generally is facing a shortage of drivers, whilst the existing labour force is ageing. This is further compounded by current (2023) high fuel prices and general inflation, where costs are increasing at a time when the revenue base is diminishing.

7.3.4   A key factor which disincentivises the use of the bus is that **journey times are often long** - whilst this is obviously to some degree reflective of the distances involved, commercial realities mean that buses often need to make diversions off main routes to make multiple stops, slowing down journeys even further. In larger settlements such as Inverness, Elgin and Fort William, bus services are also affected by more conventional congestion associated with peak commuting periods and seasonal tourist traffic.

7.3.5   In our **urban areas**, where congestion affects bus journey time reliability, there is a requirement for further bus priority measures (including on Trunk and major A-roads) such as bus lanes, bus gates and bus pre-signals where appropriate, and initiatives which reduce bus stop dwell times such as smart ticketing. In our **rural areas and island communities**, a more holistic approach is required which considers the structure of the network, integration with other modes such as rail and the potential for Demand Responsive Transport (DRT) to supplant conventional bus services (as explained in Section 7.3).

7.3.6   Bus service frequency across some parts of our region is low. In our most remote communities:

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[13] Scottish Transport Statistics, data for Eilean Siar, Highland, Moray, Orkney Islands, Shetland Islands, Argyll & Bute

[14] Source: Scottish Transport Statistics 2022.

- There is sometimes **only one bus service per day**, with the return journey slotted in between school transport requirements thus limiting meaningful time at destination

- There are instances where the **public bus route is part of the school bus network** and thus only operated on school days, e.g., Glendale and Milovaig in Skye[15]

- There are further instances where a community has **no scheduled bus service at all**, e.g., Port Appin and the Waternish Peninsula in Skye

7.3.7 The figures below show the **frequency** and the times of the **first** and **last buses** from each designated stop in our region, which provides an indication of the time allowed to users of these stops to undertake activities across the day.

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[15] https://tiscon-maps-stagecoachbus.s3.amazonaws.com/Timetables/North%20Scotland/Highlands/Skye%20Revised%202022.pdf
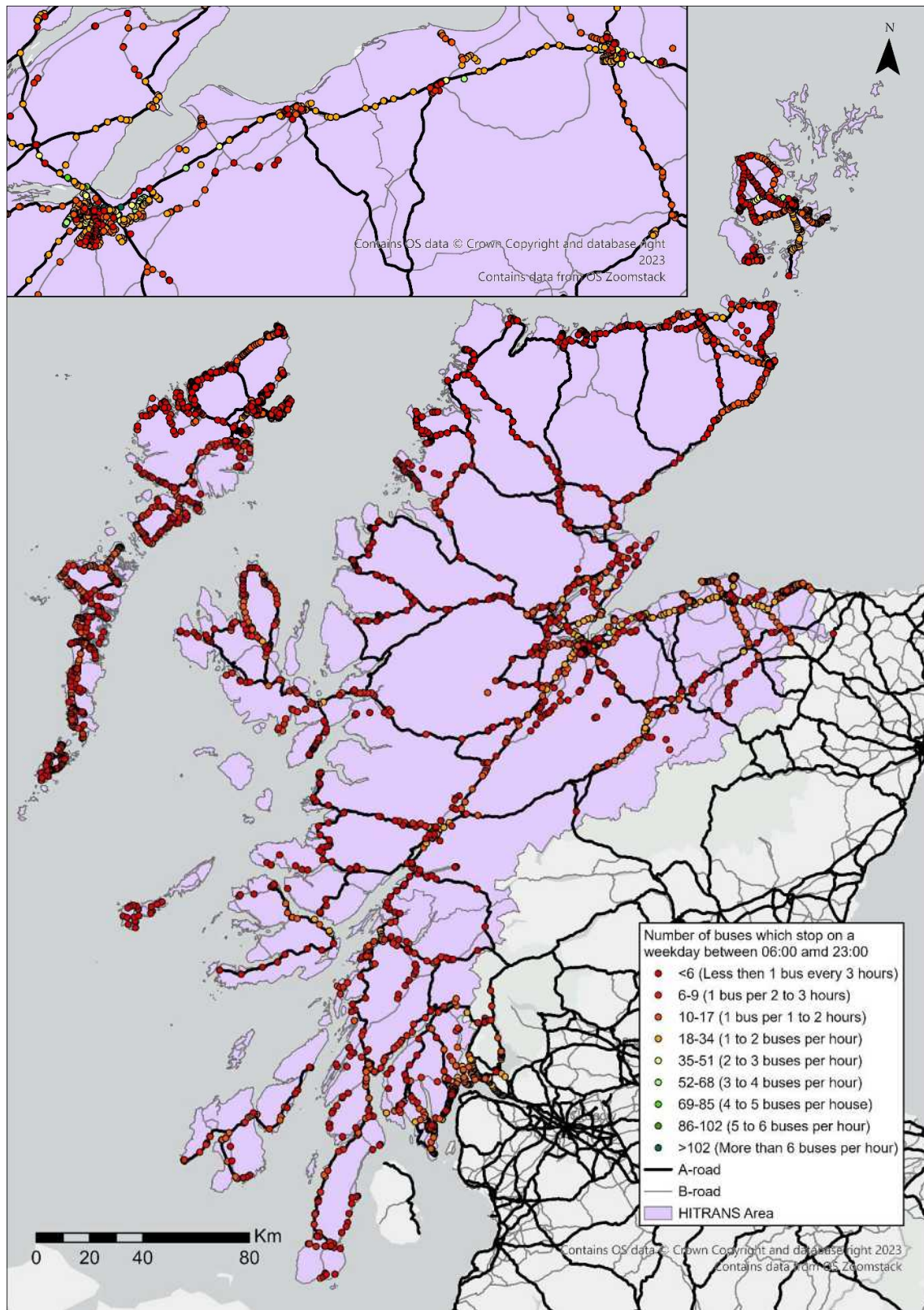
Figure 7.3: Bus service frequencies across the HITRANS region (Source NaPTAN, Q2 2022)

Stantec
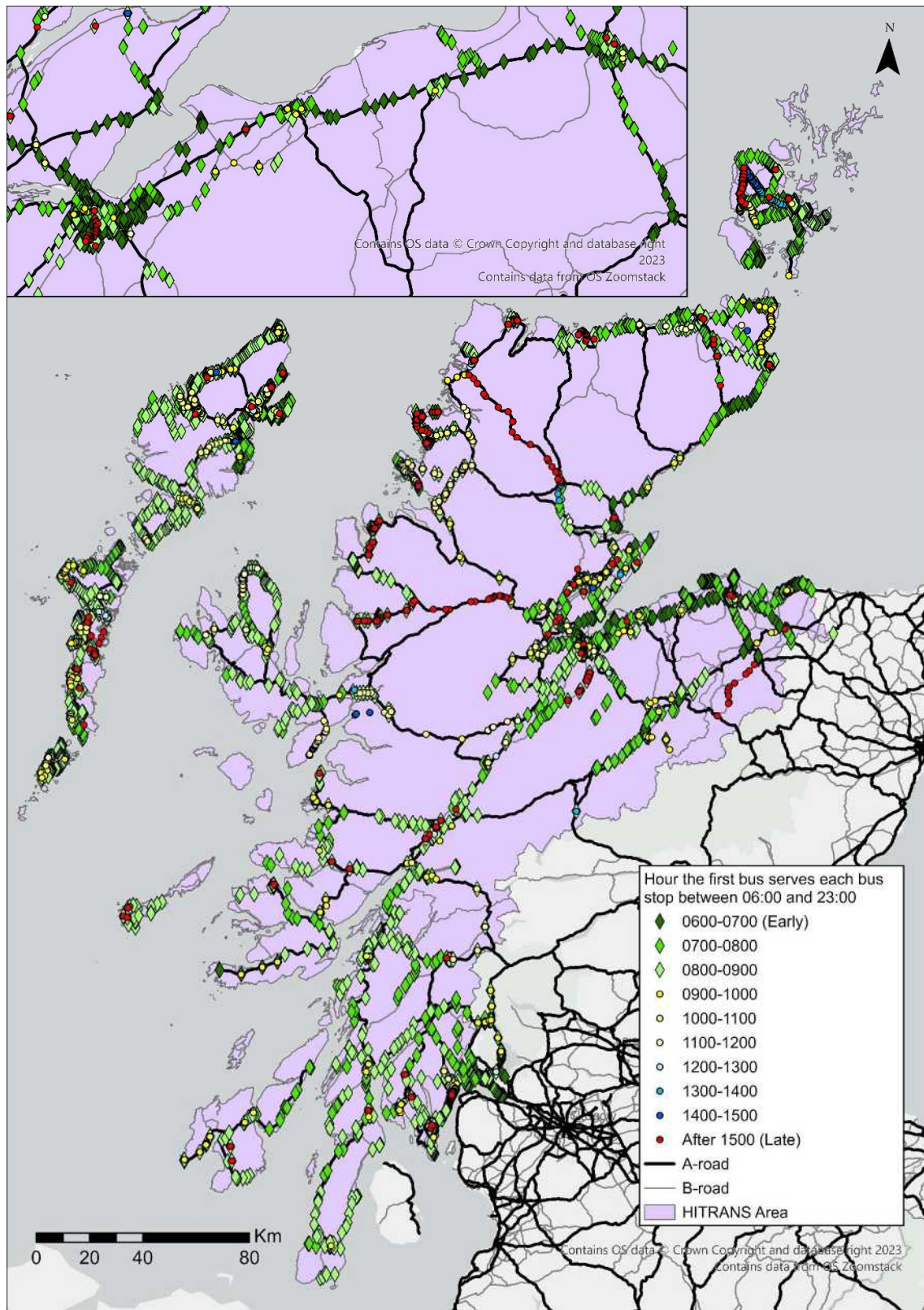
Figure 7.4: First bus from each stop in the HITRANS region (Source: NaPTAN, Q2 2022)

Stantec
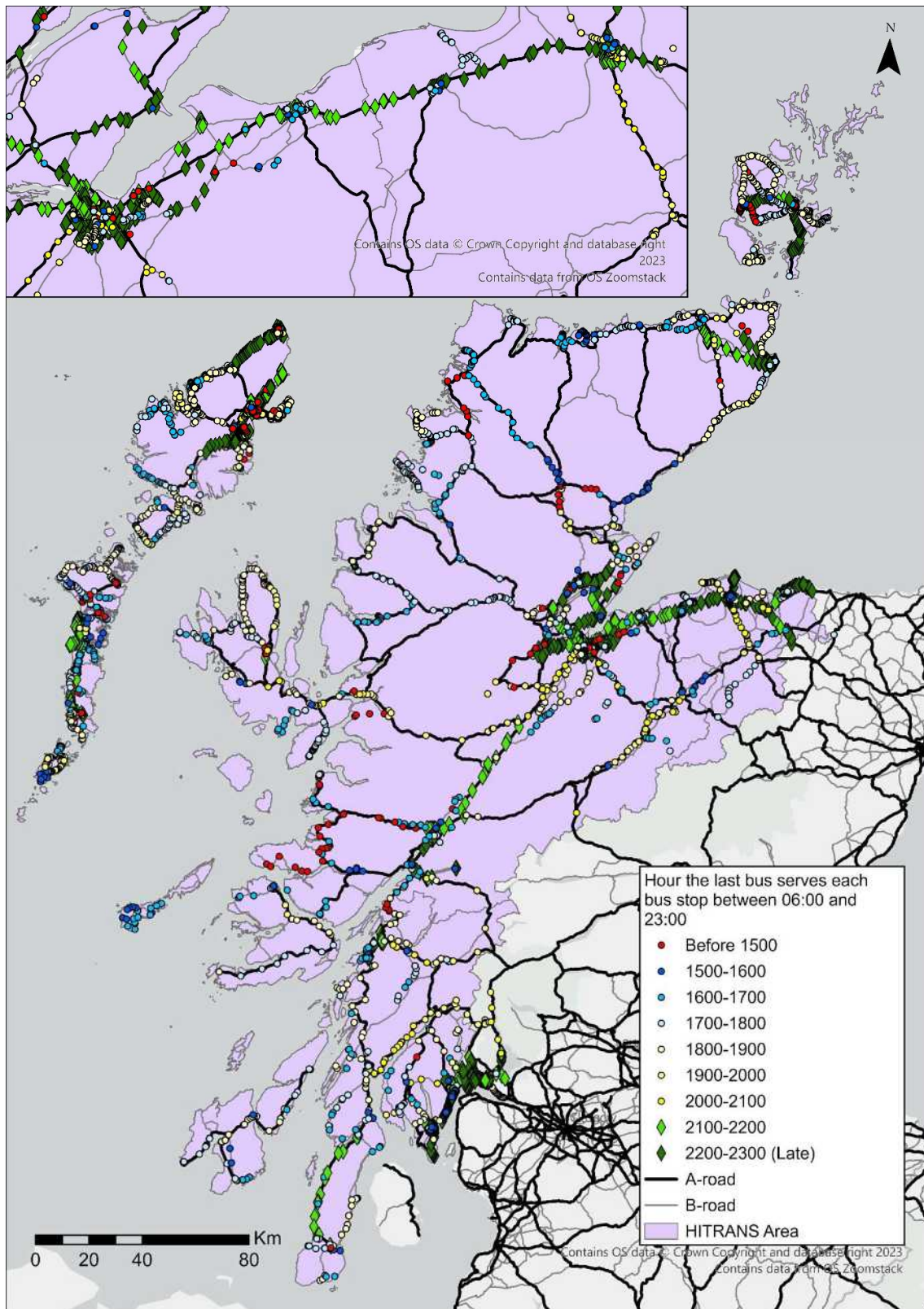
Figure 7.5: Last bus from each stop in the HITRANS region (Source: NaPTAN, Q2 2022)

7.3.8   The above figures highlight that, outwith the Inner Moray Forth and a handful of other locations such as Stromness, Stornoway and Kirkwall, bus frequency in our region is very low and the last bus is often relatively early. This means that those travelling to an urban centre such as Inverness can either have too little time to carry out their activities in a single day or alternatively could have a long wait between services. In addition, there are many settlements and transport interchanges in our region from which bus connections are indirect. This all adds to both the time and cost of travel, which is disproportionately greater than for equivalent journeys in central Scotland.

7.3.9   This analysis highlights locations across our region where bus services need to be enhanced to improve non-car based access to employment and essential services and to reduce the likelihood of people suffering from transport-induced deprivation. In many of these locations, a combination of **new bus services**, **increased frequencies on existing bus services, earlier first departures and later last arrivals** would improve connectivity and reduce the scope for transport-related social exclusion.

7.3.10   We recognise the challenges of bus service viability in the many rural parts of our region, where an ever-increasing level of subsidy is required to maintain a basic service that caters for fewer and fewer passengers. The provision of a core rural bus network is essential if we are to reduce social exclusion but it is also important to recognise that there are other ways of delivering this connectivity, including through providing feeder services to railway stations and DRT (as previously mentioned).

7.3.11   The Transport (Scotland) Act 2019 provided **new powers** in relation to buses, including the ability to introduce Bus Service Improvement Plans and local franchising. The application of these powers may in some cases be an appropriate means of delivering improvements to the bus network in our region and we will explore this as part of our first RTS Action Plan. Indeed The Highland Council has now set up an in-house bus company in the light of the increasing costs associated with tendered services from local operators.[16]

> *Case Study: Inverness and Cromarty Firth Green Freeport*
>
> *On 13th January 2023 it was announced that Inverness and Cromarty Firth was successful in being awarded Green Freeport status by Scottish and UK Governments. The primary objective is to maximise the local benefits from a pipeline of renewable energy projects which will create business opportunities and employment, attract inward investment, research and development, and position the Highlands at the heart of the country's commitment to becoming a net-zero economy.*

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[16] https://www.busandcoachbuyer.com/highland-council-launching-in-house-bus-company/

When operational, the Green Freeport will offer a package of tax and customs incentives to attract inward investment and stimulate innovation and growth. 10,000 jobs and £3bn of investment is forecast. The proximity of the area's deep water port facilities and available development land to the leased floating offshore wind sites in the North Sea will drive demand for transport and infrastructure investment. HITRANS has already been engaging with the Freeport and other key stakeholders to understand the range of transport improvements required to support what will be a step change in economic investment within the area and enable the wider Highland economy to benefit.

An early win was the Sumitomo announcement in February 2024 for a £350m high voltage cable factory at Nigg, which will supply offshore wind developments, creating 330 jobs over 10 years including 156 manufacturing jobs at the plant.

*The Cromarty Firth element of the Green Freeport highlights however the weakness of our public transport services in the area. The limited bus (and train) services that operate from the Invergordon and Nigg areas are orientated around a working day in Inverness, and thus do not facilitate travel to this part of the Green Freeport site. **Without intervention to improve public transport services, employee and business travel to and from Invergordon and Nigg will be by car, generating additional vehicle kilometres and emissions.***

Policy ST3b: The RTS recognises that the decline in bus passenger numbers in the region needs to be reversed and supports measures to extend service coverage, improve frequencies, lengthen the operating day and make the network more integrated.

Policy ST3c: The RTS supports measures to reduce bus journey times between and within settlements in the region, including through the provision of bus priority measures

7.4   Community and Demand Responsive Transport

7.4.1   Whilst we strongly support the retention and development of a core rural bus network, we also recognise that there are instances where our spatially dispersed population cannot be affordably, practically or efficiently served by scheduled bus services. Indeed, community transport (CT) and Demand Responsive Transport (DRT) has been a long-term feature of the transport network in our region, connecting local residents to employment and services. For

example, the award winning 'm.connect' DRT service, operated by our partners at Moray Council, has over many years provided accessible door-to-door bus services for those who do not have a regular scheduled bus service and since May 2023 has provided the first such DRT service to operate across the entire local authority area.

7.4.2   There are various CT and DRT models in operation, with some operating a semi-fixed route and fixed timetable and others zonally based with no fixed start or end point. Taxis are also an important part of this solution in some areas. Providers include the public sector and charities. More recently, 'Enhanced' DRT (EDRT) services have emerged, which are technology-led DRT solutions using an app-based booking system, direct messaging, dynamic vehicle scheduling and GPS vehicle tracking. These may appeal to a new demographic who would otherwise not use DRT.

7.4.3   DRT and Enhanced DRT could be used to enhance or replace fixed route bus services across our region where there is insufficient demand or funding to justify a traditional timetabled bus service or a timetabled bus service at a meaningful level of frequency. This could include providing / supporting CT, DRT and EDRT services to:

- Supplement or replace timetabled bus services on routes where the frequency is low, including providing early morning, late evening or weekend services
- Reduce the need for passenger / patient transport to hospitals
- Provide connections to long-distance coach services
- Provide connections to railway stations

Case Study – Moove Flexi & m.connect Demand Responsive Transport Services

Moove Flexi is a demand responsive transport system aimed at improving the booking, operation and marketing of existing on-demand public transport services in the region. The project secured funding from Transport Scotland's MIF Round 2, The Scottish Government Islands team, Smarter Choices Smarter Places and two of HITRANS's European projects; G-PaTRA and MOVE. In December 2021, HITRANS awarded an initial 3-year contract to Liftango to deploy the system, which consists of a booking app, an operations portal and a driver's tablet. HITRANS has since worked with the company to develop branding, a website and onboard services to trial the system.

Moove Flexi has been successfully deployed in the Ferintosh Community Council (Black Isle) and has had a significant impact on service usage, contributing to yearly passenger totals increasing by over 100% from 2022 to 2023.

The system has also been introduced across Moray as part of the Council's rebranded m.connect service, formally known as Dial M for Moray. Since launching in May 2023, m.connect has also seen an increase in total passengers and a positive response to the new booking app with one passenger stating "I have found m.connect to be a game changer for me…the app gives me instant access to booking the journeys I need".

Other operators currently involved in the project include the Far North Bus who operate in Durness, Wheels in Nairnshire and Glenfarg Community Transport.

Moove Flexi provides operators the opportunity to boost the use and efficiency of their demand responsive services and give their users an alternative, more flexible booking option and receive status updates in real-time.

Policy ST3d: The RTS supports innovative alternatives to fixed route bus services where these can be affordably provided.

Policy ST3e: The RTS recognises the role which community transport and Demand Responsive Transport (DRT) plays in our most rural communities and supports its expansion and integration with timetabled services.

Policy ST3f: The RTS supports measures to widen the awareness and use of community transport, DRT and EDRT amongst all members of society.

Policy ST3g: The RTS recognises the role of taxis as a key element of transport provision in the region where community transport, DRT and EDRT services are not provided.

7.5 Railway services

7.5.1 The railway network in our region caters for a combination of long-distance travel to Aberdeen, the Central Belt and England and local journeys, predominantly in the Inner Moray Firth area (at least in terms of passenger numbers). A unique feature of this network is that its lengthy route sections (e.g., Perth – Inverness, Inverness – Wick / Thurso etc) are almost entirely single track. Indeed, **Inverness is the only rail-connected city in Britain[17] that is not served by a continuous double track railway in any direction**.

7.5.2 **Rail journey times across our region are therefore long**, with average speeds much slower than in the Central Belt and indeed much of the UK generally. This is largely a product of the very limited physical infrastructure and, in some cases such as the Far North Line, indirect routeing caused by the terrain e.g., major river firths.

7.5.3 The consequence of these long journey times is that the train is generally not competitive with the car for many journeys, for example Glasgow Queen Street – Fort William and Inverness – Wick / Thurso. Rail in the UK commonly enjoys significant journey time advantages for long-distance inter-urban connections (e.g., Edinburgh – London, Manchester - Cardiff etc.) but road-based journey times from Inverness to Aberdeen, Edinburgh, Glasgow and Perth are all competitive with rail. Long journey times are compounded by low frequency, often making the train unattractive for time critical journeys.

7.5.4 We recognise that, in most cases, significant journey time improvements can only be delivered through investment in e.g., improved signalling, line speed improvements, track (re)doubling to reduce the need to build in time for trains crossing in loops etc. The first STPR published in 2008 proposed a sub two-hour, hourly Aberdeen to Inverness journey time, while the Highland Mainline anticipated hourly services with a fastest journey time of 2:45, average times of 3:00. Neither of these proposed improvements have been delivered.

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[17] Only the very small and historic cities of Ripon (population 16,700), St Asaph (3,300), St Davids (1,900) and Wells (12,000) are not rail connected at all.

7.5.5 Whilst it is recognised that developing a business case for transformative investment in the Far North, Kyle and West Highland Lines will always be challenging, incremental measures can be pursued to support reduced journey times, including line speed improvements, level crossing enhancements or closures, timetable planning measures and conversion of some scheduled low demand stations to request only, (although this would only make a marginal difference). In the medium to long-term, new rolling stock with faster acceleration and deceleration profiles may also assist in reducing journey times.

7.5.6 A further consequence of the highly constrained railway infrastructure is that **rail service frequency across our region is extremely low**. For example, excluding the Caledonian Sleeper:

- Fort William has the lowest service frequency of any town of its size in the entirety of the UK, with only **three** trains per day in each direction to / from Glasgow Queen Street

- Inverness only has **13** services per day to and from the Central Belt (seven for Glasgow, five for Edinburgh and one travelling on to London Kings Cross)

- Similarly, Inverness only has **11** services per day to and from Aberdeen, although a further **six** services operate to Elgin.

7.5.7 **Frequency to / from Inverness is significantly lower** than other UK cities of a similar population such as Stirling, Dunfermline, Lancaster and Winchester. Rail **service frequency** *within* **our region is also very low**, with only four departures per day from Inverness to Kyle of Lochalsh and Wick / Thurso.

7.5.8 We strongly support increased rail service frequency to Aberdeen and the Central Belt but recognise that any transformational change will require the delivery of the committed improvements to the Highland Mainline and Aberdeen – Inverness Line. We would also support the operation of a Saturday evening Caledonian Sleeper service from Fort William and Inverness, at least in the summer months, where it could support the weekend short stay market in our vibrant visitor economy, and the inclusion of Oban as a sleeper destination.

7.5.9 In the shorter-term, there are opportunities to deliver more locally focused service improvements largely using existing infrastructure. These include, for example, operating additional local services in the Fort William area in the gaps between currently timetabled services and bringing weekend provision to a level equivalent to a standard weekday, recognising the national post-COVID-19 growth in leisure travel by rail. Our initiative of establishing the 'Invernet' services (the Inverness commuter market) has demonstrated how a good local rail product can grow passenger demand. This will be important if we are to provide a clear alternative to the car and ensure that our region makes its fair contribution to national vehicle kilometre and carbon reduction targets.

Case Study: Additional Dalmally – Oban service

In 2013, we worked with ScotRail to introduce an additional return service between Dalmally and Oban to facilitate travel to and from Oban High School. The morning service starts from Glasgow Queen Street at 05:20, providing an additional long-distance connection in both directions as this unit works back to the Central Belt in the evening, departing Oban at 18:11. This service replaced long-distance and expensive school bus connections from settlements

> *east of Oban as far as Dalmally. The timetable was built around this but offered a wider range of benefits, including:*
>
> - *Additional opportunities for residents to make local commuting, personal business, retail and leisure trips.*
> - *Improved connections for long-distance travellers from other parts of the country, especially tourists.*
> - *Enhanced irregular commuting possibilities into Glasgow due to the wider spread of departures at both ends of the school day.*
> - *Improved integration with the wide range of ferry services which operate from Oban.*
>
> *The new service led to a consistent and significant increase in use of the stations along this stretch of line. Use of Oban station grew by nearly 50% from 2013 to 2014 and demand remained consistent over the five years prior to the pandemic.*
>
> *There were a wide range of benefits for from a school transport perspective, including the reallocation of buses to strengthen other services, reduced late arrival at school due to traffic congestion, reduced journey times for pupils and fewer issues with pupil behaviour. Pupils were also able to engage in after school activities and return home on later trains. The same applied to those who were able to secure after school jobs.*

Policy ST3h: The RTS recognises that rail journey times to, from and within the region are typically longer than elsewhere in Scotland, and therefore supports measures to reduce these journey times.

Policy ST3i: The RTS supports the commitment to electrify the Highland Mainline and Aberdeen to Inverness as an opportunity to reduce rail journey times and improve reliability as part of the overall decarbonisation of the network.

Policy ST3j: The RTS recognises that very low rail service frequency often makes rail uncompetitive with the car and therefore supports measures which would facilitate increased rail service frequency, particularly between Inverness and Aberdeen, Edinburgh and Glasgow.

Policy ST3k: The RTS promotes and supports the development of additional local rail services focused on our regional centres.

Policy ST3l: The RTS supports infrastructure measures which would enable increased service frequency, such as the electrification of the Highland Mainline, Aberdeen to Inverness and improvements to the signalling system.

7.6   Railway stations

7.6.1   As in other rural areas of the UK such as Gwynedd, the Conwy Valley and Norfolk, the railway network plays an important role in supplementing local bus services, or indeed acting as the 'local bus service'. On lines of this nature, often basic stations are provided short distances apart, providing connectivity for small towns and villages to larger centres of population. This is a model which has worked well in our region, and we have a strong track record of supporting the delivery of new proportionate low-cost railway stations which support the local travel needs of communities, good examples of this being the single short platform stations at Beauly and Conon Bridge.

7.6.2   We have ambitions to open new stations in our region, with current proposals including Inverness East, Evanton, Faslane (for H.M. Naval Base Clyde), Torlundy (for the settlement and Nevis Range) and Carrs Corner (for Lochaber High School and Fort William).

7.6.3 Given the generally low travel volumes, it is important that **any future station in our region is delivered in a proportionate manner that minimises costs**. For example, Beauly and Conon Bridge were both delivered with short platforms at which only one set of carriage doors can open. This was however entirely appropriate for the level of demand ensured that a viable outcome could be realised.

Policy ST3m: The RTS supports the planning and delivery of new railway stations, including innovative solutions proportionate to the location, subject to the development of an appropriate business case.

7.7 How does this Strategy Theme contribute to our RTS Objectives?

7.7.1 The table below summarises how this Strategy Theme contributes to our RTS Objectives:

Table 7.1: Contribution of Strategy Theme 3 to our RTS Objectives

RTS Strategy Objectives	
SO1: To make a just transition to a post-carbon and more environmentally sustainable transport network	✓✓✓
SO2: To transform and provide safe and accessible connections between and within our city, towns and villages, to enable walking, wheeling and cycling for all	O
SO3: To widen access to public and shared transport and improve connectivity within and to / from the region	✓✓✓
SO4: To improve the quality and integration of public and shared transport within and from / to the region	✓
SO5: To ensure reliable, resilient, affordable and sustainable connectivity for all from / to our island, peninsular and remote communities	✓
SO6: To improve the efficiency, safety and resilience of our transport networks for people and freight and adapt to the impacts of climate change.	O

7.7.2 This Strategy Theme will make a highly positive contribution to facilitating our region's transition to a post-carbon and more environmentally sustainable transport network **(SO1)**. As has been detailed, the frequency and journey times offered on our bus and rail services are unattractive when compared to the car, and it is essential that this differential is reduced if our region is to fully contribute to national vehicle kilometre and carbon reduction targets.

7.7.3 Current levels of public transport connectivity are a significant barrier to regional economic growth and a contributory factor to transport poverty, inequality and social exclusion. Improvements to public transport connectivity to, from and within our region will widen access to public transport **(SO3)** and support a range positive economic and societal impacts.

7.7.4 By improving the coverage and frequency of public transport services and reducing journey times, this Strategy Theme will:

■ Improve the quality and integration of public and shared transport to, from and within our region **(SO4)**

■ Support our island communities through providing viable onward transport connections from ferry terminals and airports **(SO5)**

8 Strategy Theme 4: Improving the integration, quality of and access to public and shared transport

8.1 Overview

8.1.1 Whilst improving public transport connectivity is essential, the full benefits of this will not be realised if the services provided are poorly integrated, of low quality and not fully accessible. This Strategy Theme is therefore focused on addressing the impediments to travel by public transport, including interchange within and between modes, physical and other barriers for those less able and poor-quality facilities and travel information.

8.1.2 The figure below sets out the policy areas covered under this theme:

Public transport integration	Mobility hubs	Travelling with bicycles to and on public transport
Access to and the quality of bus services	Access to and the quality of rail services	Access to inter-island air services
Blue Badge parking	Improving public transport information	Improving digital coverage in our region
Supporting those less able to use our public transport network	Access to and the quality of taxi services	

Figure 8.1: Strategy Theme 4 – policy areas

8.2 Public transport integration

8.2.1 The ability to easily and conveniently (or seamlessly) switch from one bus to another or from a bus to a train is a factor which influences the attractiveness of public transport in any setting. However, it assumes a particular importance in our region for **two** reasons:

- Very **low public transport service frequency** across many parts of our region means that a missed connection can lead to a long wait for the next service or, in some instances, will require a costly overnight stay

- For those living in our **island communities**, almost all journeys to the mainland will require at least one interchange, often more

8.2.2 So, **what is meant by 'seamless integration'** – there are **three** components to this:

- The ability to reliably interchange between public transport services on **the same day and with minimum wait time**

- Transport interchange facilities that make it attractive and **physically easy to switch between services**, particularly for those with a mobility or sensory impairment or who are travelling with young children, luggage etc.

- Ideally, the ability to make a **door-to-door journey with a single ticket**

8.2.3 Enhancing integration within and between modes of transport reduces the actual and perceived barriers to multi-leg journeys, which in turn helps to ensure that public transport is seen as a viable alternative to the car.

8.2.4 A particular challenge faced in achieving seamless **bus-to-bus** and **bus-to-train** integration between services is competition between commercial operators. For example, Scottish Citylink competes with ScotRail on several long-distance routes, e.g., Oban to Glasgow. Whilst there are examples of integrated ticketing, for example the availability of PlusBus[18] tickets in Elgin, Fort William and Inverness, these are few and far between and are not widely used or promoted.

8.2.5 Timetable coordination is also difficult given often long route distances, particularly as some bus services need to be planned to accommodate school transport. Similarly, ScotRail timetables are heavily influenced by constraints imposed by the very limited infrastructure in our region and the availability of paths in the Central Belt for longer-distance services.

8.2.6 Improving integration will in many cases depend on being able to increase bus service frequency (increasing train service frequency is more difficult, although not impossible, as the Dalmally – Oban case study in the previous chapter highlights). However, there is potentially a case for a more radical review of the role of the supported bus network in terms of how it could be reorganised to more efficiently connect with coach and rail services, particularly given the opportunities presented by the Transport (Scotland) Act 2019. and alternative models of provision such as Community or Demand Responsive Transport solutions.

8.2.7 Connecting services are of critical importance to our **island communities** as **ferry** and **flight** passengers will only have a certain amount of time at their destination before their return trip. Long waits or missed connections significantly reduce meaningful time at destination and can on some occasions lead to a requirement for one or more costly overnight stays. This is **societally as well as financially important** – for example, for children who board at mainland (or island mainland) schools Sunday or Monday to Friday (e.g., Kirkwall Grammar, Mallaig High, Oban High etc), there is a desire to maximise time at home at the weekend, which assists with population retention.

8.2.8 One of the challenges with **bus-ferry integration** is that, if the ferry arrives late, the connecting bus will often depart before ferry passengers have disembarked. This is because the bus needs to maintain its other timetabled calls on the route (this is also an issue with **bus-air integration** but is less prominent as the bus routes are generally much shorter and, in some cases, will be dedicated services). One option would be to provide dedicated 'ferry buses' which operate direct from the ferry terminal to a destination such as Inverness, Thurso or Portree. These 'ferry buses' could either travel on the ferry on short crossings or meet the ferry on longer crossings and could be provided by CT, DRT or EDRT services as well as scheduled bus services. Good examples of this are local bus services in Orkney which are timed to connect with inter-island ferry services for Rousay, Egilsay and Wyre and Hoy and Flotta (albeit these are not specifically dedicated 'ferry buses').

8.2.9 There is also an issue around the certainty of getting a seat on the bus – some of the larger ferries operating in our region can on occasion carry up to 1,000 passengers, and thus there is

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[18] PlusBus is an add-on that can be bought in tandem with a train ticket to provide unlimited bus travel around the whole urban area of the rail-served town or city.

a risk that demand can overwhelm the capacity of a single bus or coach. In partnership with Comhairle nan Eilean Siar, we have previously underwritten the cost of an additional coach from Ullapool (which meets the ferry from Stornoway) over the summer to cater for whenever bookings for the service exceed the bus capacity more than 48 hours in advance. Innovative approaches such as this highlight how additional demand can be flexibly accommodated and high-quality integration delivered.

8.2.10   Integration of **rail and ferry** timetables is more challenging, as timetable planning for both modes (particularly rail) is constrained by infrastructure and operational parameters. However, opportunities to retime ferry services to better connect with trains should be considered where practicable. Similarly, the process of changing from ferry to rail and vice versa should be made as simple as possible, particularly where a connecting journey is required such as between Thurso and Scrabster (this is an example of a particularly poor interchange at present).

8.2.11   For our **island communities in Orkney**, it is important that inter-island air and ferry services are well integrated with Loganair, NorthLink and Pentland Ferries connections to the Scottish mainland. A particular consideration is the ability to make 'same day' connections to / from the Scottish mainland (e.g., from Westray to Inverness), including early morning and late evening arrivals and departures to / from the Scottish mainland, where practicable.

8.2.12   An important principle with respect to integration across all modes is **integrated ticketing**. At its most basic, this entails cross-operator ticket acceptance or 'combi' tickets such as PlusBus and 'Rail and Sail'. However, creating a seamless transport network will ultimately require fare capping or other such measures to reduce the cost of two or more fare trips, an issue addressed in Strategy Theme 11.

Policy ST4a: The RTS supports measures that will improve integration within and between modes of transport at key locations and transport interchanges in order to provide new travel options and alternatives to the private car, recognising the constraints within which this is possible (e.g., delivering school bus services).

Policy ST4b: The RTS supports integrated ticketing measures to simplify travel and improve the passenger experience.

Policy ST4c: The RTS supports the adoption of contract conditions for tendered and supported services that encourage operators to work in partnership to improve integration, timetable planning and coordination.

8.3   Mobility hubs

8.3.1   The potential creation of a network of **mobility hubs** across our region provides an important opportunity to improve, formalise and promote integration. Mobility hubs bring together shared transport with public transport and active travel in spaces designed to improve the public realm for all, supplemented by facilities such as EV charging points, bicycle parking and repairs etc. and high-quality travel information. Other community services such as Wi-Fi, parcel lockers and other urban realm improvements can also be provided. They offer a range of benefits for the customer (including visibility, convenience, safety and accessibility), transport providers and policy makers. There are already a number of mobility hubs in our region, including at the University of the Highlands and Islands' Inverness Campus.

8.3.2   Mobility hubs should be co-located with major transport interchanges such as Inverness Station, supplementing the role of high-frequency public transport within our settlements. They can be developed in a range of settings, from city centres to rural areas and at differing scales to suit local needs, which is particularly important in our region. Indeed, they provide a potential opportunity to 'rural proof' the 20-minute neighbourhood concept. It is important that local access to mobility hubs is facilitated by high quality active travel routes that enable safe walking, wheeling and cycling.

Case Study: Angus Rural Mobility Hub

Whilst there are many examples of mobility hubs across Europe, many of these are in urban areas, either cities or large towns. Whilst such solutions offer great promise for settlements such as Inverness, Elgin, Fort William etc, there is a wider question as to how this concept can be applied to our rural areas.

The emerging Angus Council Rural Mobility Hub, which is being delivered as part of the Tay Cities Deal provides an interesting example in this respect. The Rural Mobility Hub (RMH) will be co-located with a new clean growth energy park in Brechin, just off the A90 which, taken together, will integrate zero carbon energy systems with mobility services, enabling a 'smart mobility infrastructure'.

Transport opportunities that will be explored as part of the RMH include EV charging infrastructure; smart logistics solutions; EV car and fleet sharing; development of a digital platform to enable rural active travel and automation capabilities; bus interchange; trialling of on-demand public transport; micromobility connections (e-bikes and cargo bikes); changing washing and locker facilities; and connectivity to public amenities through safe and sheltered pedestrian and cycle routes. This is a good example of how a mobility hub of some considerable scale can be developed in a predominantly rural area.

https://investinangus.com/tay-cities-deal/the-angus-fund/low-carbon/angus-rural-mobility-hub/

Policy ST4d: The RTS supports the provision and enhancement of mobility hubs across the region, in line with a hierarchy reflecting local requirements.

8.4   Travelling with bicycles to and on public transport

8.4.1   Whilst cycling, alongside walking and wheeling, is at the top of the *Sustainable Transport Hierarchy*, provision for cyclists at public transport interchanges is patchy outwith the main settlements, whilst the public transport fleet used in our region is not always conducive to carrying a bicycle (although foldable bicycles can be more readily accommodated). Moreover, information on cycle parking, booking etc is often non-existent or out-of-date. **Making it easier to access public transport by bicycle** is therefore important to improving the overall quality of transport provision in our region.

8.4.2   The recent introduction of 'active travel carriages' to some West Highland Line services to create the ScotRail *Highland Explorer* product are a good example of what can be achieved in this area. These modified Class 153 units have 24 seats (20 seats around tables and four airline style seat), with the rest of the vehicle given over to the carriage of 20 bicycles, sporting equipment and large items of luggage. This is however a relatively short-term solution given the age of these units. The real opportunity presents itself in the requirement for **new rolling stock** over the next two decades, driven both by the requirement for decarbonisation and the age of the current fleet. We will work with partners, including *Scotland's Railway*, to influence future rolling stock specification, and will make the case for a specific **'rural' unit specification** suited to our region. Carriage of bicycles will be central to the case that we make.

8.4.3   We also recognise that, in many cases, cyclists prefer to leave their bicycle at the station. The provision of secure **bicycle parking** is therefore important, particularly at the main commuter stations such as Dingwall and Nairn. Given the cost of bicycles, and particularly e-bicycles, this should ideally be secure parking of the type shown in the image inset.

8.4.4 There is a wide range of bus vehicles in our region, from small minibuses through to large coaches, and the ability to carry bicycles varies, although is generally very limited. We support the provision of **facilities for bicycles on buses** and indeed our **'Bikes on Buses'**[19] scheme is a practical initiative to support integrated active travel and public transport journeys. However, we also recognise that there are several practical challenges to this including space and safety. To this end, we also call for the provision of **new, extended or upgraded secure bicycle parking** at high volume bus stations / stops and in other key locations such as town centres, major employment sites and transport interchanges, potentially as part of a wider mobility hub arrangement (see **Policy ST4d**).

8.4.5 Provision of facilities is of course only half of the solution. The process of taking a bicycle on a train or bus or parking it at a station or stop can be problematic. For many journeys, it is not possible to book carriage space or a secure bicycle parking space and thus uncertainty is introduced into the journey. The **provision of clear, correct and regularly updated information** is therefore essential, with new technology providing an opportunity to improve the **efficiency of booking** and the provision to book your bike via the Scotrail app is a welcome improvement.

> **Policy ST4e:** The RTS supports measures which will enable people to leave their bicycle in a secure environment at a bus stop / station, railway station, ferry terminal or airfield.
>
> **Policy ST4f:** The RTS supports, where practical, the provision of increased bicycle capacity on public transport services within the region.
>
> **Policy ST4g:** The RTS supports the simplification of the process of taking a bicycle both to and onto a bus or train.
>
> **ST4h:** The RTS supports more widespread journeys which combine bicycle and public transport.

8.5 Access to and the quality of bus services

8.5.1 The sheer breadth of the bus network across our region means that there are also significant differences in the quality of vehicles, bus stops, bus stations and the overall customer experience. Raising the quality of bus services and making them fully accessible to all is therefore an important component of an overall package of measures to facilitate and encourage both more journeys by bus and mode switch to the bus.

8.5.2 At **bus stops**, improvements could include the provision of dropped kerbs; new sections of footway to improve access; improved bus shelters, including provision of seating and up-to-date travel information; and measures to improve security of passengers such as lighting[20] and CCTV, particularly where anti-social behaviour is known to be a problem. As well as these improvements, regional **bus stations** should incorporate appropriate high quality waiting facilities such as real time information, a covered and seated waiting area and accessible toilet facilities. In designing and delivering new bus station and bus stop infrastructure, it is important that the most **up-to-date equalities design guidance** is followed. This may include *Inclusive Mobility*, the Department for Transport's best practice design guidance on access to pedestrian and transport infrastructure, and Scottish guidance within which inclusive design principles are incorporated.

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[19] The 'Bikes on Buses' scheme was introduced in 2021 and allows commuters and visitors to the region to take their bikes on popular Highland bus routes. A booking service is operated to guarantee a seat to accompany free carriage of the bike - https://hitrans.org.uk/News/Story/1284

[20] Consideration would need to be given to what is appropriate, particularly in rural locations where excessive lighting has potential to cause environmental and amenity disturbance.

8.5.3   Improvements to the **bus vehicle fleet** will also be important, including the provision of a fully accessible and comfortable fleet, well-trained drivers and mechanically sound vehicles. We specifically recognise that many bus journeys to, from and within our region are of a long duration, meaning that passengers experience significant dead time when travelling. It is our aspiration that bus travel should enable meaningful working time through the provision of high-quality seating, tables, Wi-Fi etc.

Case Study: TrawsCymru

TrawsCymru is a medium-to-long distance strategic bus network, connecting major towns in Wales. The network consists of a mix of longer distance and shorter distance routes and is funded by Welsh Government, managed by Transport for Wales (TfW), and delivered through seven bus operators contracted by local authorities.

The TrawsCymru network fills an essential role in the overall public transport network in Wales. The geography and spatial distribution of the population means that, throughout much of the country, the scope for the operation of commercial bus services is limited. TrawsCymru therefore responds to the public transport connectivity challenges faced outwith the metropolitan areas of Wales. In some respects, it acts like a long-distance coach service connecting, for example, Newtown with Cardiff and Carmarthen with Aberystwyth. However, there is a recognition that the TrawsCymru service may be the only bus service available to certain communities and thus, unlike most express coach services, its stopping pattern will connect local settlements along the route. Moreover, TrawsCymru generally complements the railway network, either through:

- *Providing a public transport connection where there is no direct railway line, Barmouth to Wrexham for example.*

- *Providing bus-rail interchange opportunities, for example connecting the university town of Lampeter to Aberystwyth and Carmarthen.*

- *Supplementing low frequency rail services, for example along the Conwy Valley between Llandudno and Blaenau Ffestiniog.*

This multi-faceted role as long-distance coach operator and 'local' bus service is essential in providing public transport connectivity which would otherwise not exist, therefore reducing car dependency and inequalities associated with 'forced' car ownership. Moreover, TrawsCymru provides a consistent product for customers in terms of branding, vehicles, accessibility, fares, certainty of supply etc, providing increased customer confidence and also making it easier to use and more marketable to visitors. It also provides very high-quality vehicles which are attractive to passengers making medium to long-distance trips – amenities include tables, reliable wi-fi, the ability to carry luggage and foldable bikes and the provision of comfortable seats. Importantly, integrated and discounted ticketing is offered with selected TfW operated rail services, thus reducing cost significantly.

Policy ST4i: The RTS supports the provision of consistent standards of facilities at bus stations and bus stops reflecting location and usage.

Policy ST4j: Our bus network should be safe secure and fully accessible to all.

Policy ST4k: Our bus network should provide a high-quality and consistent onboard experience.

Policy ST4l: Travel on buses to, from and within the region should, where possible, enable meaningful working time.

8.6 Access to and the quality of rail services

8.6.1 Relative to bus services, the passenger experience for rail passengers is typically much more consistent and generally of a higher quality, although there remains scope to raise standards.

8.6.2 Whilst our region offers some of the most scenic rail journeys in the world (which are popular with visitors as an attraction in their own right), the **quality of the on-train experience** is variable. Services on the Highland Mainline and Aberdeen – Inverness Line are often operated by Class 170 or 158 Diesel Multiple Unit stock more suited to urban routes or shorter distance regional routes or 1970s-built (although significantly refurbished) High Speed Train (HST) stock. On the West Highland Line and Far North Line, services are operated by 1980s built Class 156 or 158 stock cascaded from the Central Belt. These units, particularly Class 156 trains, are not ideal for the length of the journey and offer limited space for bicycles, luggage etc. (although the addition of modified Class 153s for cycle carriage has addressed this issue on selected services to some degree).

8.6.3 On train-provision in terms of e.g., catering, toilets, wi-fi etc is often less than would perhaps be expected given journey lengths and well below the standard found on 'signature' routes abroad. On certain units, the seats are not well-aligned with the windows, which means that passengers cannot always fully appreciate the views, which for some is why they are making the journey in the first place.

8.6.4 Providing a higher quality on-train experience for the passenger is an important element of growing the customer base and encouraging mode shift to rail. Central to this will be the rolling stock replacement over the next 10 years, and we have already stated our desire for a rural unit specification suited to operating in our region. However, shorter-term improvements such as improved on-train catering could also make a meaningful improvement to the passenger experience.

8.6.5 Our region also incorporates a diverse set of **railway stations**, ranging from city and town centre stations such as Inverness and Elgin to small unmanned rural halts such as Beasdale and Scotscalder. By dint of this, facilities and manning levels also vary significantly. In most cases, the level of facilities provided is proportionate to patronage. Nonetheless, facilities at several stations are sub-optimal, particularly in terms of level access to both the platform and

the trains. In addition, rural stations can also feel isolated and passengers can on occasion have long waits with very limited facilities. Request to Stop machines at rural locations can provide security through the provision of real time running information, in addition to the performance and environmental benefits, and we would support further roll-out on Kyle and West Highland routes.

8.6.6   The key action required in relation to station improvements is to **improve access for all**, particularly where there is no step free access to the station. The accessibility of all railway stations is assigned to one of three categories, as follows:

- **Category A:** The station has step-free access to and between all platforms, at all times trains are running, via level access, lifts or ramps
- **Category B:** The station does not meet Category A standards but has step-free access to either all platforms or one platform
- **Category C:** The station has no step free access to any platform[21]

8.6.7   Of the stations in our region:

- **28% (21 stations)** are **Category A**, although Nairn does not fall under this category and is a particularly obvious outlier
- **59% (44 stations)** are **Category B**, although the access to many of these stations is over rough and uneven ground unsuited to e.g., wheelchairs, mobility aids, prams etc.
- **12% (9 stations)** are **Category C**, including Bridge of Orchy, Crianlarich and Nairn[22]

8.6.8   In the immediate term, provision of information on where access to a station is not step free, and advice on alternative arrangements continues to be essential. More generally, stations would benefit from upgrades (e.g., waiting areas, customer toilets etc); continued high quality station appearance, potentially through the *Scotland's Railway* Station Adoption programme; and a wider roll-out of the automated request stop kiosks which have recently been introduced on the Far North Line.

Policy ST4m: The RTS supports the provision of more consistent standards of facilities at railway stations, reflecting station usage.

Policy ST4n: Our railway network should be safe, secure and fully accessible to all.

Policy ST4o: The RTS supports the continuation and expansion of the *Scotland's Railway* Adoption Programme and other measures to enhance the station environment.

8.7   Access to and the quality of ferry services

8.7.1   Some of the ferries around our region and the ports which accommodate them are old and fall well below modern accessibility standards, their continued operation protected by 'grandfather rights'. This issue is perhaps most extreme on lift-on, lift-off routes in Orkney (Graemsay, North Ronaldsay and Papa Westray) but can be found across the network. Passengers regularly experience having to board ferries over steep gangways and linkspans and face other obstacles onboard the vessels including steep stairs and door sills.

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[21] *Accessible Travel Policy – Guidance for Train and Station Operators* (ORR, 2019), p. 46.
[22] https://www.scotrail.co.uk/media/3504/download?inline

8.7.2   Passenger comfort on some routes (e.g., the CalMac Ferries Ltd Gourock – Dunoon route) can be an issue for some, but it is generally a much less prevalent problem than physical access.

8.7.3   These problems will be progressively resolved through the introduction of new tonnage and port infrastructure which meets Equality Act 2010 requirements. However, options to improve existing vessels through the introduction of lifts, ramps etc should also be explored.

Policy ST4p: Our ferry network should be safe, secure and fully and easily accessible to all. This includes both shore-to-vessel access and movement around the vessel itself.

8.8   Access to inter-island air services

8.8.1   Inter-island air services in the Orkney Islands and Argyll and Bute are exclusively operated by 8-9 seat single pilot Britten-Norman *Islander* aircraft. These aircraft are ideally suited to the operating environment in the Inner Hebrides and Orkney but are challenging to access for Persons of Reduced Mobility – indeed, any passengers carried must be able to self-evacuate the aircraft. This issue will however only be addressed through the long-term replacement of the *Islander* aircraft, but there is not as yet an obvious candidate aircraft and thus this may be a challenging point to resolve in the medium-term.

Policy ST4q: The RTS recognises that there is not a short-term solution to the accessibility issues with the Argyll and Bute and Orkney inter-island air services. We will keep abreast of developments in technology and new aircraft types and, in the meantime, continue to work with partners to support alternative options such as the Scottish Ambulance Service.

8.9   Blue Badge parking

8.9.1   Whilst the RTS generally has a presumption against new parking provision, it is important that an appropriate number of disabled parking bays are provided, particularly as our region's population is forecast to age. Disabled parking availability is of particular importance at 'honeypot' tourist locations if equitable access is to be enjoyed.

Policy ST4r: The RTS supports sufficient provision and better enforcement of Blue Badge parking across the region.

8.10   Access to and the quality of taxi services

8.10.1 The taxi industry across our constituent authorities is commercial in nature, with Councils fulfilling a licencing role. It is however an essential industry, providing connections to transport interchange points such as railway stations, ferry terminals and airports / airfields, whilst also providing essential connectivity where public transport is limited or non-existent.

8.10.2 Recognising the importance of taxis in our region in facilitating essential journeys and filling connectivity gaps, we support the continual development of the industry as a vital component of the transport network. Of particular importance is increasing the number of fully accessible taxis and ensuring a consistent taxi licencing and enforcement programme. However, improvements in relation to customer experience and security would also be beneficial – these could include, for example, the option of a text booking service for those with a hearing impairment, training in customer care for drivers and increased in-vehicle CCTV coverage.

Policy ST4s: The RTS recognises the important role of taxis as part of the overall transport mix in the region. It supports partnership working with licencing authorities and taxi providers to raise standards of provision where required and to facilitate the expansion of the network.

Policy ST4t: The RTS supports the provision of taxi services which are fully accessible in terms of booking and vehicle access.

8.11 Supporting those less able to use our public transport network

8.11.1 Accessing public transport services can be difficult or impossible for some users because of physical barriers. In addition, the tasks and experiences inherent in undertaking independent public transport travel can also pose challenges for some, such as those with autism and cognitive impairments, dementia for example. Such issues can be particularly significant for island residents for whom the use of multiple modes of transport operating on irregular timetables may be required. This results in people either choosing to travel by car or not travelling at all which in turn can limit access to employment, education, and social opportunities as well as key services.

8.11.2 To ensure that all residents of our region can participate fully in society, we advocate measures to support those less able to use our public transport network. These include, but are not limited to: provision of accessibility / disability awareness training (including dementia training) for drivers and other support staff, e.g., those working at railway stations, travel centres etc; chaperoning services for vulnerable users; the provision of all online content in accessible formats and ensuring that it is up-to-date; and the provision of all published material in multiple formats (e.g., Braille, large print, different languages etc).

Policy ST4u: A key component of making travel accessible to all, the RTS supports measures to remove barriers to travel, including increased staff training, passenger chaperones and the provision of physical and online travel information in accessible formats.

8.12 Improving public transport information

8.12.1 The range of modes (walking, wheeling, cycling, bus, rail, ferry and air), diversity of the geography and the number of public transport operators across our region can make public transport journeys difficult to understand and plan, particularly for visitors, who will be less familiar with the area.

8.12.2 It is essential that everyone has access to the information that they need to be able to plan and make journeys, and enable them to make the right choice for them when faced with a range of what can be confusing travel options. To be accessible to all, public transport information should be available in a wide range of formats including online sources, dedicated apps, hard copy, large print, braille and audio.

8.12.3 It is particularly important that reliable and up-to-date information is provided at bus stops, railway stations and transport interchanges. Where there has been investment in 'screen' based information, these facilities need to be maintained and populated with meaningful information. At higher volume

locations, this could include real-time information. However, as a minimum, physical timetable information should be provided at bus stops, travel centres and community facilities (for those without access to the internet). We will continue to work with partner councils and local bus operators to improve the quality and consistency of information provision at transport nodes across the region.

8.12.4 Apps have also become a prominent feature of journey planning and making – in many respects, they have transformed journeys by instantly providing real-time information within and across modes. However, there are plethora of such apps and some are more useful than others, and this can be bewildering for occasional users and visitors. It is important therefore that there is a consistency of information between apps and that customers know where to look for information, particularly visitors to our region. Our GO-HI has an important role to play in this respect.

> ### Case Study: GO-HI App
>
> *Go-HI is a groundbreaking Mobility-as-a-Service (MaaS) platform, which we launched in June 2021. Its aim is to improve accessibility to integrated transport services for residents, tourists and business travellers in our region and beyond.*
>
> *The free-to-use app integrates multiple transport and travel options into one platform, providing more reliable journey planning capabilities, easier access to travel information, in-app ticketing and a hassle-free payment system. GO-HI has integrated API data feeds to enable passengers to plan book and pay for travel by air, bus, coach, car club, ferry, folding bike, e-Bike and train.*
>
> *GO-HI has been developed with support from Transport Scotland's MaaS (Mobility-as-a-Service) Investment Fund. The Fund's aim is to test, in a practical application, the viability of MaaS in Scotland.*
>
> *The success of the app was recognised in 2023 with awards for innovation at the Transport Times Scottish Transport Awards, SCDI Business Awards and CiTTi Magazine awards.*

Policy ST4v: The RTS supports the maintenance and expansion of at-stop / at-station multi-modal real-time information.

Policy ST4w: The RTS promotes the simplification and consolidation of travel planning and in-journey information to make travel easier for less frequent users.

Policy ST4x: The RTS supports the further development of the GO-HI travel app.

Policy ST4y: The RTS supports the provision of up-to-date physical travel information at bus stops, and the removal of out-of-date information.

8.13 Improving digital coverage in our region

8.13.1 Over the last decade, digital connectivity has assumed an increasingly prominent role in transport and travel. From a customer perspective, this has taken the form of web and app-based travel information, electronic ticketing (e.g., smartcards, mobile tickets, car parking etc) and technologies such as Apple Car Play. For transport providers, the provision of travel information and ticket retailing has significantly shifted towards digital media, whilst wireless technology has become operationally essential, e.g., bus ticket machines.

8.13.2 In order to take advantage of the opportunities offered, high-quality digital connectivity is essential, including 4G / 5G coverage, adequate broadband speeds and DAB radio signal. By dint of its rural nature and sparse population, digital coverage across our region varies enormously. Whilst not directly a transport issue, patchy digital connectivity will limit the benefits of modern technology in the region including the delivery of e.g., online health

appointments, and will cause inequalities and social exclusion where connectivity is at its poorest.

> ***Case Study: Scottish 4G Infill Programme***
>
> *The Scottish 4G Infill (S4GI) programme is a joint Scottish Government and European Regional Development Fund investment to expand 4G coverage in 55 mobile 'notspots' (many of which are in our region) through the erection of phone masts. The project was completed by the end of 2023, with mobile network operator EE providing 4G services across all bar one of the new sites, although all sites are capable of supporting multiple operators in the future.*
>
> *The S4GI programme has provided members of the 55 affected communities with a transformational improvement in their digital connectivity. From a transport perspective, residents of these communities can now access websites and apps that they could not previously, facilitating e.g., ticket booking, journey planning, live journey update information etc. Digital connectivity is also vital for the operation and maintenance of EV charging points.*

Policy ST4z: The RTS Calls for improved cross-provider digital connectivity across the region to facilitate access to travel information for all (including in-car information), enable meaningful working time when travelling by public transport and to help reduce the need to travel where possible.

8.14 How does this Strategy Theme contribute to our RTS Objectives?

8.14.1 The table below summarises how this Strategy Theme contributes to our RTS Objectives:

Table 8.1: Contribution of Strategy Theme 4 to our RTS Objectives

RTS Strategy Objectives	
SO1: To make a just transition to a post-carbon and more environmentally sustainable transport network	✓✓✓
SO2: To transform and provide safe and accessible connections between and within our city, towns and villages, to enable walking, wheeling and cycling for all	O
SO3: To widen access to public and shared transport and improve connectivity within and to / from the region	✓✓
SO4: To improve the quality and integration of public and shared transport within and from / to the region	✓✓✓
SO5: To ensure reliable, resilient, affordable and sustainable connectivity for all from / to our island, peninsular and remote communities	✓✓
SO6: To improve the efficiency, safety and resilience of our transport networks for people and freight and adapt to the impacts of climate change.	O

8.14.2 High quality and well-integrated public and shared transport is at the heart of our approach to achieving a just transition to a post-carbon and more environmentally sustainable transport network **(SO1)**. Enhancing connectivity is good and well, but many journeys in our region require interchange within and between modes and are also very long. Seamless integration and a high-quality waiting and on-vehicle experience, including the ability to undertake meaningful work, is therefore integral to encouraging journeys by public transport. This Strategy Theme therefore strongly supports **SO3** and **SO4**.

8.14.3 For those living in our island communities, all journeys consist of at least three legs – i.e., travel to the ferry terminal / airport; the journey on the ferry or aircraft; and an onward journey to a final destination. Moreover, these journeys are often time constrained, with a requirement to make a return connection to the island, either on the same day or a different day. For those travelling without a car, seamless and reliable integration between modes is essential in

maximising meaningful time at the ultimate destination. This Strategy Theme therefore supports **SO5**.

9 Strategy Theme 5: Providing connectivity that supports our island and peninsular communities

9.1 Overview

9.1.1 A unique feature of our region that sets it apart from almost all others in the United Kingdom is the number of island and peninsular communities contained within it, over 50 in total. Indeed, two of our constituent members – Comhairle nan Eilean Siar and Orkney Islands Council – are wholly island authorities, whilst the Moray Council area is the only part of our region with no island or peninsular communities.

9.1.2 The number of island and peninsular communities in our region is however just a small part of the story. This grouping of communities is often thought of, referred to and planned for as a single homogenous entity, with islands treated in the generality. These communities are however extremely diverse in terms of population size, economic structure, culture and history. For example, Islay's prominence in the Scotch whisky industry means that it has an industrial and export-focused economy whereas, at the other end of the scale, communities such as North Uist and Graemsay are predominantly focused on crofting. Our RTS specifically recognises for this point – whilst it defines overarching policies for island and peninsular communities, it explicitly recognises that the actions required to deliver these policies may vary by community.

9.1.3 Common across all these communities is the key role of ferry services, and in some cases air services, in facilitating travel for business, health, education, tourism and the functioning of supply-chains. However, with regards to **ferry services**, the absence of new ferries in recent years means that severe reliability, capacity and resilience issues have emerged, and these are having detrimental impacts on some of our communities. In addition, a shortage of ferries and funding pressures mean that the level of connectivity offered is often not meeting the needs of our communities. These problems are set against the wider backdrop of the requirement to decarbonise the ferry fleets in our region.

9.1.4 The geography and topography of our region means that **aviation** has a key role to play in reducing peripherality, both in terms of strengthening existing routes and considering how the network could be expanded to connect other communities.

9.1.5 One way in which the connectivity of island and peninsular communities has historically been improved in our region is through **fixed links**, significantly reducing journey times between communities. This has included fixed links across major river firths (e.g., Moray, Cromarty and Dornoch), between island communities and the Scottish mainland (e.g., Skye) and between islands (e.g., Scalpay to Harris). Fixed links have the potential to transform the economic and social structure of communities, offering many benefits, although also increasing the risk of loss of local identity and the centralisation of services. Given the recent ferry-related resilience and cost challenges, the potential of fixed links as means of transforming connectivity in our region must be considered.

9.1.6 This Strategy Theme is therefore focused on improving the connectivity and reducing the peripherality of island and peninsular communities through improved ferry and air services, and potentially fixed links.

9.1.7 The figure below sets out the policy areas covered under this theme:

Connectivity of island and peninsular communities	Booking and ticketing arrangements	Managing capacity on ferry services
Modernising ferry fleets and infrastructure	Converting Lo-Lo routes to Ro-Ro	Air network coverage
Inter-island air services	Fixed links	

Figure 9.1: Strategy Theme 5 – policy areas

9.2 Connectivity of island and peninsular communities

9.2.1 The concept of **'connectivity'** in relation to public transport was introduced under Strategy Theme 3. To recap, there are three components to this:

- **Network geographical coverage:** The bus, community and demand responsive transport, rail, ferry and air services that collectively form a network of connections for our communities

- **Timetables / connections:** The number of days on which a service operates, the frequency at which it operates and the time of the first and last service

- **Journey times and journey time reliability:** How long the journey takes, including the time on-vehicle and 'door-to-door' journey time, and the extent to which the service turns-up and arrives on time

9.2.2 In the context of ferry services, there is an additional dimension to this, namely their role in meeting the service delivery, visitor and inbound and outbound **supply-chain** and **service delivery** needs of communities. These needs often necessitate a different set of service requirements. For most resident travel, the desire is for an early service off-island and late evening return, maximising the time on mainland. Conversely, supply-chains are often (although not always) orientated around early morning arrivals into an island and a late evening or even overnight sailing off-island to tie into logistics hubs in Inverness and the Central Belt. The delivery of services, such as visiting health professionals, itinerant teacher cover, utilities providers etc, generally requires a timetable that facilitates a half-day or working-day on island.

9.2.3 A feature of many ferry services is their use by visitors – many routes experience a significant summer / winter variation in demand. For example, in calendar year 2022, CalMac carrying statistics show that **76%** of all passengers who travelled on the Oban – Craignure route did so in five months between April and September (with **30%** in July and August alone). Much of this visitor demand is also clustered around certain days (e.g., Saturday) and sailings. This

9.2.4   Meeting the sometimes competing connectivity needs of residents, visitors, service providers and the supply-chain is challenging. Whilst most islands have a daily connection to and from the Scottish or 'island' mainland (e.g., Orkney Mainland), it is in many cases not a 'meaningful' connection in terms of allowing the desired activities to be undertaken in a day. The term 'meaningful' varies by island type – for example, for islands close to the mainland, this may be a service which facilitates commuting to employment or education whilst, for more distant islands, this may be the ability to travel for a medical appointment, a tradesperson visit or to undertake a shopping trip and return on the same day.

9.2.5   The absence of 'meaningful' time on-mainland and / or on-island can constrain an island economy and society or increase the cost of doing business or providing services there. For example, it is not possible for a fuel supplier to make a meaningful day return trip to some islands in the winter months as the last ferry departure leaves 30-45 minutes after the first arrival. This leads to significant standing time for the vehicle and potentially the driver, and cost to the business / customer. Similarly, residents of Colonsay cannot make a day-return trip to Oban on all days, meaning an overnight stay is required when such trips are made.

9.2.6   Our aspiration over this RTS period is therefore to **work towards a 'meaningful' day on-mainland and on-island** for island communities across our region (this is less of an issue for peninsular communities). There are some short-term measures which could assist this including:

- Operating **additional services with existing vessels**. This would though require an increase in crew complement, which presents its own challenges in terms of recruitment and, for vessel-based crew, accommodating them. The impact of additional sailings on reliability and resilience would also have to be considered.

- Deployment of **additional charter vessels to supplement the existing fleet** – there is precedent for this with the summer deployment of MV *Alfred* on the Arran run and the repeated deployment of MV *Arrow* on the Stornoway – Ullapool and Aberdeen – Kirkwall / Lerwick routes. The scarcity of suitable vessels, especially for short-term charter, and the cost of such charters mean that this can only ever be a stop-gap option.

- **Timetable amendments**, particularly where it would allow a vessel to be based on-island (or at either side of a crossing when there are two vessels, e.g., Bute)

- **Working with commercial airlines to provide the necessary connectivity**, albeit it is of a different nature to that offered by ferry services

9.2.7   Whilst the above options could assist in progressing towards a meaningful day on-mainland and on-island, the scope for any major expansion of services is limited significantly by the number of available vessels and crew, as well as the cost of operating such services. The ultimate realisation of this aspiration will require both infrastructure investment, and additional revenue funding / human resource.

9.2.8   An issue facing a number of communities is the absence of **seven-day connectivity** (primarily in the winter months) or a reduction in Sunday connectivity to the extent that it does not allow meaningful return journeys to be made. There is also **no winter service** on some routes (e.g., Nigg – Cromarty) or a **much-diminished winter service** (e.g., Mallaig – Armadale and Mallaig – Small Isles). A further variation of this is the **refit ferry timetable for the Orkney Outer North Isles**, which leads to a significant diminution in connectivity. The absence of a connection on one or more days a week can be highly detrimental to an island community, requiring overnight stays when a return journey cannot be completed in a day or the service is disrupted. For some islands, this is difficult to resolve within the current resources. However, for other islands, the reduction in connectivity is due to low demand and the high-cost of operating the service. Whilst we acknowledge that additional services would

operate at a deficit, delivering seven-day connectivity by ferry (and air where appropriate) would be beneficial to communities.

Policy ST5a: The RTS supports the provision of longer daily time on-mainland and on-island where this is required for the long-term sustainability of a community.

Policy ST5b: The RTS supports the provision of services which minimise the requirement for one or more overnight stays.

Policy ST5c: Where practicable, the RTS supports the operation of additional sailings on the supported ferry networks within the region.

Policy ST5d: The RTS supports year-round seven-day connections for island and peninsular communities where this is required for the long-term sustainability of a community and enjoys public support.

9.3   Booking and ticketing arrangements

9.3.1   The growing pressure on ferry vehicle deck capacity in the summer months, particularly on parts of the CHFS network and in Orkney, means that the efficiency of the **ferry booking process and ticketing arrangements** is becoming increasingly important. Whilst booking and ticketing arrangements vary across Scotland, there is a general desire to see booking systems opened earlier and for island residents to have access to more convenient ticketing options, such as longer duration multi-journey books, increased use of mobile and electronic ticketing and integrated ferry and rail / bus tickets.

9.3.2   All ferry tickets are available on a **first come, first served basis** at present. A key issue raised by island communities is that visitors typically plan much further ahead and therefore often book the vehicle deck capacity on the most popular sailings early, leaving little or no space for residents who may be travelling at shorter notice (albeit essential resident travel for e.g., a funeral is almost always accommodated). There has been a longstanding debate as to whether residents should be afforded a degree of priority and, at the time of writing, a trial is underway in Mull, Coll and Tiree whereby a certain proportion of vehicle deck space is held back in the booking system for local residents until 72 hours before departure. Other groups such as freight customers also make the case for guaranteed space, and on some routes, this is offered through block booking systems.

9.3.3   The question of prioritisation and indeed general transparency and consistency around the release and management of vehicle deck space on ferry services is one which needs to be considered and resolved over the RTS period.

Policy ST5e: The booking and ticketing arrangements for ferry services in the region should support the convenience and efficiency of travel for all.

Policy ST5f: The RTS calls for the earlier opening of ferry booking systems and increased transparency around the release and management of vehicle deck space.

9.4 Managing capacity on ferry services

9.4.1 A major pressure on ferry services across our region is capacity. On most routes, this relates to the carriage of vehicles, whilst cabin capacity can also be an issue on the NorthLink Aberdeen – Kirkwall – Lerwick route. With some limited exceptions (e.g., certain sailings on the Oban – Craignure route), passenger capacity is almost always sufficient. A particular challenge for most ferry operators in Scotland is adjusting supply to reflect demand – winter carryings are typically low and summer carryings high, with some routes such as Uig – Tarbert / Lochmaddy, Oban – Craignure and Houton – Lyness / Flotta experiencing pronounced summer peaks.

9.4.2 However, despite public perceptions, capacity utilisation data highlights that, on most routes, it is particular sailings or sailing days that are problematic, rather than capacity across the piece, although this may not be the case during periods of service disruption, which have become far more frequent in recent years. Addressing these issues through adding capacity is difficult in the short-term - the fleet and crew that ferry operators in our region work with is largely fixed, outwith some minor increments in crew to expand services and the occasional use of charter vessels.

9.4.3 There are however opportunities to better manage the capacity on our ferry services, through a combination of **fares-based measures** and the **more efficient use of existing vessels**.

9.4.4 At present, ferry fares on most routes are the same across the year and, with limited exceptions such as the NorthLink seasonal fares. There is no use of pricing to manage demand, as happens in parts of the railway and airline industries. There are very good reasons for this, including the terms of operator contracts; the desire to maintain a simple fares system; and to avoid generating inequalities for those who have little flexibility in their choice of sailing. However, capacity constraints impose costs on our island communities, and we support a position where **price incentives are introduced to encourage off-peak travel**. This support is predicated on **two conditions**:

- **No fares are increased** for any community
- Any measures would need to be introduced manner that led to **'no net detriment' for the operator**, therefore implying additional subsidy

9.4.5 There are many different options for introducing price incentives to encourage off-peak travel and these could vary by route, route group or network. Potential options include:

- Fares differentials to **incentivise the use of quieter sailings** by time of day or week

- Fares differentials to **incentivise foot-passenger travel rather than taking a car onboard** (although it should be noted that current ticketing systems do not differentiate between foot passengers and passengers in a car, so this issue would have to be resolved)

- Provision or extension of price incentives to move **commercial traffic and potentially unaccompanied cars on freight sailings** (currently Aberdeen – Kirkwall / Lerwick or Stornoway – Ullapool only)

- Provision of **incentives to use an alternative route**, e.g., Lochaline – Fishnish rather than Oban – Craignure when travelling from Mull

- Specifically on the NIFS services, further **promotion of the 'land bridge' offer on the Stromness – Scrabster route** to release space on Kirkwall – Aberdeen sailings

9.4.6   Price is course only one of the mechanisms that can be used to manage demand and capacity – two other complimentary strategies can be pursued:

- Implementing measures to **make more efficient use of existing capacity** such as, for example: improved management of block bookings; improved management of commercial vehicles and motorhomes where they prevent the deployment of mezzanine decks; advertised freight only sailings; and coordination of different traffic types to minimise conflicts between users

- Providing better **options for travelling without a car**, including enhanced active travel, public transport and shared mobility options for travelling to and from ferry terminals, potentially allied with increased parking capacity at ferry terminals. This measure could be reinforced through offering reduced or free passenger fares

Policy ST5g: The RTS supports the principle of Road Equivalent Tariff (RET). However, where service frequency permits, controlled use of peak times / surge pricing could be used to help manage demand, recognising that this would need to be at no net detriment to the connectivity of island and peninsular communities.

Policy ST5h: The RTS supports operational measures which maximise the efficient management of vehicle deck space on sailings.

Policy ST5i: The RTS supports measures to improve door-to-door journeys through enhancing active travel, public transport and shared mobility connections to and from ferry terminals, combined with other measures to reduce the need to take a car onboard.

9.5   Modernising ferry fleets and infrastructure

9.5.1   The recent and well-publicised reliability problems on several Scottish ferry routes highlight the need for new vessels. The 'rule of thumb' in relation to vessels operating in Scottish waters is that they should be replaced when they are circa 30-years old. However, there are now a considerable number of vessels which are older than this, with many others between 20 and 30 years old. Some networks, such as those operated by Orkney Islands Council[23] and Argyll & Bute Council have not seen a newbuild vessel introduced to their fleet this century, and this is clearly not a sustainable position.

9.5.2   Throughout 2023, the risks associated with depending on ageing vessels materialised. Cancellations and vessel redeployments due to vessel breakdowns on the CHFS network have been extensive, with communities suffering from the impacts of this – e.g., the service to

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[23] It should though be noted that Orkney Ferries purchased the 2012-built passenger ferry MV *Nordic Sea* in April 2020 to operate the Pierowall to Papa Westray route, although there have been issues getting this vessel into service.

South Uist was withdrawn for an extended period; the busy Islay route was reduced to a single vessel; and Colonsay could only be offered a very limited winter timetable. However, nowhere have the impacts been felt more keenly than on the west side of the Corran Narrows. The Corran Ferry is the busiest single vessel crossing in Europe but a technical fault with the main vessel MV *Corran* and repeated breakdowns of the relief vessel MV *Maid of Glencoul* meant that the vehicle carrying service was more or less suspended for a whole year.

9.5.3   Whilst there are several new vessels on order for CHFS network, on delivery of these the average age of the fleet will remain relatively high. On local authority networks, there is no new tonnage on order outwith a committed three-year pilot operation of two small passenger only vessels in Orkney from 2024. **Investment in new vessels over the RTS period is therefore essential**.

9.5.4   In our view, any vessel replacement programme must:

- Be informed by an overarching **'Vessels and Infrastructure Planning Pipeline'** which provides a robust and transparent evidence base to inform investment decisions and priorities

- Be supported by a **robust and objective business case informed by significant community inputs**, which clearly sets out how a preferred option has been arrived at. Within this, there is a requirement to ensure that an **objective approach to vessel design characteristics** is adopted

- **Address the recent resilience issues** which have so badly affected our island and peninsular communities. Options to strengthen resilience include greater standardisation of vessels and infrastructure to facilitate **inter-changeability** and **building more rather than larger vessels** (i.e., providing capacity and resilience through increased frequency rather than larger vessels).

9.5.5   The future vessels strategy should look to provide increased capacity (e.g., vehicle deck, sleeping accommodation etc) where required; improved passenger comfort, including access for all; and reduced journey times where practicable (particularly in Orkney, where the deployment of additional tonnage could support the splitting of indirect routes).

9.5.6   As vessels nominally have a service life of 30-years in Scottish water (and in reality much longer), it is essential that investment in new tonnage has a strong focus on **decarbonisation**, as even a new vessel introduced in 2024 would be in service long after the national 2045 net zero target.

9.5.7   Investment in new vessels also provides an opportunity to adopt a more holistic approach to asset planning. **Investment in harbours** (e.g., piers, linkspans, marshalling areas, terminal buildings etc) will almost always be required to accommodate a new vessel. Many of the ports around our region suffer from constraints associated with their spatial layout (and the availability of space generally), draught, tidal conditions, bespoke infrastructure for a specific vessel etc. This in turn causes **reliability and resilience issues** associated with e.g., the inability to access ports in certain weather / wind conditions, delays to turnaround times, limited diversion ports / ports of refuge.

9.5.8   Whilst enhanced preventative maintenance at harbours is always beneficial, it is in planning for new vessels that major changes can be made, for example the forthcoming relocation of Lochboisdale ferry terminal to the adjacent island of Gasaigh. It is essential that **vessel and harbour solutions are jointly progressed to deliver the optimum combination**. This should be informed by a robust and objective business case, which demonstrates how the preferred option has been arrived at and how any particular port / route fits within the wider network. Any business case should as a minimum consider opportunities for the **establishment of shorter crossings**, where this is a practical proposition.

9.5.9   Ferry terminals are generally 60-year assets and there is again a requirement to ensure that environmental considerations are at the forefront of investment planning. An issue of particular importance here is ensuring that **landside civil engineering works associated with new vessels are minimised**, so as to reduce embodied carbon and other environmental impacts. This approach goes hand-in-hand with focusing on a larger fleet of smaller interchangeable vessels.

Policy ST5j: The RTS recognises the long-term underfunding of vessels and infrastructure in the region and strongly calls for fleet and infrastructure modernisation to address issues of reliability and resilience.

Policy ST5k: The RTS calls for the development of a regularly maintained *Vessels and Infrastructure Planning Pipeline* across all publicly supported ferry networks in Scotland.

Policy ST5l: The RTS supports an increase in the overall fleet size and the inter-operability of that fleet and supporting infrastructure to strengthen resilience.

Policy ST5m: The RTS supports the principle of increasing capacity through frequency rather than larger vessels.

Policy ST5n: The RTS calls for an objective consideration of the design characteristics of future vessels for all routes, including hull form and the provision of crew accommodation.

Policy ST5o: The RTS supports the introduction of new low or zero emissions vessels to replace life-expired tonnage. This should be done in line with the NTS2 *Sustainable Investment Hierarchy*.

Policy ST5p: With the vessel and infrastructure replacement cycle, the RTS supports measures to reduce journey times for our island communities. This includes providing direct sailings rather than via another island (where this is the preference of the local community) and consideration of new ferry terminal locations that reduce crossing distances.

Policy ST5q: The RTS supports harbour infrastructure improvements ahead of life expiry where this could contribute to a material improvement in reliability.

9.6   Converting Lo-Lo routes to Ro-Ro

9.6.1   A small number of ferry routes in our region continue to operate on a lift-on, lift-off (Lo-Lo) basis, where cargo and vehicles are craned or physically handled from the vessel onto the quayside (and vice versa). This imposes limitations on the types of goods that can be moved and also increases the costs of doing so by adopting what is now an outdated and inefficient practice.

9.6.2   The main islands which fall into this category are Graemsay, North Ronaldsay and Papa Westray in the Orkney internal network. The latter two islands are also part of the Outer North Isles mini-network of services and their Lo-Lo operations impose constraints on the other four islands in that network (Eday, Sanday, Stronsay and Westray). Through their 'Inter-Island Transport Study' business case work, Orkney Islands Council has confirmed the replacement of Lo-Lo with Ro-Ro (roll on, roll off) on these islands as priority, subject to this being acceptable to the communities. There are a small number of other island and peninsular communities outwith the publicly supported network, such as Knoydart and Ulva, which are also served in this way.

9.6.3   An important consideration in any Lo-Lo to Ro-Ro conversion is ensuring that the change in freight handling method does not lead to a significant increase in fares or the cost of moving goods more generally.

Case Study: Converting the Small Isles from Lo-Lo to Ro-Ro

For generations, Scotland's island communities were served by passenger ferries and packet steamers, typically calling at multiple islands on a round-trip basis, conveyed people and all goods to and from an island, operating on a Lo-Lo basis. On what is now the CHFS network, Ro-Ro began to be introduced in the 1970s. By the 1990s, almost all CHFS routes were operated by either slipway or linkspan Ro-Ro vessels. One of the few exceptions was the group of four islands to the west of Mallaig – Canna, Eigg, Muck and Rum, the Small Isles.

The Small Isles were served by a traditional mail steamer, which was replaced in 1979 by a Lo-Lo vessel specifically designed to meet the requirements of the route. Only Canna had its own pier, so passengers and cargo were transferred onto small flit boats at each of the other three islands. A round trip from Mallaig took 10 hours, in part due to time consuming Lo-Lo operations and flit boat transfers at three of the four ports.

Recognising the need to modernise the route, the Small Isles were converted to Ro-Ro in 2003. A new purpose-built vessel, the stern-loading MV Lochnevis, was procured at a cost of £5.5m and entered service in 2000, reducing the round-trip journey time from 10-hours to 7-hours. New slipways were built at Eigg, Muck and Rum. A new non-tidally constrained pier was built at Canna and opened in 2006. MV Lochnevis was also built to accommodate 14-cars, but this was predominantly for her use as the winter vessel on the Mallaig – Armadale route. An image of the vessel departing Mallaig is shown below:

The impacts and benefits of the converting the Small Isles to Ro-Ro included:

Despite the limitations of serving four islands with a single vessel, by 2014, passenger carryings were 59% higher than in 2003, increasing from circa 19,000 to 30,000 per annum. Following a dip in 2015, the introduction of RET fares system took carryings back to around

> *the 30,000 mark, where they remained until the pandemic. Car carryings also increased significantly, from 334 cars in 2004 to 1,800 in 2019. The introduction of Ro-Ro effectively facilitated meaningful car traffic for the first time. Ro-Ro significantly improved freight handling on the route, with almost all freight moved on wheeled vehicles. Goods now often arrive in much better condition and livestock can be moved on dedicated floats, improving animal welfare. Project delivery on-island, such as the building and refurbishment of properties has also become easier and cheaper. The delivery of services to the Small Isles, including social care, has also become easier as it is possible to make a day return trip to each island on certain days of the week.*

Policy ST5r: The RTS supports the conversion of the remaining Lo-Lo routes in the region to Ro-Ro where there is community support.

9.7 Air network coverage

9.7.1 Aviation is of critical importance to the cohesion of our region and its connectivity with the Central Belt, London and further afield. It fulfils both an economic role (e.g., business travel) and social role (e.g., connecting island residents to hospitals), mitigating the impact of distance and reducing the geographic peripherality of many of our communities, and in particular our island communities.

9.7.2 With exception of the PSO services supported by Argyll & Bute Council and Orkney Islands Council and a handful of longer distance PSO routes, most of the aviation network is operated commercially. Whilst we, nor the public sector at large, cannot directly influence how these routes are operated, we have always worked closely with airlines, particularly Loganair as the most significant in the region in terms of network coverage. This is something which we will continue to do over our RTS period, **making the case for the operation of additional flights and new / larger aircraft** where appropriate.

We will also continue to **work closely with partner organisations that support regional PSO routes** - namely Comhairle nan Eilean Siar (Stornoway – Benbecula), Transport Scotland (Barra, Tiree and Campbeltown) and The Highland Council (Wick John O'Groats – Aberdeen) – to make the case for **additional flights and capacity** where required.

9.7.3 We will continue to explore the case for the **reinstatement or development of new routes** across the region, such as between Skye and Glasgow. In the majority of cases, these would be PSO routes given that they have not been progressed commercially to date. Just as importantly, we commit to working with partners to **protect existing routes** which may be under threat or where the level of service may be diminished to the extent that it adds little value.

Policy ST5s: The RTS supports the further development of the Highlands and Islands' air network.

Policy ST5t: The RTS supports the further development of commercial external routes, particularly to London Heathrow and other international hub airports, that support the economic competitiveness of the region.

Policy ST5u: The RTS supports the retention of the PSO air network within the region and, where alternative travel choices are inadequate, its further expansion. 'Adequate' in this context refers to the ability to achieve an affordable daily return to / from a national centre.

9.8 Inter-island air services

9.8.1 Our inter-island air services in Argyll & Bute and Orkney provide essential connections for 10 islands, several of which are the amongst the most fragile and least populated in our region. These services allow island residents to access employment, education and undertake business trips. However, they are also integral to service delivery in the islands, including but not limited to health provision, itinerant teacher cover, banking and veterinary care.

9.8.2 The major challenge associated with these services is **seat capacity**, with the Britten-Norman *Islander* aircraft only capable of carrying eight passengers, or occasionally nine if one passenger sits next to the pilot. Many flights also serve more than one island in a single 'rotation' and capacity is therefore often a major constraining factor where there may be double demand. The scope for introducing larger aircraft in the short-term or expanding the number of flights operated by the current aircraft is very limited. However, *Islander* aircraft are in plentiful supply and are relatively low cost to lease and operate – the deployment of additional aircraft would increase capacity through expanding frequency and reduce the number of indirect flights and the capacity issues associated with them.

9.8.3 The inter-island air services are also operated by a single pilot under Visual Flight Rules (VFR), which effectively entails flying by line of sight. This impacts on service **reliability** as low cloud cover, fog or darkness can lead to flights being cancelled, delayed or brought forward. On some islands, this issue is exacerbated by their only being a single runway, increasing the crosswind cancellation risk.

9.8.4 There are a range of potential options for expanding the flying envelope including operating under Instrument Flight Rules (IFR) or adopting satellite navigation aids. However, IFR flying and the use of navigational aids would increase the cockpit workload and could necessitate a second pilot, significantly increasing costs. Ground-based measures such as additional cross runways and runway lighting are also options, although the experience of runway lighting in North Ronaldsay to date has been far from positive. Whilst changing operational practices is not without its challenges, it is important that opportunities to improve reliability and expand the flying day for the benefit of our communities are continually explored.

Policy ST5v: The RTS supports the operation of additional connections and flights on the PSO air networks within the region, whether delivered by existing, additional or new low emission aircraft.

Policy ST5w: The RTS supports more direct flights rather than via another island.

Policy ST5x: The RTS supports the adoption of technological and infrastructure solutions which would improve the reliability and frequency of inter-island air services.

9.9 Fixed links

9.9.1 One means of improving the connectivity of island and peninsular communities in the region is through fixed link (bridges, causeways and tunnels). Over the last 50-years, the construction of bridges and causeways (although not yet tunnels) has been instrumental in improving connectivity in our region – these include the Kessock, Dornoch, Cromarty, Skye, Scalpay and Kylesku bridges and the chain of causeways in the Outer Hebrides. There are three potential opportunities in relation fixed links:

- **Island-to-mainland:** there are several proposals of this nature, with a fixed link between Mull and the mainland being included as recommendation in STPR2

- **Island-to-island:** Whilst there are fewer proposals in this category, those such as that to connect Rousay with Egilsay in Orkney would offer efficiencies in the operation of ferry services. Proposals for fixed links across the Sound of Harris and Sound of Barra were also included as an recommendations in STPR2.

- **Intra-mainland:** These are fixed links which would cross major sea lochs or river firths – there are several longstanding aspirations in this respect including at Corran and Stromeferry, where there are existing proposals

9.9.2   It is essential that communities are engaged in making the case for any fixed link, with a view to ensuring that they are fully informed of the benefits and potential implications of providing such a connection. This would include a discussion around any implications for future service delivery in an island or peninsular community.

9.9.3   Given the high up-front costs of fixed links and the challenges in developing a value for money conventional business case (even when considered in its broadest sense), the case for **tolling** any prospective fixed link should be considered. Within any such tolling regime, it is our expectation that residents of the **island or peninsular community would travel at a discount or for free with no delay to their journey**, this being enabled by the application of modern vehicle recognition technology.

9.9.4   We recognise that the replacement of a ferry by a fixed link could actually **reduce** connectivity for those without access to a car. Indeed, it is possible that walking, wheeling and cycling journeys could be prevented entirely in a situation where a tunnel is progressed. It is therefore essential that any fixed link progressed is done so in conjunction with a high-quality public transport offer which incorporates provision for cyclists.

Case Study: Fixed Links in the Faroe Islands

The Faroe Islands are a self-governing and autonomous nation within the Kingdom of Denmark. The archipelago consists of 18 islands, 17 of which are inhabited. Its has a population of 55,000, about 40% of which lives in the capital Tórshavn. As with many island communities in our region, connectivity to the main settlement of Tórshavn on the island of Streymoy and the airport on the island Vágar is essential.

The Faroese have addressed the island connectivity challenge through a major programme of fixed link building (predominantly tunnels), including four subsea tunnels, the most recent of which – the Sandoy Tunnel, which connects Streymoy and Sandoy – opened in December 2023.

Tolls are charged on all subsea tunnels in the Faroe Islands and are used to pay for the operation of the tunnels and repayment of the loans used to finance their construction. Island residents benefit from discounted tolls based on subscriptions.

The tunnel network built in the Faroe Islands is considered to have been a major success and is a great source of national pride. The subsea tunnels reduced journeys which previously took a full day to just a few hours and thus more closely integrated the different island communities which comprise the archipelago.

The fixed link network built in the Faroe Islands has supported population retention and growth and has increased economic agglomeration between island communities. Research

undertaken by Hokwerda (2017) also found that the subsea tunnels accelerated the process of centralisation and urbanisation (which has its benefits and disbenefits); increased mobility; dissolved spatial boundaries; and increased mutual dependency between villages and the capital Tórshavn.

https://www.faroeislands.fo/the-big-picture/

Policy ST5y: The RTS supports the principle of fixed links where they represent value for money and are supported by the island or peninsular community. Any fixed link should be implemented in conjunction with improved public transport connectivity and incorporate provision for active travel.

Policy ST5z: The RTS supports the consideration of tolling where this would assist in making the case for a fixed link. The use of vehicle number plate recognition technology could allow local residents to travel for free.

9.10 How does this Strategy Theme contribute to our RTS Objectives?

9.10.1 The table below summarises how this Strategy Theme contributes to our RTS Objectives:

Table 9.1: Contribution of Strategy Theme 5 to our RTS Objectives

RTS Strategy Objectives	
SO1: To make a just transition to a post-carbon and more environmentally sustainable transport network	✓✓
SO2: To transform and provide safe and accessible connections between and within our city, towns and villages, to enable walking, wheeling and cycling for all	O
SO3: To widen access to public and shared transport and improve connectivity within and to / from the region	✓✓
SO4: To improve the quality and integration of public and shared transport within and from / to the region	✓
SO5: To ensure reliable, resilient, affordable and sustainable connectivity for all from / to our island, peninsular and remote communities	✓✓✓
SO6: To improve the efficiency, safety and resilience of our transport networks for people and freight and adapt to the impacts of climate change.	O

9.10.2 The central focus of this Strategy Theme is providing reliable, resilient and sustainable connectivity for all from and to our island and peninsular communities. All of the policies listed make a highly positive contribution to **SO5**. In addition, there is a strong focus on improving air and ferry connectivity, both on existing and potential new routes, thus supporting **SO3**.

9.10.3 Given their long asset life, it is important that all new vessels are low or zero emission, and our RTS includes a specific policy related to this (aviation decarbonisation is covered in **Strategy Theme 9**). This Strategy Theme also identifies as a priority the need to ensure proportionate harbour works to accommodate new tonnage, and in particular advocates a fleet of smaller standardised vessels which will minimise landside infrastructure requirements. It therefore supports **SO1**.

9.10.4 This Strategy Theme also advocates addressing the barriers to travel faced by Persons of Reduced Mobility, particularly in terms of making vessels and harbour infrastructure fully accessible, thus supporting **SO3**.

10 Strategy Theme 6: Improving the efficiency of transport networks and supply-chains and reducing their impact on our communities

10.1 Overview

10.1.1 Our region is a major exporter, but many of our supply-chains are marginal (i.e., they only just cover their costs) and face challenges not encountered elsewhere in Scotland, working around ferry connections for example. This means that the efficiency and environmental sustainability of transport links with other parts of Scotland and beyond are as important as those within the region itself.

10.1.2 This Strategy Theme is therefore concentrated on enhancing the efficiency of supply-chains and identifying means for reducing the impact which they have on our communities. It focuses specifically on **ferry, other waterborne transport** and **rail-based** supply-chains. Issues related to road freight are addressed in **Strategy Theme 7**.

10.1.3 The figure below sets out the policy areas covered under this theme:

Ferry freight capacity	Ferry freight fares
Supporting the growth in rail freight	Other waterborne transport
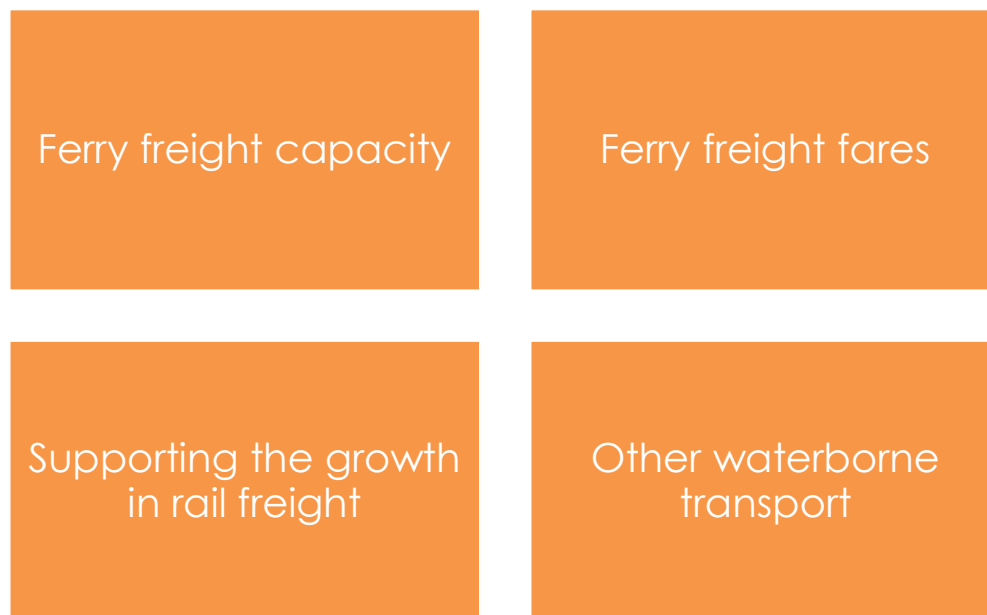
Figure 10.1: Strategy Theme 6 – policy areas

10.2 Ferry freight capacity

10.2.1 Ferry freight is of critical importance to the functioning of our island communities. It is a multi-faceted industry with different islands having different needs. In some communities such as Gigha and Lismore, the need is predominantly related to the inbound supply-chain, whilst in others such as Islay and Orkney Mainland, the freight industry must also meet high export demand, in some cases clustered around specific peaks, such as livestock season in Orkney. There are also several vessels on freight intensive routes which are restricted in terms of weight, height, use of mezzanine decks and carriage of dangerous goods. This can be to the disadvantage of both freight customers and car passengers.

10.2.2   With vehicle deck capacity pressures on many routes, particularly in the summer months, there is a frequent tension between deck space for personal vehicles and freight. We recognise the importance of ferry freight in our region and support the case for additional capacity for the carriage of freight.

10.2.3   In the medium-term, the demand for freight capacity can best be met through the introduction of **new vessels**, as outlined in **Strategy Theme 5**. As part of the overall planning for and prioritising of new tonnage, it is important that the requirements of the freight industry in each island are fully understood and that a forward look is taken on any major projects (e.g., new hospital buildings, windfarms etc) or emerging / evolving industries (e.g., the expansion of the green hydrogen industry in Shapinsay and Eday) that could impact demand for the movement of commercial vehicles. Vessel design requirements should reflect this, and it may be that there is a case for dedicated freight vessels, as operate on the Aberdeen – Kirkwall / Lerwick route or 'freight plus'[24] vessels.

10.2.4   In the immediate term, there is a case for considering how **existing capacity can be more efficiently managed** to provide additional capacity for freight. Options in this respect are largely captured by **RTS policies 5g and 5i**, which consider how pricing flexibility and operational changes can support improved demand management overall. However, one freight specific measure which could be progressed is the **formalisation and extension of the carriage of unaccompanied trailers** to a wider range of routes, which would reduce the lane meterage consumed by commercial vehicles. At present, unaccompanied trailers are formally carried (i.e., operator managed) on the Stornoway – Ullapool overnight freight service and NorthLink services, whilst more informal arrangements (i.e., haulier managed) are in place on the Port Ellen – Kennacraig route. Expansion of this practice provides an opportunity to reduce capacity pressures on busy routes, but any potential impact on turnaround times would need to be considered on a route-by-route basis.

10.2.5   Where ferry freight capacity is particularly pressured, there is a case for considering the operation of **dedicated freight sailings year-round or for short periods** (e.g., to accommodate livestock season in Orkney). This could be done using existing vessels (as per the practice with MV *Loch Seaforth* on Stornoway – Ullapool), charter vessels (e.g., as per the frequent charter of MV *Arrow*) or commercially where such a market exists.

Policy ST6a: The RTS supports the principle of new dedicated or high-capacity freight vessels on freight intensive routes.

Policy ST6b: The RTS supports the formalisation and extension of the carriage of unaccompanied trailers to a wider range of routes.

Policy ST6c: The RTS supports the operation of dedicated freight sailings, either by contracted or commercial operators where there is demand and it is operationally deliverable.

10.3   Ferry freight fares

10.3.1   The approach to the setting of ferry freight fares on most publicly supported networks in Scotland is inconsistent, archaic and, in many cases, simply born of history. There are significant inconsistencies even within networks in terms of the basis of the charge and the absolute tariff level, whilst there are a multitude of discounts and surcharges that apply to individual routes or small bundles of routes. This creates inefficiencies in the movement of freight, the commercial viability of some of which is already marginal, and inequalities between islands.

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[24] These are predominantly freight vessels but with some passenger and car carrying capacity.

10.3.2 Transport Scotland recognised this issue and undertook a *Ferry Freight Fares Review* (FFFR) in 2014-15 for the Clyde and Hebrides and Northern Isles networks. However, the major challenge emerging from this review was that, to provide consistency across the network, either: (i) significant additional subsidy would be required to reduce all fares to the lowest common denominator; or (ii) to achieve revenue neutrality, some fares would need to go up to compensate for others going down. Hauliers evidently consider absolute costs in relation each route that they serve (i.e., comparative fares between routes are less important), so the risk of increasing fares for some islands is that some commodities may no longer be shipped, or indeed the haulier could stop serving the island altogether. However, the subsidy impact of reducing fares to the lowest common denominator is also significant. The FFFR has not progressed further although a commitment to it has been confirmed in Transport Scotland's Fair Fares Review[25]. Constituent local authorities within our region have also undertaken wider ferry fares reviews but have not progressed these beyond concept stage.

10.3.3 Whilst this is an undeniably complex issue, it is important that it is resolved, either through progressing with a new fares system(s) or accepting the inbuilt inequalities and inconsistencies within the current framework.

> **Policy ST6d:** The RTS supports moves towards greater simplification and consistency in the setting of ferry freight fares across the region, recognising that this would be achieved over the medium-term.

10.4 Supporting the growth in rail freight

10.4.1 Growth in rail freight offers significant opportunities for our region, either delivered commercially or in support or major new developments such as the Cromarty Firth Green Freeport. A key societal benefit offered by rail freight is reducing the number of HGV journeys – this would be a particular benefit in our region where HGVs extend journey times and increase driver frustration on our predominantly single carriageway roads. They also emit significant carbon dioxide and have a disproportionately negative effect on the condition of our road network. Moreover, rail freight is well-suited to handling bulk and homogenous products such as timber, bulk liquids and waste, which are features of our region's supply-chain.

10.4.2 Supporting the growth in rail freight will require enabling investment in services and facilities, including improved route availability; improved gauge clearance; new rail freight terminals; improvements to the efficiency of existing rail freight terminals; longer passing loops for larger freight trains; procurement of adapted wagons to run on our region's network; and new connections to emerging industrial sites.

> **Policy ST6e:** The RTS supports infrastructure measures which will enable the growth of rail freight to and from the region.

10.5 Other freight transport

10.5.1 Our region features a long coastline, dozens of ports and harbours, deep sea lochs and inland waterways, all of which offer opportunities for waterborne freight transport. Indeed, the super quarry at Glensanda on the western shore of Loch Linnhe has been in operation for almost 40-years, moves all quarried rock by sea, and is an example of the scope for waterborne freight movements in our region.

10.5.2 Waterborne transport provides an important opportunity to remove commercial vehicle kilometres from our region's roads (and in, some cases, ferries) in two ways:

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[25] https://www.transport.gov.scot/our-approach/strategy/fair-fares-review/#:~:text=The%20Fair%20Fares%20Review%20aims,across%20government%2C%20business%20and%20society.

- Taking materials to site and removing waste associated with **major new construction projects located adjacent to waterways**, for example the proposed Coire Glas pumped hydro storage scheme (which is adjacent to Loch Lochy and the Caledonian Canal)

- Handling the **routine movement of bulk commodities**, for example the import of grain for the Diageo maltings at Port Ellen by the bulk coaster MV *Victress*

10.5.3   Our region's coast and waterways are therefore under-used assets and we support both the expansion of waterborne transport on a commercial basis and via government-based incentives such as the Freight Facilities Grant.

10.5.4   Key technical developments are also taking place to accelerate the use and efficiency of amphibious aircrafts, including zero-emission power technologies for use in salt-water environments. here are several emerging aviation technologies that will improve efficiency and environmental sustainability, as well as support connectivity across the HITRANS region. Advancements in heavy-lift autonomous drones, airships and seaplanes provide an opportunity to improve freight and logistics services whilst reducing the carbon impact of operations. The Sustainable Aviation Test Environment (SATE), established through Innovate UK's Future Flight Challenge, could offer a long-term test environment to facilitate trials with a range of these technologies to encourage future adoption.

Case Study - Scottish Timber Transport Scheme

In recent years the Scottish Timber Transport Scheme (STTS) managed by Scottish Forestry (SF) has provided significant funding for projects in the Highlands and Islands. The STTS funding supported with additional funds from both the private sector and the Highland Council have help move timber along fragile road networks and through sensitive communities.

Since 2021, 15 projects totalling £6.9m have been funded in Highland, including £915,000 on the A897 Helmsdale-Melvich, £1.05m on bridge replacement and other improvements at Tomatin, the £150k construction of a pier to move land locked timber to market at Gorteon, and bridge and other works at Loch Arkaig valued at £485k.

STTS also funds TimberLINK which ships up to 100,000 tonnes of timber a year from Argyll to mills in Ayrshire, avoiding around 8,000 lorry journeys on the A83. Since 2000, the TimberLINK service has shipped 2m tonnes of timber, saving 42k tonnes of CO_2 emissions.

STTS shows the way forward for partnership working, enabling timber resource to be harvested while improving fragile infrastructure for all users.

Policy ST6f: The RTS supports infrastructure investment and funding initiatives which will enable the growth of waterborne and air freight to, from and within the region.

10.6   How does this Strategy Theme contribute to our RTS Objectives?

10.6.1   The table below summarises how this Strategy Theme contributes to our RTS Objectives:

Table 10.1: Contribution of Strategy Theme 6 to our RTS Objectives

RTS Strategy Objectives	
SO1: To make a just transition to a post-carbon and more environmentally sustainable transport network	✓
SO2: To transform and provide safe and accessible connections between and within our city, towns and villages, to enable walking, wheeling and cycling for all	O
SO3: To widen access to public and shared transport and improve connectivity within and to / from the region	O

RTS Strategy Objectives	
SO4: To improve the quality and integration of public and shared transport within and from / to the region	O
SO5: To ensure reliable, resilient, affordable and sustainable connectivity for all from / to our island, peninsular and remote communities	✓
SO6: To improve the efficiency, safety and resilience of our transport networks for people and freight and adapt to the impacts of climate change.	✓✓✓

10.6.2   This Strategy Theme is predominantly focused on **SO6** and will contribute strongly to improving the efficiency of our ferry, rail and waterborne transport networks. By extension, ferry-based measures will support our island and peninsular communities **(SO5)**.

10.6.3   Shifting road-based freight to rail and water will also facilitate our aspiration to make a just transition to a post-carbon and more environmentally sustainable transport network **(SO1)**.

11 Strategy Theme 7: Improving the safety, reliability and resilience of our road and rail networks

11.1 Overview

11.1.1 The extremes of geography, topography and weather together with limited road and rail diversion routes mean that our region is singularly lacking in network resilience. Closures of routes such as the A83 Rest and Be Thankful and A890 at Stromeferry can leave communities with long diversion routes and with a sense of isolation.

11.1.2 However, even at a day-to-day level, short-term road and rail closures can lead to lengthy delays and diversions, whilst there is a significant backlog in road maintenance. (in March 2022, The Highland Council had a road maintenance backlog of £194m, whilst Argyll & Bute had a backlog of £112m[26]). Similarly, the accident rate and severity of accidents on several roads in the region is well in excess of the national average, a risk heightened by the large summer visitor influx, many of whom will be driving our roads for the first time.

11.1.3 This Strategy Theme is therefore focused on improving the safety, reliability and resilience of transport networks within the region. It should be noted that the focus is on **road and rail**, as active travel is covered in **Strategy Themes 1 and 2** and ferries and aviation in **Strategy Themes 5 and 6**.

11.1.4 The figure below sets out the policy areas covered under this theme:

Figure 11.1: Strategy Theme 7 – policy areas

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[26] https://www.highwaysmagazine.co.uk/Scottish-local-road-backlog-close-to-1.7bn/9579

11.2   Road-based journey times

11.2.1   The 'Case for Change' clearly demonstrated that **road-based journey times within and to / from our region are in most cases slow and unreliable**. As well car journeys, this impacts negatively on bus / coach journey time reliability and also the haulage industry, with its strict regulations around driver hours.

11.2.2   Whilst policy has largely moved away from major road-building schemes, it is important to recognise that there **will be occasions where new / upgraded roads are required** on the basis of safety, congestion reduction in settlements and improved journey time reliability, particularly for strategic freight movements. On our Trunk and major A-roads, investment could include full or partial dualling; climbing lanes, overtaking opportunities and sections of '2+1' in areas with poor accident records, low average speeds and poor journey time reliability; junction improvements, Route Actions Plans to address known issues of e.g., geometry, gradient, width, improved forward visibility from vegetation clearance etc; and the increase of HGV speed limits to 50mph as per the A9.

11.2.3   **Single track roads** account for a significant proportion of road kilometres in our region. Indeed, several of the regionally significant roads connecting settlements such as the Outer Hebrides Spinal Route through much of Harris, Uist and Barra and sections of the A848 between Salen and Craignure are of this form. Journey times on single track roads are slow and variable, whilst the frequent stopping and starting consumes much more fuel, thus making journeys more expensive and environmentally damaging, as well as being more demanding on car maintenance. Adding and lengthening passing places and converting the busiest single-track roads to single carriageway would therefore be positive in terms of safety, connectivity, resilience and the environment.

> **Policy ST7a:** The RTS restates our support for the full dualling of the A9 and A96, with early prioritisation of the Elgin and Keith bypasses to dual carriageway standards, following the already committed Inverness to Wester Hardmuir scheme.
>
> **Policy ST7b:** The RTS calls for incremental improvements to our road network where there are safety, efficiency and environmental benefits, including in relation to single track roads.
>
> **Policy ST7c:** The RTS supports the expansion of 50mph HGV speed limits across the Trunk Road network in the region.
>
> **Policy ST7d:** The RTS supports the provision of improved overtaking opportunities on our roads, especially where there are known problems with vehicle platooning which can cause driver frustration.

11.3   Network resilience

11.3.1   The DfT describes transport system resilience as:

- *"The ability of the transport network to withstand the impacts of extreme weather, to operate in the face of such weather and to recover promptly from its effects".*[27]

11.3.2   The resilience of the transport network in our region is a major issue, one that is not experienced to the same degree anywhere else in the United Kingdom.

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[27] Transport Resilience Review – A review of the resilience of the transport network to extreme weather events (DfT, 2014), p. 8.

11.3.3 Our **road network is particularly vulnerable to disruption** due to a combination of severe weather (e.g., snow), geological instability (e.g., A83 Rest and Be Thankful, A890 Stromeferry etc) and flooding / sea level rises. This vulnerability to disruption is compounded by the length and standard of diversions in the event of disruption. For many settlements in our region, the terrain means that there is a dependence on only one road for travel e.g., north or south, even for regional centres such as Fort William. This has led to these sections of the network being defined as 'lifeline' in function, since their loss has such a significant impact on the impacted communities that are cut off from the day-to-day amenities on which any community depends. Diversions can take several hours and sometimes require a ferry crossing, such as when the A83 Rest and Be Thankful or A830 west of Lochailort are closed. A good recent (2023) example of this was the closure of the A816 in Argyll due to a landslide – a consequence of this was that children in the village of Ardfern were unable to take the bus to Lochgilphead High School and required a private boat transfer to Crinan to pick-up a school bus from there.

11.3.4 We recognise that the scale of this problem means that options to improve resilience are often limited, for example on the A82 between Ballachulish and Fort William. However, we support the exploration of options for emergency diversions equivalent to e.g., the Old Military Road at the A83 Rest and Be Thankful and the use of Kyle Line for vehicles at Stromeferry. In addition, we call for permanent solutions where there is frequent and repeated disruption leading to communities being cut-off for extended periods, most notably at the A83 Rest and Be Thankful and the A890 at Stromeferry.

11.3.5 Like the road network, the **railway network in our region is highly susceptible to disruption** due to weather and geological instability. Indeed, three sections of the West Highland Line were damaged in June 2023 during heavy rain, with one of the sections having to be rebuilt after 400 tonnes of material was swept away. Similarly, the Far North Line had to be closed between Brora and Helmsdale in November 2023 when Storm Babet damaged the sea wall.

11.3.6 It is important that the safety and integrity of the railway network in our region continues to be carefully monitored and that improvements are made to improve resilience, including regular vegetation clearance.

11.3.7 More generally, it is essential that **new transport infrastructure in our region is designed to mitigate the impacts of climate change** such as increased severe weather events and flooding.

Case Study: A83, Rest and Be Thankful

The A83 is one of Scotland's longest trunk roads, departing the A82 at Tarbet on the western shore of Loch Lomond and running all of the way to Campbeltown in the Mull of Kintyre. One of the most notorious stretches of this road is that between Ardgartan, located just south-west of Arrochar, through Glen Croe to the Rest and Be Thankful, a viewpoint at the head of then glen.

This section of road has been affected by a series of major landslips in recent years, requiring the use of the Old Military Road (OMR) (with associated delays) or creating an additional 25-mile detour via Tyndrum (Tarbet to Inverary via Crianlarich and Dalmally). More frequent severe weather events associated with climate change are exacerbating these concerns. The resilience of the RaBT is a key issue for Argyll, and the Scottish Government published the following data in response to an FoI request.

The level of disruption and uncertainty clearly affects communities and businesses which rely on the RaBT. Transport Scotland is currently progressing plans to construct a permanent solution to the issue.

A83 Rest and Be Thankful disruption (Source: FoI Request)

Year	Days with temporary lights in operation	No of Days A83 RaBT closed	No of days OMR in operation	No of nights OMR in operation	No. of days both A83 RaBT & OMR closed with diversion route in operation
2010/11	0	0	0	0	0
2011/12	0	5	0	0	5
2012/13	0	4.5	0	0	4.5
2013/14	0	6	5	5	1
2014/15	0	5	5	7	0
2015/16	0	5	3.5	0	1.5
2016/17	0	0	0	0	0
2017/18	155	0	0	0	0
2018/19	365	9	3.5	2	5.5
2019/20	309	2.5	2	2	0.5

Policy ST7e: The RTS calls for investment in our regional road network where there are regular and sustained periods of disruption due to weather and / or geological instability.

Policy ST7f: The RTS recognises the increasing vulnerability of our region's road network to severe weather events linked to climate change and supports capital and revenue measures to mitigate this.

Policy ST7g: The RTS recognises the increasing vulnerability of the railway network to severe weather events linked to climate change and supports capital and revenue measures to mitigate this.

11.4   Travel disruption information

11.4.1   Weather, geological instability, roadworks and accidents all having the potential to lead to delays and diversions. Limited fuelling and EV charging infrastructure is also an issue for those less familiar with the region or parts of it. In most cases, there is no diversion route available, or the diversion is extremely lengthy, often on less suitable roads. These issues are compounded by delays and cancellations to ferry services, which are effectively part of the road network – a good example of this being the extended disruption to the Corran Ferry service in 2022-23.

11.4.2   A feature of this lack of diversion routes is the requirement to provide reliable and up-to-date travel information as quickly as possible and at strategic points on the road network. Intelligent Transport Systems (ITS) and information on websites such as Traffic Scotland and the CalMac App is essential, as is up-to-date social media information.

11.4.3   Given limited digital connectivity in much of our region, traditional methods of imparting information such as Variable Messaging Signs (VMS) and traffic cameras continue to be necessary and important. This is particularly the case at strategic points on the network, e.g., at Tyndrum where the A82 and A85 diverge.

11.4.4   Where disruption is anticipated due to e.g., planned roadworks, rail replacement services or forecast bad weather, it is important that this is publicised to our communities in advance. Expected disruption should be publicised through a variety of media, including: formal sources where relevant (e.g., The Scottish Road Works Register); public transport operator websites; the local press; and social media, including apps such as GO-HI.

Policy ST7h: The RTS supports the continued provision and expansion of real-time travel information for motorists and public transport users through existing and emerging platforms.

11.5   Road maintenance

11.5.1   A combination of the size of our region together with the very low traffic flows on many roads make prioritising and funding road maintenance difficult. This issue is heightened by the high cost and logistical challenges of undertaking even routine maintenance in some islands and our more remote communities. A consequence of this is that a significant length of the road network is in a poor state of repair with potholes, degraded carriageways and damaged verges to name but a handful of the problems.

11.5.2   Improving the condition of our road network is an important element of our overall objective to improve road safety in our region. Well maintained roads are also integral to the efficient movement of people and goods around our region and influence the perception of it amongst those visiting. Remedial work is therefore required to address known maintenance backlogs, whilst the overall maintenance programme needs to be strengthened, something which we recognise will require an increase in funding for both Transport Scotland (as the Trunk Roads authority) and our local authority partners.

Policy ST7i: The RTS recognises that many parts of our region's road network are in poor condition. It calls for enhanced preventative and remedial road maintenance to ensure the safe, reliable and efficient movement of people and goods and the delivery of services across our region.

11.6 Road safety

11.6.1 **Road safety** in our region is a **long-term issue of public concern** and regularly features prominently in both the local and national press. Rural routes, which are prevalent in our region, typically tend to have higher rates of fatal and serious accidents than urban roads and motorways. This trend is however amplified in our region by the long duration of many journeys undertaken, a significant length of single-track roads and the seasonal influx of visitors, a subset of whom do not speak English as a first language and will be driving left-hand drive vehicles.

11.6.2 The long-term trend at the regional level has been positive, with the total number of accidents reducing by around half since 2000. **Nevertheless, in 2019, there were 39 fatalities and 264 serious injuries on our region's roads**.[28] In absolute terms, the route sections with the greatest number of accidents are the A9 Perth – Inverness; the A83 Tarbet – Campbeltown; and the A96 Inverness – Keith. We share and support the Scottish Government's ambitious vision for Scotland to have the best road safety performance in the world by 2030 and the long-term goal where no one is seriously injured or killed on our roads by 2050.[29] We still have some way to go to meet these targets in our region and thus our RTS calls for measures to improve regional road safety.

11.6.3 There are a range of measures which could be implemented to support this, including:

- **Road improvements** such as addressing sections of poorly aligned carriageway, converting single track roads to single carriageway where appropriate etc, particularly where there are known safety problems

- Increased **HGV-specific and general motorist rest areas / services**, particularly on strategic long-distance routes such as the A9, A96 and A82 etc.

- **Improvement or removal of priority junctions** on higher speed roads, particularly for right turning traffic

- The wider roll-out of **average speed cameras**

- Ongoing **public information campaigns around the use of single track roads**, promoted in partnership with local authorities, ferry operators, airlines, HIAL and car hire companies

- **Increased advisory signage** (including multi-lingual signage) to highlight specific dangers, such as where there is a high risk of animals on the road or where a road is not suitable for certain vehicle types

- **Information campaigns for those visiting our region**, particularly where they are driving left-hand drive vehicles

- An **improved winter roads treatment programme**, in particular ensuring that journeys in the early morning and late evening are as safe as possible

- **Level crossing closures / improved management of level crossings** (which would have the ancillary benefit of potentially being able to increase line speeds on the railway)

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[28] Scottish Transport Statistics, includes figures for whole of Argyll and Bute

[29] https://www.transport.gov.scot/news/scotland-s-road-safety-framework-to-2030/

Policy 7j: Investment in our road network should continue to have an overarching focus on safety with a view to reducing road traffic casualties in accordance with *Scotland's Road Safety Framework to 2030*.

Policy 7k: To address risks which are particular to roads in our region, the RTS supports: enhanced advisory signage; ongoing public information campaigns around the use of single-track roads; provision of additional safe motorist services and HGV rest areas; and information campaigns for visitors driving left-hand drive vehicles.

Policy 7l: The RTS specifically supports the improvement or removal of priority junctions on higher speed trunk roads, especially for right-turning traffic.

11.7 Rail service reliability

11.7.1 Whilst rail service reliability in our region overall was not identified as a major issue in the 'Case for Change', limited infrastructure, aging rolling stock and imported delay from elsewhere in the country do cause some challenges in this respect. Our RTS therefore supports measures that improve service reliability within and external to the region and reduce station dwell times.

Policy ST7m: The RTS calls for increased provision of level boarding at stations across the region, which will reduce station dwell times.

Policy ST7n: The RTS supports the provision of additional sections of double track (or static or dynamic passing loops where double track does not represent value for money) to improve punctuality.

Policy ST7o: The RTS supports infrastructure and timetable improvements external to the region which will improve the reliability of services to / from Inverness, Fort William, Oban and Mallaig.

11.8 How does this Strategy Theme contribute to our RTS Objectives?

11.8.1 The table below summarises how this Strategy Theme contributes to our RTS Objectives:

Table 11.1: Contribution of Strategy Theme 7 to our RTS Objectives

RTS Strategy Objectives	
SO1: To make a just transition to a post-carbon and more environmentally sustainable transport network	**O**
SO2: To transform and provide safe and accessible connections between and within our city, towns and villages, to enable walking, wheeling and cycling for all	**O**
SO3: To widen access to public and shared transport and improve connectivity within and to / from the region	**O**
SO4: To improve the quality and integration of public and shared transport within and from / to the region	**O**
SO5: To ensure reliable, resilient, affordable and sustainable connectivity for all from / to our island, peninsular and remote communities	✓
SO6: To improve the efficiency, safety and resilience of our transport networks for people and freight and adapt to the impacts of climate change.	✓✓✓

11.8.2 This Strategy Theme is predominantly focused on **SO6** in terms of improving the safety, reliability and resilience of our road and rail networks. It therefore contributes highly positively

to this RTS Strategy Objective. There would also be a minor positive impact for our island communities **(SO5)**, particularly for time sensitive freight.

12 Strategy Theme 8: Facilitating sustainable visitor travel demand

12.1 Overview

12.1.1 Our region is characterised by extreme winter-summer differentials in travel associated with a significant influx of domestic and international visitors. Retail and tourism are the second and third biggest sectors by employment in our region, and the biggest employers outwith the public sector. Indeed, compared to the rest of Scotland, the economy of our region has a **significantly higher proportion of jobs in tourism** (**10%** versus **6.8%** for the rest of the country). The most recent (pre-COVID-19) data from VisitScotland suggests:

- **Argyll and the Isles**[30] (2017-19 average): a total of **6.5m visits**, with **4.0m nights stayed**, with associated spending of **£443m**. Top attractions included Argyll Forest Park, Inverary Castle and Staffa National Nature Reserve.

- **Highlands**[31] (2019): a total of **12.5m visits**, with **11.5m nights stayed** and associated spending of **£1,533m**. Top attractions included Urquhart Castle, Glenfinnan Viaduct, Glencoe visitor centre and Glenmore Forest Park.

- **Orkney**[32] (2019): a total of **192k visits**, with associated spending of **£67m**

- **Outer Hebrides**[33] (2017): a total of **218k** visits, with associated spending of **£65m**. Top attractions included Callanish Stones, Butt of Lewis and Harris Distillery

12.1.2 Taken together, these figures amounted to around **£2bn** of tourism spend annually in the region pre-pandemic.

12.1.3 Despite the clear benefits of tourism to our region, the volume, diversity and type of tourism in our region has a significant impact on the transport network, some associated with 'over-tourism'. Some of the main impacts include:

- **Higher traffic volumes** and **slower journeys** during peak tourism season – this affects both trunk and local roads. It also impacts on a range of different users, but particularly on those for whom **journey time reliability** is essential, e.g., freight, residents travelling for appointments etc. High volumes can also contribute to carriageway degradation leading to frequent vehicle damage and punctures such as that seen in parts of Skye.

- **Safety and driver frustration risks**. This includes but is not limited to: the risks of driving on the wrong side of the road; misunderstanding the frequent switches between dual and single carriageway on the A9; safety and etiquette when driving on single track roads; and the high risk of animals on the road.

- **Indiscriminate, illegal, damaging and dangerous parking** at 'honeypots' (e.g., the Fairy Pools on Skye, Glenfinnan etc) and in passing places to take photographs or admire views, of Luskentyre / Seilebost for example.

- **Vehicle capacity constraints on many ferry routes** (and passenger capacity constraints on a handful of routes) – as visitors typically book further in advance, they will

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[30] https://www.visitscotland.org/binaries/content/assets/dot-org/pdf/research-papers-2/regional-factsheets/argyll-and-the-isles-factsheet-2019.pdf

[31] https://www.visitscotland.org/binaries/content/assets/dot-org/pdf/research-papers-2/regional-factsheets/highland-factsheet-2019.pdf

[32] https://www.visitscotland.org/binaries/content/assets/dot-org/pdf/research-papers/orkney-visitor-survey-2019---exec-summary.pdf

[33] https://www.visitscotland.org/binaries/content/assets/dot-org/pdf/research-papers/outer-hebrides-report---may-18.pdf

often book a car deck space early, which can be to the disadvantage of residents who tend to book at shorter notice (although urgent travel is almost always accommodated). This can also impact on freight, although block booking of slots does provide a degree of protection against this.

- There has also been a strong growth in **'travel' based tourism**. The highest profile example is the North Coast 500's (NC500 initiative) success in attracting many more visitors to the areas covered by the route. This actively encourages road-based travel (car, motorbike, motorhome (where there has been rapid growth in rental provision)) in some of the most remote areas of our region and indeed on some of the most unsuitable roads. Whilst the NC500 was reported to have generated £22.9m in GVA for businesses along the route in 2018[34], the increase in visitor numbers and the anti-social behaviour exhibited by some visitors is not universally welcomed. Other examples include 'trails' such as the Malt Whisky Trail in Speyside and the Highland Tourist Route.

- **Cruise tourism** has also been a significant growth industry in the region, particularly in Orkney (which is the UK's most popular cruise ship destination, with over 170 calls per annum) and Invergordon, but also in a selection of other ports such as Stornoway and Portree. Cruise tourism can bring significant economic benefits and can also provide the volumes required to maintain e.g., a large and modern bus fleet, but the sheer volume of passengers can overwhelm the limited infrastructure and small communities.

12.1.4   Overall, tourism is essential to our region, but sustainably managing its impact on the transport network, local communities and the environment is a key consideration for our RTS.

12.1.5   The figure below sets out the policy areas covered under this theme:

Improving active travel for those visiting our region	Improving public transport interchange for those visitig our region
Enhanced rail services in peak season	Parking provision, management and enforcement at tourist destinations
Targeted road improvements where there is high seasonal demand	

Figure 12.1: Strategy Theme 8 – policy areas

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[34] https://www.scottishfield.co.uk/travel/scotland-travel/north-coast-500-boosts-economy-by-22million/

12.2 Improving active travel for those visiting our region

12.2.1 Whilst investing in and promoting active travel is a central theme of our RTS overall, it is important to differentiate between leisure and 'travel for a purpose' journeys, such as travel-to-work or education. Active travel planning and funding is conventionally targeted at the latter. However, leisure-based active travel to and from tourist destinations as well as cycling and walking holidays more generally is very prominent in our region. An important feature of many of these trips is that they are linear (e.g., cycling the Hebridean Way) or concentrate high volumes of cars at a specific nodal point (e.g., Glenfinnan) or mountain, forest, loch or river access roadsides or car parks.

12.2.2 We recognise the importance of active holidays to our region and therefore support:

- The **expansion of leisure-based walking, wheeling and cycling networks**, building on major success stories such as the Great Glen Way, Hebridean Way and West Highland Way

- Improved **active travel connections to and from major tourist attractions**, both in terms of infrastructure and visitor services such as bike buses

- Improved **active travel connections to and from ports, airports and regionally important railway stations** to their surrounding hinterland

Policy ST8a: The RTS supports the further development of long-distance walking, wheeling and cycling routes (including the National Cycle Network), recognising the visitor, economic and local benefits offered.

Policy ST8b: The RTS supports the development of active travel connections to our ports, airports and regionally important railway stations.

Policy ST8c: The RTS supports the development of active travel connections to our key tourism destinations where this would be a realistic option for some visitors.

12.3 Improving public transport interchange for those visiting our region

12.3.1 A priority for visitors to our region is maximising their 'holiday' / leisure time, thus reducing transport-related 'dead time'. For public transport to be a viable and attractive option for visitors, the **public transport interchange experience must be of a high quality** through a combination of increased seasonal staffing, the provision of high-quality information and a positive 'welcome ashore' experience for cruise passengers (an area in which Orkney has a particularly strong reputation).

12.3.2 Partnership working is required to deliver a high-quality experience of this nature and thus it is not an issue for the RTS alone. Multi-agency delivery from local authorities, port authorities, Visit Scotland, HIE and other partners will be essential.

Policy ST8d: Where there are concentrations of international tourists, including cruise passengers, the RTS supports the provision of enhanced local travel information and coordination to improve visitor experience and reduce impacts on local networks.

12.4 Enhanced rail services in peak season

12.4.1 The railway network in our region, and in particular the scenic West Highland, Kyle and Far North lines, experience a major uplift in passenger numbers in the summer. For many passengers, the attraction is the journey itself, whilst for others the train is a means of reaching their destination, either on a day-trip or where there is one or more overnight stays

involved. This puts pressure on seat capacity, but also increases demand for the carriage of bicycles, luggage, equipment etc on what are essentially urban diesel multiple units.

Whilst the infrastructure constraints on the region's railway network limit the scope for a major ramp-up in services, there are opportunities to operate some additional local services, such as in the Fort William area. Similarly, there are options to strengthen peak services with additional carriages (such as the Class 153 bicycle carriages introduced by ScotRail).

Policy ST8e: The RTS supports the operation and promotion of additional local rail services to key tourism destinations.

Policy ST8f: The RTS supports the provision of additional rail carriages on existing services in peak season, where feasible.

Policy ST8g: The RTS supports the principle of flexible timetabling where this can co-exist with regular services for local residents.

Policy ST8h: The RTS supports the principle of expanded open access rail services where these can be accommodated at no disadvantage to scheduled services.

12.5 Parking provision, management and enforcement at tourist destinations

12.5.1 The **demand for parking and illegal / damaging / indiscriminate parking** is one of the more visible impacts of the seasonal influx of visitors to our region. Throughout Scotland, parking management and enforcement resources tend to be focused on urban centres and settlements and is concentrated on managing compliance and increasing turnover. It can be difficult to flex this model to incorporate both specific tourist attractions (e.g., Luskentyre) and large areas of high seasonal demand (e.g., the Cairngorms National Park). Added to conventional parking problems is campervan and motorhome parking, coach parking at tourist sites and other problematic practices such as parking in passing places.

12.5.2 It is essential that the **RTS adopts an even-handed approach to this problem** – excess demand and inappropriate parking behaviour imposes real costs on some of our communities but, at the same time, these visitors are crucial to our local and regional economy. We recognise that new / strengthened parking restrictions and enforcement are required in several locations to manage demand and turnover and reduce inappropriate parking which restricts access, jeopardises safety and impacts negatively on our communities. However, **the parking problem in many cases reflects a lack of parking supply or meaningful alternatives to use of the car**. We therefore support:

- **Increased visitor parking provision** where improved management and enforcement would not make a material difference

- Specific **parking for camper vans and motorhomes**, including more European-style '**aires',** and signed and dedicated spaces in town car parks such as those in Dornoch

- **Management of overnight parking in laybys**, including formalisation and clarification for potential users around what is permitted or otherwise

Case Study: Pen-y-Pass car park, Eryri National Park

In Eryri National Park (Snowdonia), the National Park Authority has introduced a requirement to pre-book a parking space at Pen-y-Pass car park between April and October, a popular access point to Yr Wyddfa (Mount Snowdon). The charge for booking a parking space is not insignificant but has been used to subsidise the Sherpa'r Wyddfa bus service, which provides high-quality public transport access to the mountain and around the National Park. This has been supported by an app-based booking system that provides real-time parking availability updates.

Policy ST8i: The RTS supports the principle of sustainably accommodating visitor demand whilst maintaining or increasing visitor numbers.

Policy ST8j: The RTS supports the introduction of additional parking restrictions and greater enforcement of existing traffic orders at tourist honeypots as a tool to encourage improved access to these locations by public transport or active modes and to address indiscriminate and dangerous parking.

Policy ST8k: Where new or increased parking charges are introduced, this should be done in combination with improved visitor facilities, including e.g., parking provision, public toilets etc.

Policy ST8l: Whilst recognising the benefits of motorhome and campervan-based tourism in our region, the RTS acknowledges that it can impact negatively on our communities at certain times of the year. The RTS therefore supports measures to ensure that this demand is sustainably accommodated.

Policy ST8m: Whilst recognising the benefits of cruise tourism in our region, the RTS recognises that catering for this demand can negatively impact on our communities. The RTS therefore supports measures to ensure that this demand is more sustainably accommodated.

Policy ST8n: The RTS supports measures which would allow the benefits of cruise tourism to be more evenly distributed around the region.

Policy ST8o: The RTS supports the principle of bespoke bus services aimed at tourists to address excessive car-based demand at honeypot locations.

12.6 Targeted road improvements where there is high seasonal demand

12.6.1 A growing challenge posed by tourism is the pressure that it puts on roads which are not designed to accommodate it. The most obvious example of this is of course the North Coast 500, but other obvious examples include the Outer Hebrides Spinal Route in Uist, the roads between Craignure and Tobermory / Fionnphort and the Bealach na Bà (Applecross, part of the NC500) road.

12.6.2 There are incremental improvements which could be made to these roads to improve their standard and suitability including: improved maintenance where road conditions and verges are severely damaged by high tourism volumes; improved and / or increased provision of

passing places in areas of high demand; formalisation of informal passing places in areas of high demand; and improved signing and lining.

12.6.3 Whilst the presumption of our RTS is against new road building, there will be occasions where the case for more significant investments such as the long-proposed conversion of the Salen to Tobermory route to single carriageway should not be ruled out, particularly when considered from a safety, driver frustration and emissions perspective.

> **Policy ST8p:** The RTS recognises that high volumes of tourist traffic are impacting the condition of some roads in our region and that increased central government funding is required that reflects this increased pressure on local transport infrastructure, to support an enhanced repair and maintenance programme.
>
> **Policy ST8q:** The RTS recognises that high volumes of tourist traffic can lead to slow and inefficient journeys and therefore supports measures to address this.

12.7 How does this Strategy Theme contribute to our RTS Objectives?

12.7.1 The table below summarises how this Strategy Theme contributes to our RTS Objectives:

Table 12.1: Contribution of Strategy Theme 8 to our RTS Objectives

RTS Strategy Objectives	
SO1: To make a just transition to a post-carbon and more environmentally sustainable transport network	✓
SO2: To transform and provide safe and accessible connections between and within our city, towns and villages, to enable walking, wheeling and cycling for all	✓✓
SO3: To widen access to public and shared transport and improve connectivity within and to / from the region	✓✓
SO4: To improve the quality and integration of public and shared transport within and from / to the region	✓✓
SO5: To ensure reliable, resilient, affordable and sustainable connectivity for all from / to our island, peninsular and remote communities	✓
SO6: To improve the efficiency, safety and resilience of our transport networks for people and freight and adapt to the impacts of climate change.	✓

12.7.2 We recognise the economic and societal importance of tourism to our region, but we also understand the significant transport impacts that this demand can have on our communities. Our RTS supports the continued development of tourism in our region but calls for both capital investment and additional revenue funding to ensure that the demand generated by the sector can be sustainably accommodated.

12.7.3 The policies promoted through this Strategy Theme will make a positive contribution to all six of our RTS Strategy Objectives, complimenting resident-focused policies in other Strategy Themes. Of particular focus is improving the provision, quality and integration of active travel and public transport, thereby making notably positive contributions to **SO2**, **SO3** and **SO4**.

13 Strategy Theme 9: Decarbonising our transport, mitigating the effects of climate change

13.1 Overview

13.1.1 Decarbonisation and mitigating the effects of climate change is embedded through our RTS through behavioural change and supply side changes. The small population of our region means that it generates comparatively few emissions in absolute terms and is, at the same time, one of the most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. Increased severe weather events will affect the reliability of our ferry and land-based transport networks and increase the risks of geological instability, whilst rising sea levels pose a risk to our coastal roads and railway lines.

13.1.2 Whilst decarbonisation is a key objective at all levels of government in Scotland, there are features of our region which make decarbonisation challenging, including the geography, range of modes of transport and commercial provision of some transport services. Policies and associated actions for achieving net zero in our region must reflect our local context and circumstances and will in reality require an expansion of both capital and revenue funding.

13.1.3 The figure below sets out the policy areas covered under this theme:

Decarbonising our public transport vehicle fleet

Vehicle pooling and vehicle sharing

Zero-emission vehicle uptake and use
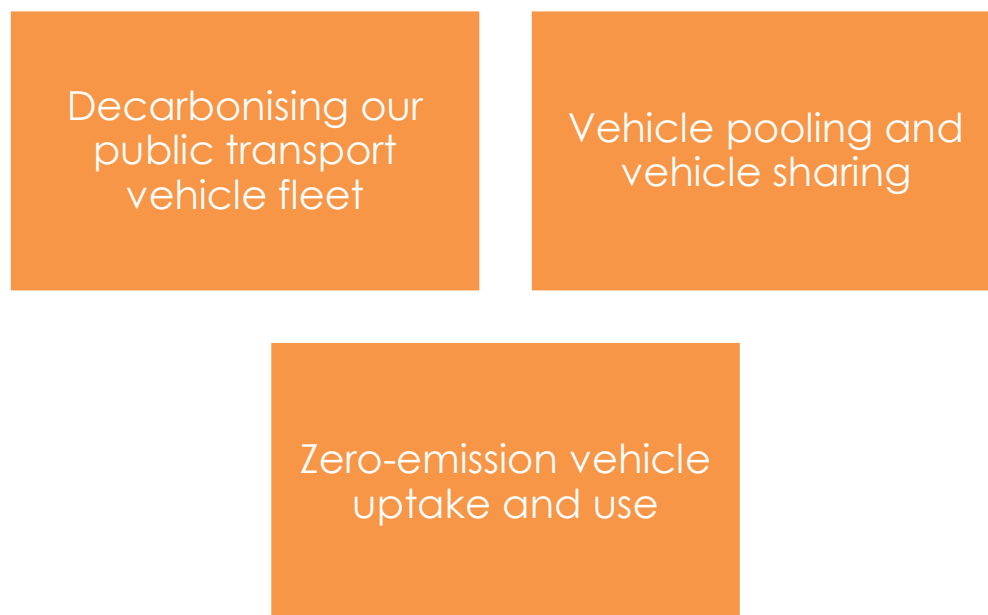
Figure 13.1: Strategy Theme 9 – policy areas

13.2 Decarbonising our public transport vehicle fleet

13.2.1 Outwith a few electric buses and hybrid-electric ferries, the public transport vehicle fleet in our region is almost entirely hydrocarbon based. There are several reasons for this:

■ The **long-distance of many bus and coach routes** means that they can be towards the outer end of the range for electric buses. In addition, one end of almost every route is likely to be relatively rural in nature and thus opportunities for recharging are limited.

- The **same is also true of the railway network**. At present, the strategy for rail decarbonisation in Scotland, as defined in the *Rail Services Decarbonisation Action Plan*[35], is predominantly built around a **rolling programme of electrification**, but this will be **expensive to deliver in our region and will also assume a lower priority** relative to busier urban and suburban routes. To this end, **alternative traction solutions** are proposed on the Aberdeen – Inverness, West Highlands, Far North and Kyle Lines – however, the preferred option(s) have not yet been confirmed.

- For commercial bus, coach, ferry and aviation companies, **hydrocarbon-based fuels are generally cheaper than sustainable alternatives**. Additionally for ferries, grid capacity in island and rural communities may be short of what would be required to routinely charge large seagoing vessels such as those in CFL's 'Major Vessel' fleet.

13.2.2 However, **our region is at the forefront of renewable energy production in the UK**, and it is important that our transport infrastructure capitalises on and reflects this.

Buses and coaches

13.2.3 Buses and coaches potentially present the **quickest win in terms of decarbonising our public transport vehicle fleet**. Battery performance and range is rapidly improving and it is likely that as older buses are phased out, they will gradually be replaced by electric buses. This will likely be an organic process, starting in the Inner Moray Firth and larger settlements such as Fort William and then gradually expanding over time.

13.2.4 There is however a case for continued public sector support in incentivising the uptake of more fuel efficient / alternative fuel vehicles and associated support services. This may require the provision of financial or other incentives to commercial operators to modernise their fleet, particularly for the very small operators found all across our region, but particularly in the most rural areas. The Scottish Zero Emission Bus Challenge Fund is a good example of such a scheme, where funding has been provided to upgrade refuelling infrastructure and convert existing diesel buses to a zero-emission drive train or to fund new zero emissions buses.

Rail rolling stock

13.2.5 The rolling stock used in our region operates exclusively on diesel (although the LNER *Azuma* units are bi-mode and are operated as electric services from Edinburgh Haymarket South Junction). Moreover, the majority of the units used were built between the 1970s and 1990s, with only the Class 170 stock built this century, and even that is now circa 20-years old. This presents a challenge in terms of the scale of replacement required, but also an **opportunity to deliver a transformational change** akin to that realised when the 'Sprinter' fleet was introduced in the 1980s.

13.2.6 We recognise that the approach to traction decarbonisation will largely be driven from the top down given that the units will operate to and within the Central Belt either routinely or occasionally. It will however be important to communicate the specific needs and aspirations of our region into the national process, particularly with regards to the prioritisation of electrification schemes.

Aircraft

13.2.7 The market for aircraft is global and thus delivering a fully decarbonised fleet in our region will to a large degree be driven by the economics of the industry. That said, there are exciting developments in this field, and our region is in the vanguard of low carbon aviation in the form

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[35] rail-services-decarbonisation-action-plan.pdf (transport.gov.scot)

of the **Kirkwall-based Sustainable Aviation Test Environment**, the UK's first low carbon test location at an operational airport (see case study below).

13.2.8 Moreover, in most other transport sectors, change tends to happen at scale and trickle down – for example, major rail investment tends to be concentrated on the busiest lines and electric buses have been developed at scale in cities. In the aviation sector however, the early decarbonisation opportunities relate to smaller aircraft – for example, Britten-Norman is planning to introduce its first zero emission *Islander* aircraft in 2026. This presents an important opportunity for our region where small aircraft such as the *Islander*, *Twin Otter* and ATRs form the spine of our network.

13.2.9 Whilst we recognise that much of the aviation network in our region is commercial, there is a clear opportunity for HITRANS and our constituent local authority members to facilitate delivery of fleet decarbonisation through our PSO contracts.

13.2.10 PSOs are a unique opportunity to promote and incentivise early adoption of low or net-zero emission technologies in aviation. Deployment of low emission aircrafts could start from 2026/27, and local authorities could be early adopters and help to establish the necessary infrastructure for their operation, bridging the risk gap for operators.

13.2.11 PSOs could be designed to promote innovation. For example, airlines can struggle to justify investment in new aircrafts for fear of not being competitive at the next tender round if a competitor offers an older, compliant aircraft. A new aircraft cannot be fully depreciated in the c.4-year PSO cycle, therefore if the specification better promoted innovation and sustainable technologies this could favour operators who prioritise low and zero-emission aircrafts in the future.

Ferries

13.2.12 It should be noted that decarbonisation of the ferry fleets within our region is largely captured in **Strategy Theme 5** in relation to new vessels. Whilst it is possible to decarbonise existing vessels (e.g., the proposed conversion of MV *Shapinsay* to hydrogen), the age of most vessels in the Scottish networks means that this will be uneconomical relative to procuring new tonnage.

Case Study: Sustainable Aviation Test Environment, Kirkwall

As referenced above, the Kirkwall-based Sustainable Aviation Test Environment (SATE) is the UK's first low carbon test location at an operational airport. HITRANS and our constituent member, Orkney Islands Council, are amongst several local partners involved in the SATE consortium. Indeed, Kirkwall Airport has a dedicated hangar to house any aircraft during any trial or demonstration flights.

Led by HITRANS, SATE is at the forefront in progressing UK and Scottish Government's aviation aspirations, bringing together a consortium of 14 partners covering industry, public sector, and academia. Partners work with a range of regional businesses and stakeholders to showcase emerging technologies alongside real-world potential scenarios, highlighting the environmental, social, and economic contribution sustainable aviation can make.

The project is part-funded by the UKRI Future Flight Challenge – a £300 million programme, co-funded by government and industry, that is supporting the creation of the aviation ecosystem needed to accelerate the introduction of advanced air mobility (AAM), drones, and zero-emission sub-regional aircraft in the UK.

While the SATE facilities are based at Kirkwall Airport, the project is evolving to focus on the Highlands & Islands as a whole, matching new technologies with practical use cases to benefit communities.

The work for SATE covers: the development of new sustainable ecosystems; aircraft development and demonstration; airspace change proposals; airport operations; ground infrastructure; skills development; and energy and fuels.

SATE provides a blueprint for net zero regional aviation and has already delivered some early successes, including trialling the first hybrid electric flights in Scotland and collaborating with Windracers and Royal Mail on autonomous drone flights.

Policy ST9a: The RTS supports the implementation of measures which facilitate the decarbonisation of the public transport vehicle fleet within the region, including commercial vehicles, buses and community transport, rail rolling stock, aircraft and ferries.

Policy ST9b: The RTS recognises the opportunities brought about by the availability of renewable energy in our region, including locally produced green hydrogen. The transport fleet mix and associated infrastructure should reflect this.

13.3 Vehicle pooling and vehicle sharing

13.3.1 Our RTS seeks to provide **alternatives which make car ownership less necessary, reducing the need to multi-car households in particular**. The provision of vehicle pooling and vehicle sharing opportunities are two means by which the ned to own a car, or an additional car, can be reduced.

13.3.2 **Vehicle-pooling** is ride sharing where people with similar travel requirements share one vehicle rather than making separate trips. Vehicle-pooling can be undertaken informally between friends / colleagues (as is highly common in islands), coordinated by an employer, or formally through an online platform or app that matches people who have no other connection other than similar travel requirements.

13.3.3 **Vehicle sharing** can remove the need for vehicle ownership. Instead, users access shared vehicles through a vehicle sharing organisation that provides a fleet of vehicles in their local area. Vehicles can then be booked online or via a smartphone app. The operator provides

fuel, parking and maintenance with users paying a fee each time they use the vehicle. We already support the concept of lift sharing through our www.hitravel.liftshare.com website, which would provide a basis for further expansion.

Policy ST9c: The RTS supports the development of vehicle pooling and vehicle sharing services across the region to reduce the need for personal car ownership.

13.4 Zero-emission vehicle uptake and use

13.4.1 The Scottish Government is aiming to phase out the need for new petrol and diesel cars by 2030, although the UK ban on the sale of such cars has been pushed back to 2035, in line with the EU. It is therefore essential that, over the RTS lifespan, alternative fuels and environmentally friendly technologies are critically assessed for both cars and good vehicles (buses having been considered above).

13.4.2 Battery Electric vehicles (BEVs) are seen as the long-term future of road transport (with Plug-in Hybrid Vehicles (PHEV) and Hybrid Electric Vehicles (HEV) playing a role in the medium term) – **BEV registrations in the UK in 2022 were 40% higher than in 2021** and, with **267,203** new BEVs sold, accounted for **16.6% of all new car sales in that year**.[36]

13.4.3 BEVs offer zero tailpipe carbon emissions albeit they still have whole life carbon impacts, from electricity generation, manufacturing to disposal. Whilst not a panacea for the issue of car-based emissions, BEVs will deliver a major reduction in whole life carbon emissions.

13.4.4 However, there are a number of factors hindering uptake:

- Despite lower running costs, **BEVs remain significantly more expensive to purchase than internal combustion engine (ICE) vehicles**. This restricts market uptake and introduces an inequality whereby those on lower incomes are either excluded from the market or are disproportionally affected due to a higher proportion of their income being spent on BEV acquisition. That said, improvements in battery technology and more widespread adoption means that unit costs are declining, and it is anticipated that the cost of an EV will come into line with an ICE vehicle in the years ahead.

- The **running cost advantage of EVs was reduced** by major increases in energy costs over the period 2021-23 and the reduction in the number of free-to-use chargers. The recent volatility of energy prices may act as a short-term barrier to BEV uptake, at least until energy markets settle for a sustained period.

- There are also **relatively few BEV chargers in the region (626 in total as at 1st October 2023[37])**, although provision varies by authority, with Orkney for example having the highest number of chargers per capita in Scotland (231 chargers per 100,000 population[38]). This is a major challenge given the **geographic expanse of our region** where journeys are often long. Moreover, **steep and frequent gradients, shorter winter days and inclement weather all give rise to range anxiety**. This would be a particular **challenge for fully laden commercial vehicles** travelling to and from e.g., geographically remote Scotch whisky distilleries.

- The **electrical grid** in the region, and in particular in the most remote areas may not have sufficient capacity to support the wholesale and uniform transition of the transport network to EVs at present. A range of other low and zero emission fuels are also emerging.

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[36] https://heycar.com/uk/blog/electric-cars-statistics-and-projections

[37] https://maps.dft.gov.uk/ev-charging-map/index.html

[38] https://maps.dft.gov.uk/ev-charging-map/index.html

Case Study: FASTER

The FASTER Project is a joint initiative by partners in Scotland, Ireland and Northern Ireland to support the overarching ambition to transition to low carbon transport systems. The project partnership has completed the physical roll out and installation of 75 rapid (50KW capacity) electric vehicle charging stations in the programme area.

Within Scotland, 23 chargers have been installed at 12 sites across the Western Isles, Argyll & Bute and the Highland regions. Three priorities were identified:

- *To increase coverage across network gaps, aiding a just transition in more rural and remote areas*

- *To improve accessibility for both small commercial vehicles and those with mobility issues through the design*

- *To improve reliability through a more enforceable maintenance contract and co-locating chargers on the Western Isles, so that there is a back-up if one is waiting to be fixed.*

The multi-unit delivery programme afforded many learning opportunities, the most pertinent being the complexity of scheduling four different suppliers for a five-stage installation process at each site, after obtaining the necessary legal agreements and consents. Some organisations built in significant timeframes for flexibility and were not accountable to HITRANS or the project timeframes (e.g., 3rd party legal, wayleaves, EDF metering). This resulted in some delays to the programme, causing frustration for members of the public.

The project offered the opportunity to share challenges and learning with other members of the partnership at a local, regional and national level and positive engagement with local communities and private landowners helped achieve and overcome the necessary legal issues.

HITRANS and partners hope to take forward the lessons learnt into future EV infrastructure work including the EV Infrastructure Funding (EVIF) programme.

13.4.5 Whilst electric power is emerging as the dominant vehicle fuel technology, it will not necessarily be appropriate in for all modes of transport, commercial vehicles for example. **Alternative fuels** such as green hydrogen may therefore have a role of play in our region's future vehicle mix.

Policy ST9d: The RTS calls for the expansion of EV charging infrastructure to support the decarbonisation of all vehicle based travel in our region.

Policy ST9e: The RTS recognises the challenges of distance, topography, climate and short winter daylight hours to the rollout of battery electric powered commercial vehicles and seeks low or zero emission solutions appropriate to our region that capitalises on the surplus energy production within our region.

Policy ST9f: The RTS supports the roll-out of other alternative fuels to promote the decarbonisation of our transport networks, ports, ferry terminals, airports and airfields.

13.5 How does this Strategy Theme contribute to our RTS Objectives?

13.5.1 The table below summarises how this Strategy Theme contributes to our RTS Objectives:

Table 13.1: Contribution of Strategy Theme 9 to our RTS Objectives

RTS Strategy Objectives	
SO1: To make a just transition to a post-carbon and more environmentally sustainable transport network	✓✓✓

RTS Strategy Objectives	
SO2: To transform and provide safe and accessible connections between and within our city, towns and villages, to enable walking, wheeling and cycling for all	O
SO3: To widen access to public and shared transport and improve connectivity within and to / from the region	✓
SO4: To improve the quality and integration of public and shared transport within and from / to the region	O
SO5: To ensure reliable, resilient, affordable and sustainable connectivity for all from / to our island, peninsular and remote communities	✓
SO6: To improve the efficiency, safety and resilience of our transport networks for people and freight and adapt to the impacts of climate change.	✓✓

13.5.2   The over-riding emphasis of this Strategy Theme is on transitioning to a post carbon and more environmentally sustainable transport network, and it therefore makes a particularly strong contribution to **SO1**. Mitigating the effects of climate change would have positive impacts for our island communities **(SO5)** and in terms of the efficiency, safety and resilience of our transport networks for people and freight **(SO6)**.

13.5.3   Vehicle pooling and vehicle sharing schemes would expand shared transport provision within our region and would thus support **SO3**.

14 Strategy Theme 10: Embracing new technologies

14.1 Overview

14.1.1 Travel in our region changed significantly in the 1960s and 1970s. The upgrading of major roads such as the A9, the construction of river and estuarial crossings, the conversion of many ferry routes to Ro-Ro and the growth in regional aviation provided new opportunities for travel and improved journey quality. Since that period, the pace of change has been much slower, with travel by 2010 not dissimilar to the end of the 1970s in terms of journey times, routes, means of travel etc. However, over the last 10 years or so, the rapid growth in technology combined with wider societal change (accelerated by COVID-19) has changed travel behaviour across our region and beyond.

14.1.2 Many of these emerging technologies, and their associated impacts on society, are at an early stage of development and manifestation but offer new ways of providing and accessing transport services. This Strategy Theme is therefore focused on options for embracing new technologies over the lifespan of the next RTS.

Policy ST10a: The RTS embraces the opportunities provided by new technologies to improve the provision of transport infrastructure and services across the region.

14.1.3 The figure below sets out the policy areas covered under this theme:
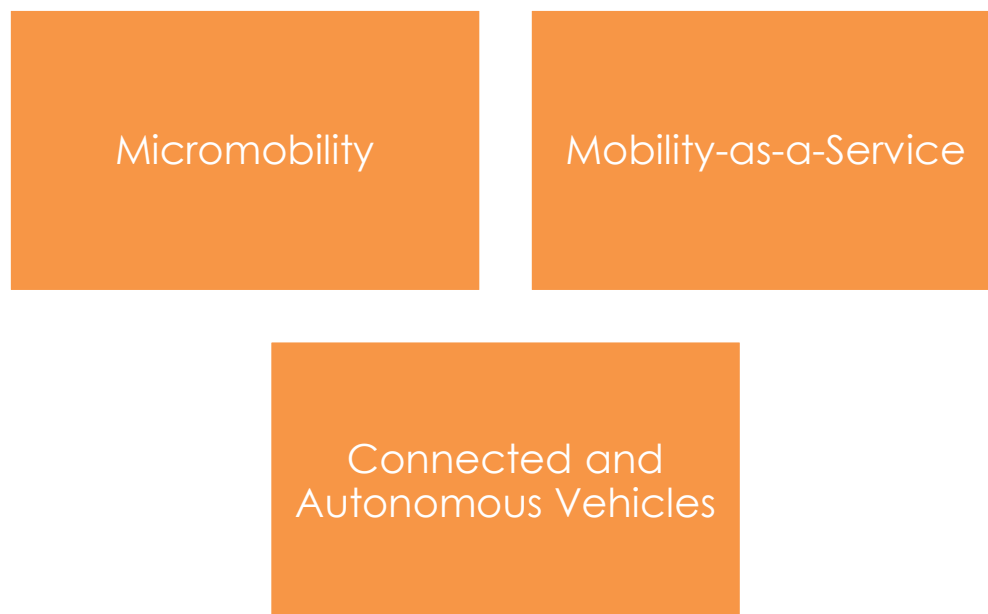
Figure 14.1: Strategy Theme 10 – policy areas

14.2 Micromobility

14.2.1 Micromobility refers to the use of a range of small, lightweight vehicles, including bikes, e-bikes, electric scooters etc. Micromobility devices can be human-powered or electric and can be privately-owned or available through a shared fleet.

14.2.2 Although not legal on the roads in the UK as of 2024, two wheeled electric scooters are growing in popularity with sharing schemes available in several European cities and pilot schemes running in the UK. These are usually dockless and typically, users can track, reserve, and unlock scooters via their smartphone with payment on an annual, monthly, daily or per-trip basis. The availability of shared schemes also removes the purchase cost for users which can be a significant deterrent to use.

14.2.3 Micromobility solutions can be delivered independently or as part of the overall concept of mobility hubs, as introduced in relation **Policy ST4d**.

Policy ST10b: The RTS supports consideration of the provision of future innovative personal transport within the design of our active travel network and mobility hubs.

14.3 Mobility-as-a-Service

14.3.1 **Mobility as a Service (MaaS)** allows users to plan, book and pay for multiple transport services (including public transport, car clubs, access to active travel, taxi, demand responsive transport, etc.) as packages based on their needs instead of buying these in a series of individual purchases. The concept moves away from relying on personally owned models of transport towards being able to access various modes of transport through a single platform. The implementation of a MaaS system or systems within all of parts of our region would create opportunities to develop a seamless, integrated and sustainable transport system that effectively and efficiently meets the needs of residents and visitors.

14.3.2 The fundamental components of MaaS are:

- **Multi-modal:** integration between multiple modes of transport including public transport, active travel, and shared mobility solutions.
- **Payment solutions:** users are able to pay for their travel across a range of modes directly through the MaaS platform with integrated multi-modal ticketing solutions in-built.
- **One platform:** for everything including travel information, booking, ticketing and payments.
- **Integration:** bringing together customers, transport providers, public sector, payment processors, telecommunication companies and the platform owners.
- **Digital:** an online platform supported by telecommunications technology.
- **User-focused:** centred around demand from customers and personalised to their needs.

14.3.3 MaaS is still an emerging concept and is yet to be widely implemented, although Apps which are built on the principles of MaaS are beginning to emerge. For example, our Go-HI app allows residents and visitors to plan, book and pay for end-to-end multi-modal journeys in a single transaction using their smartphone or desktop devices. The platform offers instant access to book buses, trains, taxis, demand responsive transport, car clubs, air travel and car hire, with bicycle hire and ferries being added to the app as the project expands. The app therefore provides a basis for the further development of this option into a fully functional MaaS system.

Policy ST10c: The RTS supports the principle and further development of Mobility-as-a-Service as the technology evolves, particularly through our Go-HI app.

14.4 Connected and Autonomous Vehicles

14.4.1 New vehicles are incorporating increasing levels of automation, where the driver is performing increasingly fewer tasks. There are six tiers of automation, ranging from 'no automation'

through to **Connected and Autonomous Vehicles (CAV)**, where the vehicle is able to operate and perform functions without human intervention.

14.4.2 Currently, only partially automated vehicles are available on the market. In partially automated vehicles, the system takes control of most driving actions, but the driver is expected to remain alert and intervene where necessary. Higher levels of automation are however being developed and piloted with commercially driven advances in this sector being delivered by organisations such as Tesla, Google and other major firms who are competing to develop fully automated or 'driverless' vehicles. As such, it is plausible that higher standards of automated vehicles will move from pilot projects to operational within the lifetime of our RTS.

14.4.3 One of the immediate opportunities with respect to automation is autonomous buses. Indeed, the UK's first full autonomous bus service, CAVForth, launched in May 2023 running between Ferrytoll Park and Ride in Fife and Edinburgh Park Transport Interchange (see the case study below). Given that the driver accounts for the majority of bus operating costs, fully autonomous (and unstaffed) buses would offer an important opportunity improve the viability of 'thin' routes. Moreover, the demographic profile of bus drivers is ageing and there is an emerging shortage of bus drivers across the country (particularly in rural areas), so this option could also partially mitigate the risks posed by this.

14.4.4 Whilst there are clear benefits to CAVs, there remain many issues to overcome, for example the allocation of liabilities in the event of a collision. In addition, it is important that automation contributes to other goals, including the delivery of net zero. Moreover, given that automation is market-led, it is essential that there is policy, regulatory and legal framework which governs the introduction of such vehicles onto our roads.

Case Study: UKs First Autonomous Bus Service

Scotland's first autonomous bus service was launched by HITRANS in October 2022, part-funded by the Planning for Autonomous Vehicles (PAV) project, supported by the ERDF Interreg North Sea Region Programme. The vehicle travelled a three-kilometre route linking Inverness Campus with the Inverness Retail and Business Park.

Policy ST10d: The RTS supports opportunities for the more widespread adoption of Connected and Autonomous Vehicles and autonomous buses, whilst recognising the challenges posed in our region.

14.5 How does this Strategy Theme contribute to our RTS Objectives?

14.5.1 The table below summarises how this Strategy Theme contributes to our RTS Objectives:

Table 14.1: Contribution of Strategy Theme 10 to our RTS Objectives

RTS Strategy Objectives	
SO1: To make a just transition to a post-carbon and more environmentally sustainable transport network	✓
SO2: To transform and provide safe and accessible connections between and within our city, towns and villages, to enable walking, wheeling and cycling for all	✓
SO3: To widen access to public and shared transport and improve connectivity within and to / from the region	✓✓
SO4: To improve the quality and integration of public and shared transport within and from / to the region	✓
SO5: To ensure reliable, resilient, affordable and sustainable connectivity for all from / to our island, peninsular and remote communities	✓
SO6: To improve the efficiency, safety and resilience of our transport networks for people and freight and adapt to the impacts of climate change.	✓

14.5.2 Emerging technologies offer a range of potential benefits for our region and thus could make a positive contribution across our RTS Strategy Objectives in the future.

14.5.3 New technologies in aviation are expected to provide new markets for passenger and freight travel as well as improve efficiencies in current markets. Several examples are being explored in SATE – including large UAVs with payload capacities of 100kg, and Airlander, the world's most efficient large aircraft, that could help to deliver cost-effective, low-emission passenger transport and freight to the Highland and Island communities in the North of Scotland.

14.5.4 Mircomobility and MaaS offer improved opportunities to make more environmentally sustainable journeys **(SO1)**, including by wheeling and cycling **(SO2)**.

14.5.5 A combination of MaaS and CAVs, and in particular autonomous buses, offer the opportunity to expand public transport connectivity **(SO3)** and improve quality **(SO4)** and efficiency, safety and resilience **(SO6)**. These benefits would accrue to our mainland and island **(SO5)** communities.

15 Strategy Theme 11: Reducing the cost of travel, particularly for those most in need

15.1 Overview

15.1.1 A combination of distance, low volumes and, for passenger journeys, the frequent requirement for more than one connection (and sometimes mode) when making a journey means that cost of travel is major issue for some living in our region. Indeed, **transport poverty** is a major issue, particularly in our island and rural communities.

15.1.2 This Strategy Theme is therefore focused on policies that reduce the cost of travel, particularly for those most in need. There are different ways in which the cost of travel can be reduced, including universal reductions in fares, discounts targeted by either geography or person group or measures to improve cross-operator ticket acceptance. Ahead of setting out our policy position on these matters however, it is important to define what we mean by transport poverty.

15.1.3 The figure below sets out the policy areas covered under this theme:

Transport poverty	Reduce public transport fares	Expand Road Equivalent Tariff
Cross-operator ticket acceptance	Expanding the scope and geographic coverage of natioanl fares policies	Expansion of the Air Discount Scheme
	Equitable road pricing	
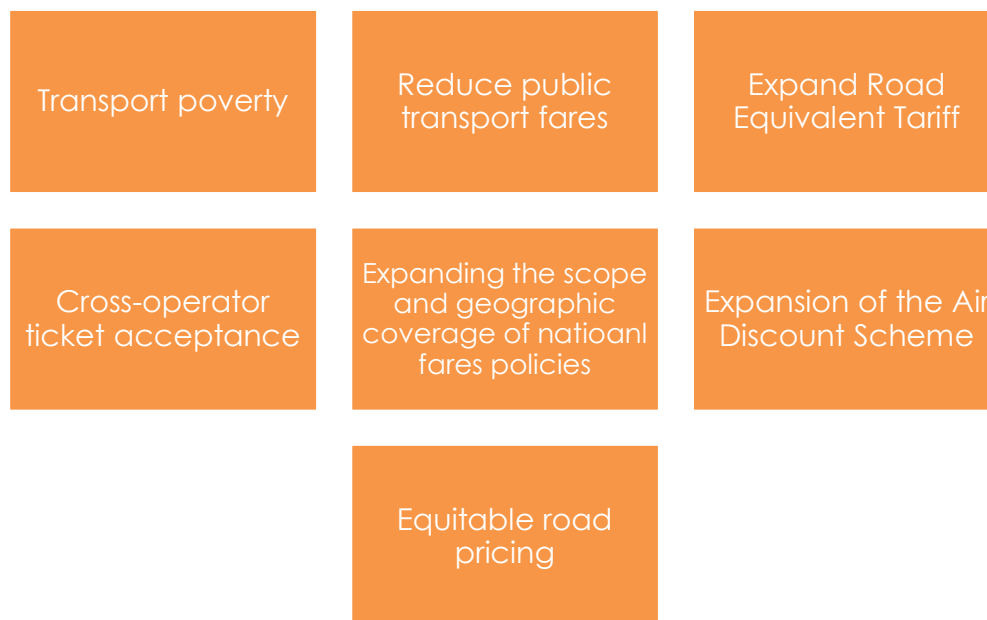
Figure 15.1: Strategy Theme 11 – policy areas

15.2 Transport poverty

15.2.1 The European Parliament defines transport poverty as a:

- *"…lack of adequate transport services necessary to access general services and work, or the inability to pay for these services"*.

15.2.2 Five distinct elements of transport poverty are identified:

- No transport **availability** (the lack of transport options or low frequency, also referred to as **mobility poverty**)

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- No [physical] **accessibility** to transport

- Low transport **affordability**

- Too much **time spent travelling**

- Inadequate **transport conditions** (available transport options are dangerous or unsafe)[39]

15.2.3   As set out in the 'Case for Change' and alluded to throughout this Strategy, **transport availability, affordability and time spent travelling** are pervasive issues across our region, whilst **accessibility** and **quality** can be problems for some groups or in certain geographic areas. Almost all of these issues are ultimately reflected in cost, either in terms of public transport fares or through '**forced car ownership'**.

15.2.4   Recent research undertaken by the Scottish Government has found that 15% of people living in rural Scotland (or 170,000 people) are in relative poverty. **Fuel poverty** is a particular issue, with a **third of houses in remote rural Scotland estimated to be in extreme fuel poverty**, compared to only 11% of households in the rest of Scotland (it should be noted that this research was carried out prior to the steep increase in energy costs in 2022).[40]   Moreover, island and peninsular communities in our region have additional costs associated with island-mainland travel (and, in some instances, inter-island travel), particularly given the commuter nature of some of our islands and peninsular communities (e.g., Rousay, Ardgour etc).

15.2.5   Transport cost, when considered in its broadest sense, and associated fuel poverty can therefore be a '**push' factor in out-migration** from communities which are already fragile. As well as being damaging for the communities concerned, it makes service delivery much more challenging, a point recently raised by The Highland Council in response to the 2022 Census.[41]

15.2.6   Whilst we know that transport poverty is a problem in our region, it is one that is ill-defined and poorly evidenced. In making the case for investment to address this issue and determining which actions would be most appropriate to address it, it is essential that work is done to better define and evidence the problem. This will allow us through our RTS Action Plan to develop and implement measures which will alleviate transport poverty in our region.

> **Policy ST11a:** Transport poverty is a complex, dispersed and often hidden problem in our region. The RTS commits to define and evidence this problem and identify appropriate actions to be delivered by HITRANS and our partners.

15.3   Reduce public transport fares

15.3.1   The absolute level of public transport fares across all modes can be a barrier to travel and a contributory factor to transport poverty. This also acts as an incentive to visitors to travel by car, rather than using public transport either to get to or travel around region.

Bus and coach

15.3.2   Any reduction in fares would likely lead to a reduction in revenue – that is, the additional passengers generated would not cover the revenue lost from reducing the fare. Therefore, any reduction in fares is likely to be dependent on the provision of additional public funding, whether via subsidy or market intervention in accordance with the provisions of the Transport (Scotland) Act 2019.

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[39] Kiss, M., *Understanding transport poverty* (European Parliamentary Research Services, 2021), pp. 1-2.

[40] Poverty in Rural Scotland: A review of evidence (Scottish Government, 2021), pp. 4-5.

[41] Highland populations at risk of being 'drained' of people - report - BBC News

> **Case Study: Capped bus fares in England**
>
> *To support post-pandemic patronage recovery, the UK Government provided funding to cap single bus fares outside London at £2 until the end of 2024 (for participating operators), at which point the government will review the effectiveness of the policy. Early indications are that this initiative has been successful, with a Transport Focus survey finding that 11% of respondents recorded increased bus use. This could be a potential model for our region but would be dependent on the provision of additional external funding.*
>
> *https://www.nationalworld.com/news/traffic-and-travel/when-does-ps2-bus-fare-cap-end-new-finish-date-for-low-cost-fare-as-travel-discount-extended-4098311*

Rail

15.3.3   For communities living near the **railway network** in our region, the train service can be their equivalent of a bus and may be their only meaningful public transport connection. Despite the availability of the Highland Railcard, the cost of rail fares can still be more than the bus fare for some. Moreover, many island and peninsular residents seek to connect with rail services at Wemyss Bay, Gourock, Oban, Mallaig, Thurso and Aberdeen, with the cost of their rail ticket often exceeding their ferry fare.

15.3.4   Residents travelling outwith our region can also face significant fare costs as their journeys are generally long distance. In some instances, variable demand-based fares designed to maximise operator yield come into play, sometimes offering reduced costs for advanced booking, but also increasing costs for essential short notice travel.

15.3.5   As with bus services, any reduction in fares would in all likelihood lead to an increase in the overall operating deficit of the railway network, with the cost accruing to the Scottish Government as the ultimate owner and funder of Scotland's railway.

Publicly supported ferry services – passenger fares

15.3.6   With some limited exceptions (e.g., the Corran Ferry), all **ferry foot passengers** pay a fare for travel. This is a supplementary cost paid by island residents which is additive to onward transport costs when they arrive on the mainland. On several routes, such as those operated by Orkney Ferries, passengers can buy heavily discounted books of tickets. However, being able to do so is reliant on having the money up-front to buy these books, which discriminates against those on lower incomes.

15.3.7   **Reducing foot passenger fares, or removing them altogether**, would be beneficial to those living in island or peninsular communities, narrowing the cost differential which they face. It is often suggested that providing reduced or free fares for foot passengers could be a potential means of dissuading people from taking their car on the ferry. However, it is important to recognise that there is no practical means of charging car-based passengers but providing free fares for foot passengers. Whist the vehicle fare could still be applied (with a driver fare), car passengers could walk on as a foot passenger for free. The Corran Ferry is an example of where all passengers, whether on-foot or in a car, travel for free.

15.3.8   For those living in or travelling to the Orkney Islands, a reduction in the cost of onboard accommodation (in addition to the 'Islander' fare) would be beneficial. However, the practical limitations in terms of capacity are well understood and this may therefore only become a consideration as part of the future replacement of the current NIFS fleet.

Air services

15.3.9   For a small number of island communities, **publicly supported air services** provide the lifeline mode of travel and / or fulfil a critical role in meeting specific needs, such as

transporting children to and from school or allowing medical professionals to visit an island. Air travel is however generally more expensive than making the journey by sea (or overland in the context of Campbeltown and Caithness). Reducing fares to a level which is competitive with sea or land-based travel would be advantageous for communities.

15.3.10 The economics of the **commercial aviation network** in the region mean that fares can often be prohibitively high. The Scottish Government's Air Discount Scheme (ADS) provides a 50% reduction on core fares (i.e., pre-tax) for residents in certain parts of the region when travelling for a purpose other than business. The fares themselves are set by the airline on the basis of market conditions and vary by flight, time of booking etc. Fares could be reduced by increasing the level of the ADS discount or widening its eligibility to e.g., businesses.

Delivering public transport fares reductions

15.3.11 We **support the principle of reducing public transport fares** and recognise the benefits in terms of reducing transport poverty and encouraging modal shift. However, we also recognise several key challenges in providing lower fares:

- The majority of transport services in our region are either marginal or operate with a subsidy. Given low population density, it is highly unlikely that the revenue foregone from any reduction in fares would be offset by increased demand. There would therefore be an **additional cost to the public sector in either direct funding or subsidy to private operators** to account for this reduction in farebox revenue.

- Making changes to the means by which fares are set and their absolute level can also be a **complex undertaking** and risks both unintended consequences and public acceptability issues

- Any fares reduction would need to be delivered in a way that is **compliant with competition law and subsidy control**, as well as within the **regulatory framework** governing each mode of transport

15.3.12 The above is not to say that reductions in public transport fares cannot be delivered, rather it is emphasising the importance of well-thought through analysis and appraisal to inform any reduction in fares.

Policy ST11b: Recognising that, for many in our region (and especially those living in our island communities), transport costs account for a high proportion of household income, the RTS supports a reduction in public transport fares and the introduction of payment plans for multi-journey tickets.

Policy ST11c: The comparative costs of public transport mean that residents and visitors to the region often choose to travel by car. The RTS therefore supports a reduction in the cost differential between travelling by public transport and car.

15.4 Expand Road Equivalent Tariff

15.4.1 Our RTS has a general presumption against increased car-based travel, recognising the importance of decarbonisation and the policy commitment to reduce car kilometres by 20% by 2030. However, **for most island residents, taking a car on the ferry for at least some journeys is essential**. It allows them to maximise time off-island and carry items such as luggage, pets, goods purchased on the mainland or livestock in trailers. The absolute level of car fares has long been recognised as a barrier to travel or an additional cost that island residents must bear, despite below average incomes. Indeed, this formed the basis of the Scottish Government's Road Equivalent Tariff policy, first introduced as a pilot in 2008.

15.4.2 There are numerous means by which car fares could be reduced, and this would merit a study in its own right - indeed, the specific dynamics of each route would ideally need to be

considered. It is though important to recognise: (i) the **capacity challenges** on many routes that any fares reduction could exacerbate; and (ii) the **risk of unintended consequences**, such as causing economic leakage from islands, with more money being spent elsewhere. There is a significant body of evidence on the impact of RET and its variability by community contained in the *Evaluation of Road Equivalent Tariff on the Clyde and Hebridean Network*, published by Transport Scotland in March 2020.[42] The principle of a general reduction in ferry car fares would be addressed through **Policy ST11c**.

15.4.3   Beyond this however**, we support the extension of the RET policy** to services to the Northern Isles and local authority operated services, again where this can be delivered within the law. An inequality between our island communities has emerged, whereby some islands have benefited from significant fares reductions associated with RET, whilst others have not. Whilst the RET fares system may evolve over time, we support an **equitable approach** to the setting of fares across all our island communities. We also support the principle that **no community should see an increase in their fares when RET is introduced**, albeit we acknowledge that there are again here significant complexities around which level of multi-journey ticket book discount to peg the RET fare at.

Policy ST11d: The RTS supports in principle the roll-out of Road Equivalent Tariff to any ferry routes on which it does not currently apply, including local authority services.

15.5   Cross-operator ticket acceptance

15.5.1   Many journeys to, from and within our region require one or more interchanges, often between modes. For example, a resident of Stornoway travelling to Glasgow without a car could make the journey using a combination of ferry, bus and rail. At present, almost all public transport journeys in our region are payable separately, which is both expensive and inconvenient for the passenger. It can also be complicated and confusing to find the cheapest fare.

15.5.2   This problem is of course common across most of the UK outwith London, where public transport continues to operate within a regulated rather than a commercial environment. However, the distances involved in many journeys and the frequent requirement for multiple interchanges make the absence of cross-operator ticket acceptance particularly problematic for our residents. To be clear, this is not simply a matter of convenience, which integrated / smart ticketing solutions will address, rather it is about **reducing the end-to-end cost of a journey** through, for example, **through ticketing** (e.g., 'Rail and Sail', expansion of PlusBus etc) and **fare capping**.

Policy ST11e: The RTS calls for greater cross-industry partnership working and regulatory reform to reduce the cost penalty for interchange within or between modes of transport.

15.6   Expanding the scope and geographic coverage of national fares policies

15.6.1   A consequence of low population density and public transport frequency is that residents of our region derive a **proportionally lower benefit from national policies and funding streams**, e.g., the National Concessionary Travel Scheme – this is a **clear inequality**. Indeed, we commissioned independent research on this topic in 2022, which confirmed that residents of our region experience lower levels of public transport connectivity and have fewer opportunities to use existing concessionary schemes. This is a location-based inequality and can give rise to social exclusion and / or 'forced' car ownership. This inequality can be

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[42] https://www.transport.gov.scot/media/49397/evaluation-of-road-equivalent-tariff-on-the-clyde-and-hebridean-network.pdf

particularly stark for the most vulnerable groups such as the elderly, the young and people on low incomes.

15.6.2 There is therefore a case for extending:

- The **scope** of national fares policies – for example, where a train or ferry is the main mode of travel in an area due to no / limited bus service provision, there is an argument that the National Concessionary Travel Scheme card should be accepted on these services

- The **geographic coverage** of national or regionally / locally targeted fares policies – for example, expanding eligibility for the Highland Railcard

Policy ST11f: The RTS calls for the extension of the National Concessionary Travel Scheme and Under-22s Concessionary Travel Scheme to rail, ferry and air services where these are the main or only mode of public transport in an area.

15.7 Expansion of the Air Discount Scheme

15.7.1 The economics of the commercial aviation network in the region mean that fares can often be prohibitively high. **Retaining the ADS discount is essential** for our region. Its **expansion** would also be welcomed, particularly for **those on the lowest incomes or for high frequency users such as sports teams**.

15.7.2 When originally introduced in May 2006, the ADS incorporated travel for private and public sector business trips (including business travel for NHS staff), but this was discontinued from April 2011 due to a combination of cost and compliance with European State Aid legislation. However, work undertaken as part of the *Our Islands, Our Future* workstream in September 2016 indicated that **ADS for business travel could be reintroduced in a legally compliant manner** and for circa £1.7m per annum (2016 prices).[43]

15.7.3 Regional air travel is essential to many businesses in our region, reducing the distance-based cost disadvantage that they face. However, the high level of fares for those making (often short-notice) business trips affects both the commercial performance of private firms and the budgets of the public sector.

Policy ST11g: The RTS calls for the retention and expansion of the Air Discount Scheme, including to businesses in the region.

15.8 Equitable road pricing

15.8.1 We recognise that the vehicle fleet transformation from internal combustion engine vehicles to BEVs will have significant implications for fuel duty and Value Added Tax (VAT) collected by the UK Government through fuel sales. As EVs begin to account for an increasingly large share of the overall vehicle fleet, it is inevitable that the government will need to identify a replacement source of tax revenue.

15.8.2 Whilst no firm decision has been made on this yet (nor has it even been the subject of a public or Parliamentary debate), **national road pricing has been mooted as a potential successor to fuel duty / VAT**. We recognise that this may provide benefits for some, but there is also a **risk that a national model applied in our region would not reflect its unique characteristics**, in particular the long travel distances and the comparative importance of car travel. In a scenario where road pricing was introduced, it would be essential to ensure that it was applied in a manner that did not exacerbate existing inequalities

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[43] https://www.transport.gov.scot/media/4026/itf-29-sep-2016-ads-business-user-eligibility-paper.pdf

or create new inequalities for those living in our region. In this way any system should recognise more and less 'avoidable' car use and charge accordingly.

Policy ST11h: National road pricing proposals may emerge in response to the reduction in fuel duty and Value Added Tax as a result of the mass adoption of electric vehicles. If this eventuality materialises, the RTS calls for a road pricing system that recognises the unique characteristics of our region.

15.9 How does this Strategy Theme contribute to our RTS Objectives?

15.9.1 The table below summarises how this Strategy Theme contributes to our RTS Objectives:

Table 15.1: Contribution of Strategy Theme 11 to our RTS Objectives

RTS Strategy Objectives	
SO1: To make a just transition to a post-carbon and more environmentally sustainable transport network	✓
SO2: To transform and provide safe and accessible connections between and within our city, towns and villages, to enable walking, wheeling and cycling for all	O
SO3: To widen access to public and shared transport and improve connectivity within and to / from the region	✓✓✓
SO4: To improve the quality and integration of public and shared transport within and from / to the region	✓
SO5: To ensure reliable, resilient, affordable and sustainable connectivity for all from / to our island, peninsular and remote communities	✓✓✓
SO6: To improve the efficiency, safety and resilience of our transport networks for people and freight and adapt to the impacts of climate change.	O

15.9.2 The high cost of travel for many journeys can either: (i) prevent a journey being made by public transport, generating additional vehicle kilometres; or (ii) prevent a journey being made altogether, which impacts on the life chances of our residents and the productivity of our businesses. This Strategy Theme would therefore make a major contribution in widening access to public and shared transport through reducing its cost, thus improving connectivity to, from and within our region **(SO3)**. By extension, achieving mode shift would support a just transition to a post-carbon and more environmentally sustainable transport network **(SO1)**.

15.9.3 Measures to reduce the cost of interchanging within and between modes of transport would also support **SO4**.

15.9.4 The cost of transport is a particular issue for our island and communities. Island residents often have to make long journeys on multiple modes or have to pay the cost of either taking a car on the ferry or an expensive flight. Measures to reduce the cost of travel would therefore strongly support **SO5**.

16 Delivering our Regional Transport Strategy

16.1 Overview

16.1.1 Our RTS is a long-term strategy intended to shape how transport infrastructure and services are provided across our diverse region. Publishing a strategy is however only the first step in delivering tangible outcomes for those who live and work in and visit our region. Its successful implementation will require an ongoing programme of work (including appraisals, business cases and design work), funding and political support. All of this will require close partnership working between HITRANS and our constituent members, partner RTPs, the Scottish and UK Governments, transport operators and other regional partners such as Highlands and Islands Enterprise.

16.1.2 This chapter therefore sets out the steps which we will undertake to deliver our RTS.

16.2 Developing an Action Plan

16.2.1 Across the 11 Strategy Themes, we have developed over 100 policies, which state our 'direction of travel' across all components of the transport system in our region. However, whilst our policies define the **desired outcomes**, they do not however state **how** these will be delivered. This is entirely appropriate as selecting a preferred option is a matter for a business case, which can reflect specific geographic considerations and available funding at a given point in time.

16.2.2 Subsequent to the adoption of the RTS, an accompanying **Action Plan** will therefore be developed. This will state the actions that we will take to progress the RTS and the timeframes within which each action will be progressed. The Action Plan will contain a combination of proposed appraisals / business cases, research studies, projects and programmes. It will focus on **actions that are regionally significant in nature** - i.e., those which are large scale or cross-boundary, either between authorities within our region or between our region and other RTP areas. Local issues will be a matter for the Local Transport Strategies of our constituent members.

16.2.3 Unlike the RTS itself, which provides a circa 20-year strategic framework, the **Action Plan will be regularly reviewed and updated** to reflect the changing status of projects, their differing stages in the project lifecycle and the need for new or amended actions to support a policy (e.g., in response to the emergence or development of new technology).

16.2.4 The **first Action Plan** will be **published immediately after the adoption of the RTS** and will **run to May 2027**, which is the date of the next Scottish Local Government Elections, at which point our Board will change. Thereafter, **each subsequent Action Plan will cover the five-year period between Scottish Local Government Elections**.

16.2.5 For each Action Plan period, we will set out our proposed programme of work by year and we will revisit this annually as part of our budget setting process.

16.3 Governance

16.3.1 Reflecting on our previous (2008) RTS, a major challenge in delivering our policy commitments and the cross-boundary schemes and projects which emerged from them was **governance**. Whilst we have a statutory role, our designation as a **'Level 1' RTP** means that we have very limited statutory powers and a lack of dedicated funding to support delivery of our RTS. This has two consequences:

- Coordinating and delivering cross-boundary projects within our region is challenging as **we require the financial and political buy-in of affected member local authorities**.

Whilst a local authority may support in principle what we propose, each of our members is subject to significant financial pressures and thus may be unable to fund regionally beneficial investments without detracting from local projects for which they have responsibility.

- We have emphasised throughout our RTS the unique characteristics of our region. However, much of the funding allocated to our region is either **disbursed directly by the Scottish Government and its agencies** (e.g., the funding of the Clyde and Hebrides Ferry services) or **provided to local authorities or third parties but within a strict set of criteria** (i.e., active travel funding provided via Sustrans).

16.3.2 An immediate action upon adoption of our RTS will therefore be to undertake a **regional governance review, in partnership with our constituent local authorities**. This will consider both how we deliver the RTS and how funding is allocated to the region and disbursed. Once complete, we will submit our analysis to Scottish Ministers for consideration and, subject to approval, seek to implement the recommendations over the first RTS Action Plan period.

17 RTS Monitoring and Evaluation

17.1 Overview

17.1.1 It will be crucial to continually monitor and periodically evaluate the RTS to understand its success in delivering the RTS Strategy Objectives. A set of KPIs linked to the Strategy Objectives has therefore been defined and set out below. The KPIs closely reflect those developed for the purposes of monitoring the National Transport Strategy 2, thus also allowing us to understand how we are performing with respect to national level indicators. These indicators will be used to measure the change in the performance of the transport system in our region against the baseline initially established in the 'Case for Change' Report, which was produced prior to the RTS being adopted.

17.1.2 Monitoring reports will be produced on a two-yearly basis setting out the transport and behavioural trends against the KPIs.

17.1.3 The Scottish Household Survey Travel Diary (SHSTD) publishes a range of local authority and regional transport partnership statistics annually, usually two years in arrears, i.e., results from 2021 were published in 2023. This is one source of monitoring data, but sample sizes are typically small, and some results are aggregated over a number of years reducing their effectiveness. This will therefore be supplemented by a new HITRANS Travel and Transport Survey (HTTS) which will be undertaken every two years and will monitor the main trends in travel across the region, views on different transport modes and the causal mechanisms which may drive changes in behaviour in line with the Strategy Objectives. There could be two versions of this – reflecting mainland and island communities.

17.2 Key Performance Indicators

17.2.1 The KPIs relative to each RTS Strategy Objective are set out below. For most KPIs, the data will have to be built-up from the level of either individual local authorities or specific geographic points (e.g., ferry routes and airports)

Strategy Objective 1: To make a just transition to a post-carbon and more environmentally sustainable transport network.

■ Transport emissions in the HITRANS region (Department for Business Energy and Industrial Strategy

■ Number of Air Quality Management Areas in the region (Scottish Transport Statistics)

■ Proportion of road vehicle fleet which is ULEV (DfT Vehicle Licencing Statistics)

■ Total public charging and rapid charging devices (DfT EV charging map)

■ Number of kilometres of electrified rail track **or** number of battery-electric or alternatively fuelled rail rolling stock units (Network Rail and ScotRail)

■ Number of battery-electric or alternatively fuelled vessels (CMAL and local authorities)

■ Number of battery-electric or alternatively fuelled aircraft used on PSO air services (Transport Scotland and local authorities)

■ Use of EVs by residents (HTTS)

Strategy Objective 2: To transform and provide safe and accessible connections between and within our city, towns and villages, to enable walking, wheeling and cycling for all.

■ Number of bicycles available for private use by households (SHSTD)

- Adults (16+) – frequency of walking in previous seven days (SHSTD)

- Main mode of travel – walking (SHSTD)

- Main mode of travel – bicycle (SHSTD)

- Cycling mode share (SHSTD)

- Percentage of pupils cycling to primary school (Sustrans Hands-Up survey)

- Percentage of pupils cycling to secondary school (Sustrans Hands-Up survey)

- The level of, barriers to, and attitude to walking, wheeling and cycling will be monitored in the biennial (HTTS)

Strategy Objective 3: To widen access to public and shared transport and improve connectivity within and from / to the region.

- Passenger journeys by region for local bus services (Scottish Transport Statistics, although the figures for our region also include the Shetland Islands)

- Rail passengers by station (ORR estimates of station usage)

- Use of local bus services in previous month (SHSTD)

- Use of local train services in previous month (SHSTD)

- Main mode of travel – bus (SHSTD)

- Main mode of travel – rail (SHSTD)

- Number of taxi vehicles and private hire cars (Scottish Transport Statistics, local authority level)

- Number of taxi driver licences (Scottish Transport Statistics, local authority level)

- Number of wheelchair accessible taxis and private hire cars (Scottish Transport Statistics, local authority level)

- Terminal passengers by airport – Inverness, Passengers on selected domestic air routes to and from Inverness, Terminal passenger traffic by origin / destination – Inverness, Aircraft movements, by airport and type of movement – Inverness, and Air transport movements by airport - Inverness (Civil Aviation Authority reported in Scottish Transport Statistics)

- Residents' use of public transport (including barriers to travel) (HTTS)

Strategy Objective 4: To improve the quality and integration of public and shared transport within and from / to the region.

- Satisfaction with public transport (SHSTD or Transport Focus surveys, where the sample size is large enough)

- Residents' satisfaction with public transport, including integration (HTTS)

- Percentage of average weekly household expenditure on transport (SHSTD)

- Perceptions of safety and security on bus services (SHSTD)

- Perceptions of safety and security on train services (SHSTD)

Strategy Objective 5: To ensure reliable, resilient, affordable and sustainable connectivity for all from / to our island, peninsular and remote communities.

- Annual ferry passenger carryings by route (Scottish Transport Statistics)

- Annual ferry car carryings by route (Scottish Transport Statistics)

- Annual ferry commercial vehicle and coach carryings by route (Scottish Transport Statistics)

- Annual proportion of scheduled sailings cancelled, diverted or late by route (ferry operator data)

- Terminal passengers by airport – island and other regional airports, Terminal passenger traffic by origin / destination – island and other regional airports, Aircraft movements, by airport and type of movement – island and other regional airports, and Air transport movements by airport - island and other regional airports (Civil Aviation Authority reported in Scottish Transport Statistics)

- Island residents' use of and satisfaction with ferry and air services (HTTS)

Strategy Objective 6: To improve the efficiency, safety and resilience of our transport networks for people and freight and adapt to the impacts of climate change.

- Reported road collisions (Scottish Transport Statistics)

- Personal injury accidents, overall and by route section as per the 'Case for Change' report (Scottish Transport Statistics)

- Fatal and serious personal injury accidents per million vehicle kilometres, by route section as per the 'Case for Change' report (Scottish Transport Statistics)

- Residents' perceptions of safety (HTTS)

- Road journey times by time period / time of year (INRIX, for the 17 route sections identified in the 'Case for Change')

- Average freight lifted by UK HGVs in the HITRANS region (Scottish Transport Statistics)

- Foreign and domestic freight at ports in the HITRANS region (Scottish Transport Statistics)

- Breakdown of freight commodity at ports in the HITRANS region (Scottish Transport Statistics)

- Tonnage of freight carried, by airport (Civil Aviation Authority reported in Scottish Transport Statistics)

Consultation Survey

Below is the proposed response to the Hitrans Draft Regional Transport Strategy.

1. Do you agree or disagree with the RTS Vision?

   Agree

2. Please provide any comments on the RTS Vision and / or explain your response above should you wish.

   Moray Council agrees with the vision. In addition, access to health and education as well as economic and socially valuable activities should be stated.

3. To what extent do you agree with **RTS Strategy Objective 1**: "To make a just transition to a post-carbon and more environmentally sustainable transport network"?

   Agree

4. To what extent do you agree with **RTS Strategy Objective 2**: "To transform and provide safe and accessible connections between and within our city, towns and villages, to enable walking, wheeling and cycling for all"?

   Agree

5. To what extent do you agree with **RTS Strategy Objective 3**: "To widen access to public and shared transport and improve connectivity within and from / to the region"?

   Agree

6. To what extent do you agree with **RTS Strategy Objective 4**: "To improve the quality and integration of public and shared transport within and from / to the region"?

   Agree

7. To what extent do you agree with **RTS Strategy Objective 5**: "To ensure reliable, resilient, affordable and sustainable connectivity for all from / to our island, peninsular and remote communities"?

   Agree

8. To what extent do you agree with **RTS Strategy Objective 6**: "To improve the efficiency, safety and resilience of our transport networks for people and freight and adapt to the impacts of climate change."?

   Agree

9. Please indicate how important you consider each RTS Strategy Theme to be.

Strategy Theme 1: Transforming our communities and reducing the impact of transport upon them

Quite Important

Strategy Theme 2: Connecting our communities

Very important

Strategy Theme 3: Enhancing public transport connectivity to / from: (i) Inverness; (ii) our sub-regional centres; and (iii) Scotland's other cities and beyond

Very important

Strategy Theme 4: Improving the integration, quality of and access to public and shared transport

Quite important

Strategy Theme 5: Providing connectivity that supports our island and peninsular communities

Important

Strategy Theme 6: Improving the efficiency of transport networks and supply-chains and reducing their impact on our communities

Very important

Strategy Theme 7: Improving the safety, reliability and resilience of our road and rail networks

Very important

Strategy Theme 8: Facilitating sustainable visitor travel demand

Quite important

Strategy Theme 9: Decarbonising our transport, mitigating the effects of climate change

Important

Strategy Theme 10: Embracing new technologies

Quite Important
Strategy Theme 11: Reducing the cost of travel, particularly for those most in need

Important

Strategy Theme 1: Transforming our communities and reducing the impact of transport upon them. Improving the public realm and mobility within settlements by reducing the dominance of the private car and maximising opportunities for walking, wheeling and cycling.

Policy ST1a The RTS supports the principle of reallocating road space, including parking, from general traffic. This should support placemaking to shape improved walking, wheeling and cycling opportunities in our communities as a means to promote safe active travel and encourage use of active travel modes. Reallocation of road space should avoid any negative impacts on bus services. Policy ST1b Where traffic in settlements is reduced by investment in road infrastructure, road space reallocation should be undertaken as an integral component of that investment.

Agree, where appropriate

Policy ST1c The RTS supports the principle of traffic calming and speed limit reductions and enforcement where this is the wish of our communities, including on the Trunk Road network.

Agree, noting that this should be within the context of an evidence basis, national guidance and best practice, including affordability.

Policy ST1d The RTS supports measures to reduce road-based severance in our communities.

Agree

Policy ST1e The RTS recognises the challenges presented by the impacts of increasing abnormal load movements across the region. It calls for a coordinated approach to be taken to ensure that appropriate planning and mitigation is put in place as part of the planning process for new developments that will generate such movements.

Agree

Policy ST1f The RTS supports greater consistency (in 'like-for-like' locations) of parking management across our region, including payment mechanisms, parking information and enforcement.

Partially disagree – a 'one size fits all' approach even in like-for-like locations does not recognise the wider context of the different strategic approaches to parking management and enforcement and the differing local contexts. Synergies can, and should, still be sought where possible. Collaboration for consistency on information provision and (where there is an agreed fit) use of technology is supported.

Policy ST1g The RTS supports the principle of improving the management and enforcement of traffic and parking around schools, including School Streets (a road outside a school with temporary restriction on motorised traffic at school drop-off and pick-up times).

Agree – Like many authorities, the management of traffic around schools is a matter that is regularly raised by residents, and work has been ongoing for a number of years in Moray to identify mitigations. Moray has trialled School Streets in two locations and has learning in this area – collaboration across the region on this topic would be supported.

Policy ST1h The RTS supports the prioritisation of new development in locations that are in proximity to key services and already well-served by active travel and public transport.

Agree – and noting that where development is necessary in other areas, that transport needs continue to be a high priority in terms of the necessary infrastructure to enable development.

Policy ST1i The RTS supports the local delivery of public services, including health and education, and other day-to-day retail and personal services (e.g., banking) which minimise the need to travel.

Agree

Policy ST1j The RTS supports the integration of active travel, public transport and shared mobility into the planning of all new developments. New development proposals should be required to outline how they will connect into the local active travel and public transport networks.

Strongly Agree

Policy ST1k The RTS supports the concept of 'infrastructure first' in relation to major developments across our region.

Agree

Policy ST1l The RTS recognises the centrality of environmental considerations, particularly biodiversity enhancements and nature networks, within the planning and decision making process.

Agree

Strategy Theme 2: Connecting our communities Facilitating walking, wheeling and cycling within settlements and improving active travel connections between them.

Policy ST2a The RTS supports transformational investment in the improvement of our existing active travel networks to make these accessible to all.

Agree

Policy ST2b The RTS supports the reinstatement and expansion of a network of strategic and local traffic free / quiet walking, wheeling and cycling routes to connect communities across and beyond our region.

Agree

Policy ST2c: The RTS supports the expansion of the National Cycle Network to all parts of the region.

Agree

Policy ST2d Our active travel infrastructure should be designed to a high standard in accordance with the most up-to-date best practice and regionally appropriate design standards (as this evolves) to meet the needs of all users.

Agree – we would particularly highlight the need for regionally (and locally) appropriate design standards that reflect both predicted usage of active travel infrastructure and the rural environment in which it sits, rather than a standard nationwide approach driven by city/urban needs.

Policy ST2e The RTS supports the integration of active travel and public transport connections within our communities.

Agree

Policy ST2f The RTS promotes the adoption of measures outlined in the Sustainable Travel to Stations Strategy with respect to access to railway stations.

Agree

Policy ST2g The RTS seeks the implementation of initiatives which widen access to bicycles and e-bicycles, including e.g., promoting ownership, expansion of bicycle share and hire and provision of new 'first mile, last mile' cycling opportunities.

Agree

Policy ST2h The RTS supports the upgrade and new provision of bicycle parking and facilities at all public buildings, transport interchanges and key on-street locations within the region.

Agree

Policy ST2i Our active travel network should be developed, presented and promoted in a more coherent, recognisable and integrated way for regular, occasional and new users of the network, including visitors.

Agree

Strategy Theme 3: Enhancing public transport connectivity to / from: (i) Inverness; (ii) our subregional centres; and (iii) Scotland's other cities and beyond Distance, topography, geography and low population density currently limit public transport connectivity within much of the region. This Strategy Theme is focused on improving public transport connectivity for journeys within, to and from the region through expanding the transport network, providing additional connections and making journeys quicker.

Policy ST3a The RTS supports measures to reduce social exclusion for those without access to a car.

Agree

Policy ST3b The RTS recognises that the decline in bus passenger numbers in the region needs to be reversed and supports measures to extend service coverage, improve frequencies, lengthen the operating day and make the network more integrated.

Agree – Moray's work in this area in expanding the timetabled and demand responsive m.connect bus network is focused on the need to provide appropriate public transport links across our region, including the use of innovative approaches for service delivery.

Policy ST3c: The RTS supports measures to reduce bus journey times both between and within settlements in the region, including through the provision of bus priority measures.

Agree

Policy ST3d The RTS supports innovative alternatives to fixed route bus services where these can be affordably provided.

Agree – as above, Moray Council's m.connect service is delivering encouraging early results in terms of demand responsive transport provision and the use of app-based technology

Policy ST3e The RTS recognises the role which community transport and Demand Responsive Transport (DRT) plays in our most rural communities and supports its expansion and integration with timetabled services.

Agree

Policy ST3f The RTS supports measures to widen the awareness and use of community transport, DRT and EDRT amongst all members of society.

Agree

Policy ST3g The RTS recognises the role of taxis as a key element of transport provision in the region where community transport, DRT and EDRT services are not provided.

Agree

Policy ST3h The RTS recognises that rail journey times to, from and within the region are typically longer than elsewhere in Scotland, and therefore supports measures to reduce these journey times.

Agree

Policy ST3i The RTS supports the commitment to electrify the Highland Mainline as an opportunity to reduce rail journey times and improve reliability as part of the overall decarbonisation of the network.

Agree

Policy ST3j The RTS recognises that very low rail service frequency often makes rail uncompetitive with the car and therefore supports measures which would facilitate increased rail service frequency, particularly between Inverness and Aberdeen, Edinburgh and Glasgow.

Strongly Agree

Policy ST3k The RTS promotes and supports the development of additional local rail services focused on our regional centres.

Agree

Policy ST3l The RTS supports infrastructure measures which would enable increased service frequency, such as the electrification of the Highland Mainline, Aberdeen to Inverness and improvements to the signalling system.

Agree

Policy ST3m The RTS supports the planning and delivery of new railway stations, including innovative solutions proportionate to the location, subject to the development of an appropriate business case.

Agree – noting that this should be sought without detriment to the preceding policy statements around journey time and frequency.

Strategy Theme 4: Improving the integration, quality of and access to public and shared transport Addressing the barriers to travel by public transport, including interchange within and between modes, physical barriers for those less able and poor-quality facilities and travel information.

Policy ST4a The RTS supports measures that will improve integration within and between modes of transport at key locations and transport interchanges in order to provide new travel options and alternatives to the private car, recognising the constraints within which this is possible (e.g., delivering school bus services).

Agree – although note the tension between provision of school transport and general public transport where pupils and general passengers are often wishing to travel at

the same time for both education and employment – measures to remove this conflict to reduce barriers to the use of public transport for employment will be an important factor to consider, so public transport becomes a meaningful option for all journey types.

Policy ST4b The RTS supports integrated ticketing measures to simplify travel and improve the passenger experience.

Agree

Policy ST4c: The RTS supports the adoption of contract conditions for tendered and supported services that encourage operators to work in partnership to improve integration, timetable planning and coordination.

Agree

Policy ST4d The RTS supports the provision and enhancement of mobility hubs across the region, in line with a hierarchy reflecting local requirements.

Agree

Policy ST4e The RTS supports measures which will enable people to leave their bicycle in a secure environment at a bus stop / station, railway station, ferry terminal or airfield.

Agree

Policy ST4f The RTS supports, where practical, the provision of increased bicycle capacity on public transport services within the region.

Agree

Policy ST4g The RTS supports the simplification of the process of taking a bicycle both to and onto a bus or train.

Agree

Policy ST4h The RTS supports more widespread journeys which combine bicycle and public transport.

Agree

Policy ST4i The RTS supports the provision of consistent standards of facilities at bus stations and bus stops reflecting location and usage.

Agree

Policy ST4j Our bus network should be safe, secure and fully accessible to all.

Agree

Policy ST4k Our bus network should provide a high-quality and consistent onboard experience.

Agree

Policy ST4l Travel on buses to, from and within the region should, where possible, enable meaningful working time.

Agree

Policy ST4m The RTS supports the provision of more consistent standards of facilities at railway stations, reflecting station usage.

Agree

Policy ST4n Our railway network should be safe, secure and fully accessible to all.

Agree

Policy ST4o The RTS supports the continuation and expansion of the Scotland's Railway Adoption Programme and other measures to enhance the station environment.

Agree

Policy ST4p Our ferry network should be safe, secure and fully and easily accessible to all. This includes both shore-to-vessel access and movement around the vessel itself.

Agree

Policy ST4q The RTS recognises that there is not a short-term solution to the accessibility issues with the Argyll and Bute and Orkney inter-island air services. We will keep abreast of developments in technology and new aircraft types and, in the meantime, continue to work with partners to support alternative options such as the Scottish Ambulance Service.

Agree

Strategy Theme 4: Improving the integration, quality of and access to public and shared transport

Policy ST4r The RTS supports sufficient provision and better enforcement of Blue Badge parking across the region.

Agree – within the context of individual approaches to enforcement across the region still being supported.

Policy ST4s The RTS recognises the important role of taxis as part of the overall transport mix in the region. It supports partnership working with licencing authorities and taxi providers to raise standards of provision where required and to facilitate the expansion of the network.

Agree

Policy ST4t The RTS supports the provision of taxi services which are fully accessible in terms of booking and vehicle access.

Agree

Policy ST4u A key component of making travel accessible to all, the RTS supports measures to remove barriers to travel, including increased staff training, passenger chaperones and the provision of physical and online travel information in accessible formats.

Agree

Policy ST4v The RTS supports the maintenance and expansion of at-stop / at-station multi-modal real-time information.

Agree

Policy ST4w The RTS promotes the simplification and consolidation of travel planning and in journey information to make travel easier for less frequent users.

Agree

Policy ST4x The RTS supports the further development of the GO-HI travel app.

Agree

Policy ST4y The RTS supports the provision of up-to-date physical travel information at bus stops, and the removal of out-of-date information.

Agree

Policy ST4z The RTS calls for improved cross-provider digital connectivity across the region to facilitate access to travel information for all (including in-car information), enable meaningful working time when travelling by public transport and to help reduce the need to travel where possible.

Agree

Strategy Theme 5: Providing connectivity that supports our island and peninsular communities Improving the connectivity and reducing the peripherality of island and peninsular communities through improved ferry and air services, and potentially fixed links.

Policy ST5a The RTS supports the provision of longer daily time on-mainland and on-island where this is required for the long-term sustainability of a community.

Neutral – Moray Council does not have specific knowledge to comment.

Policy ST5b The RTS supports the provision of services which minimise the requirement for one or more overnight stays.

Neutral – Moray Council does not have specific knowledge to comment.

Policy ST5c: Where practicable, the RTS supports the operation of additional sailings on the supported ferry networks within the region.

Agree

Policy ST5d The RTS supports year-round seven-day connections for island and peninsular communities where this is required for the long-term sustainability of a community and enjoys public support.

Agree

Policy ST5e The booking and ticketing arrangements for ferry services in the region should support the convenience and efficiency of travel for all.

Agree

Policy ST5f The RTS calls for the earlier opening of ferry booking systems and increased transparency around the release and management of vehicle deck space.

Neutral – Moray Council does not have specific knowledge to comment.

Policy ST5g The RTS supports the principle of Road Equivalent Tariff (RET). However, where service frequency permits, controlled use of peak times / surge pricing could be used to help manage demand, recognising that this would need to be at no net detriment to the connectivity of island and peninsular communities.

Neutral – Moray Council does not have specific knowledge to comment.

Policy ST5h The RTS supports operational measures which maximise the efficient management of vehicle deck space on sailings.

Neutral – Moray Council does not have specific knowledge to comment.

Policy ST5i The RTS supports measures to improve door-to-door journeys through enhancing active travel, public transport and shared mobility connections to and from ferry terminals, combined with other measures to reduce the need to take a car onboard.

Agree

Policy ST5j The RTS recognises the long-term underfunding of vessels and infrastructure in the region and strongly calls for fleet and infrastructure modernisation to address issues of reliability and resilience.

Agree – this has been a longstanding position for all HITRANS members

Policy ST5k The RTS calls for the development of a regularly maintained Vessels and Infrastructure Planning Pipeline across all publicly supported ferry networks in Scotland.

Agree – a clear planning framework for vessel and infrastructure requirements would add value.

Policy ST5l The RTS supports an increase in the overall fleet size and the inter-operability of that fleet and supporting infrastructure to strengthen resilience.

Neutral – Moray Council does not have specific knowledge to comment.

Policy ST5m The RTS supports the principle of increasing capacity through frequency rather than larger vessels.

Neutral – Moray Council does not have specific knowledge to comment.

Policy ST5n The RTS calls for an objective consideration of the design characteristics of future vessels for all routes, including hull form and the provision of crew accommodation.

Neutral – Moray Council does not have specific knowledge to comment.

Policy ST5o The RTS supports the introduction of new low or zero emissions vessels to replace life-expired tonnage. This should be done in line with the NTS2 Sustainable Investment Hierarchy.

Neutral – Moray Council does not have specific knowledge to comment.

Policy ST5p with the vessel and infrastructure replacement cycle, the RTS supports measures to reduce journey times for our island communities. This includes providing direct sailings rather than via another island (where this is the preference of the local community) and consideration of new ferry terminal locations that reduce crossing distances.

Neutral – Moray Council does not have specific knowledge to comment.

Policy ST5q The RTS supports harbour infrastructure improvements ahead of life expiry where this could contribute to a material improvement in reliability.

Neutral – Moray Council does not have specific knowledge to comment.

Policy ST5r The RTS supports the conversion of the remaining Lo-Lo routes in the region to RoRo where there is community support.

Neutral – Moray Council does not have specific knowledge to comment.

Policy ST5s The RTS supports the further development of the Highlands and Islands' air network.

Agree

Policy ST5t The RTS supports the further development of commercial external routes, particularly to London Heathrow and other international hub airports, that support the economic competitiveness of the region.

Agree

Policy ST5u The RTS supports the retention of the PSO air network within the region and, where alternative travel choices are inadequate, its further expansion. 'Adequate' in this context refers to the ability to achieve an affordable daily return to / from a national centre.

Agree

Policy ST5v The RTS supports the operation of additional connections and flights on the PSO air networks within the region, whether delivered by existing, additional or new low emission aircraft.

Agree

Policy ST5w The RTS supports more direct flights rather than via another island.

Neutral – Moray Council does not have specific knowledge to comment.

Policy ST5x The RTS supports the adoption of technological and infrastructure solutions which would improve the reliability and frequency of inter-island air services.

Agree

Policy ST5y The RTS supports the principle of fixed links where they represent value for money and are supported by the island or peninsular community. Any fixed link should be implemented in conjunction with improved public transport connectivity and incorporate provision for active travel.

Neutral – Moray Council does not have specific knowledge to comment.

Policy ST5z The RTS supports the consideration of tolling where this would assist in making the case for a fixed link. The use of vehicle number plate recognition technology could allow local residents to travel for free.

Neutral – Moray Council does not have specific knowledge to comment.

Strategy Theme 6: Improving the efficiency of transport networks and supply-chains and reducing their impact on our communities Many supply-chains in the region are marginal and face challenges not found elsewhere in Scotland, working around ferry connections for example. This Strategy Theme is focused on enhancing the efficiency of supply-chains and identifying means for improving their environmental sustainability.

Policy ST6a The RTS supports the principle of new dedicated or high-capacity freight vessels on freight intensive routes.

Neutral – Moray Council does not have specific knowledge to comment.

Policy ST6b The RTS supports the formalisation and extension of the carriage of unaccompanied trailers to a wider range of routes.

Neutral – Moray Council does not have specific knowledge to comment.

Policy ST6c: The RTS supports the operation of dedicated freight sailings, either by contracted or commercial operators where there is demand and it is operationally deliverable.

Agree, subject to business case

Policy ST6d The RTS supports moves towards greater simplification and consistency in the setting of ferry freight fares across the region, recognising that this would be achieved over the medium-term.

Neutral – Moray Council does not have specific knowledge to comment.

Policy ST6e The RTS supports infrastructure measures which will enable the growth of rail freight to and from the region.

Agree

Policy ST6f The RTS supports infrastructure investment and funding initiatives which will enable the growth of waterborne and air freight to, from and within the region.

Agree

Strategy Theme 7: Improving the safety, reliability and resilience of our road and rail networks Weather, geological instability and very limited diversion opportunities make resilience a key issue in the region, whilst safety is a primary concern on many of the main road routes. This Strategy Theme is therefore focused on improving the safety, reliability and resilience of transport networks within the region.

Policy ST7a The RTS restates our support for the full dualling of the A9 and A96, with early prioritisation of the Elgin and Keith bypasses to dual carriageway standards, following the already committed Inverness to Wester Hardmuir scheme.

Strongly Agree xxxxxxxxxxxxxxx

Policy ST7b The RTS calls for incremental improvements to our road network where there are safety, efficiency and environmental benefits, including in relation to single track roads.

Agree

Policy ST7c: The RTS supports the expansion of 50mph HGV speed limits across the Trunk Road network in the region.

Agree in principle – learning from the now well-established approach on the A9 as to the risks and benefits of this would provide a potential mitigation in relation to journey time and driver frustration, however, needs careful consideration to ensure there is no detriment to road safety where trunk road alignments are different to the A9.

Policy ST7d The RTS supports the provision of improved overtaking opportunities on our roads, especially where there are known problems with vehicle platooning which can cause driver frustration.

Agree – there have been long-standing concerns particularly in relation to the A95 between Aviemore and Keith in this matter.

Policy ST7e The RTS calls for investment in our regional road network where there are regular and sustained periods of disruption due to weather and / or geological instability.

Agree

Policy ST7f The RTS recognises the increasing vulnerability of our region's road network to severe weather events linked to climate change and supports capital and revenue measures to mitigate this.

Agree

Policy ST7g The RTS recognises the increasing vulnerability of the railway network to severe weather events linked to climate change and supports capital and revenue measures to mitigate this.

Agree

Policy ST7h The RTS supports the continued provision and expansion of real-time travel information for motorists and public transport users through existing and emerging platforms.

Agree

Policy ST7i The RTS recognises that many parts of our region's road network are in poor condition. It calls for enhanced preventative and remedial road maintenance to ensure the safe, reliable and efficient movement of people and goods and the delivery of services across our region.

Agree, although note that there is an underpinning fiscal issue in relation to the challenges local authorities face in setting a balanced budget which delivers across competing priority areas.

Strategy Theme 7: Improving the safety, reliability and resilience of our road and rail networks

Policy ST7j Investment in our road network should continue to have an overarching focus on safety with a view to reducing road traffic casualties in accordance with Scotland's Road Safety Framework to 2030.

Agree

Policy ST7k To address risks which are particular to roads in our region, the RTS supports: enhanced advisory signage; ongoing public information campaigns around the use of single-track roads; provision of additional safe motorist services and HGV rest areas; and information campaigns for visitors driving left-hand drive vehicles.

Agree

Policy ST7l The RTS specifically supports the improvement or removal of priority junctions on higher speed trunk roads, especially for right-turning traffic.

Agree

Policy ST7m The RTS calls for increased provision of level boarding at stations across the region, which will reduce station dwell times.

Agree

Policy ST7n The RTS supports the provision of additional sections of double track (or static or dynamic passing loops where double track does not represent value for money) to improve punctuality.

Agree

Policy ST7o The RTS supports infrastructure and timetable improvements external to the region which will improve the reliability of services to / from Inverness, Fort William, Oban and Mallaig.

Agree

Strategy Theme 8: Facilitating sustainable visitor travel demand Responding to the challenges arising from the significant seasonal influx of tourists to the region, often in the areas least well-placed to accommodate it.

Policy ST8a The RTS supports the further development of long-distance walking, wheeling and cycling routes (including the National Cycle Network), recognising the visitor, economic and local benefits offered.

Agree

Policy ST8b The RTS supports the development of active travel connections to our ports, airports and regionally important railway stations.

Agree, and also note that public transport connections between transport modes eg bus-rail, bus-air is also important – particularly in areas where active travel may not be feasible (journey length or topography).

Policy ST8c: The RTS supports the development of active travel connections to our key tourism destinations where this would be a realistic option for some visitors.

Agree

Policy ST8d Where there are concentrations of international tourists, including cruise passengers, the RTS supports the provision of enhanced local travel information and coordination to improve visitor experience and reduce impacts on local networks.

Agree

Policy ST8e The RTS supports the operation and promotion of additional local rail services to key tourism destinations.

Agree

Policy ST8f The RTS supports the provision of additional rail carriages on existing services in peak season, where feasible.

Agree

Policy ST8g The RTS supports the principle of flexible timetabling where this can co-exist with regular services for local residents.

Agree

Policy ST8h The RTS supports the principle of expanded open access rail services where these can be accommodated at no disadvantage to scheduled services.

Agree

Policy ST8i The RTS supports the principle of sustainably accommodating visitor demand whilst maintaining or increasing visitor numbers.

Agree

Policy ST8j The RTS supports the introduction of additional parking restrictions and greater enforcement of existing traffic orders at tourist honeypots as a tool to encourage improved access to these locations by public transport or active modes and to address indiscriminate and dangerous parking.

Partially Agree: considered use of powers to manage parking is welcomed, along with collaboration and sharing of good practice. However, a one-size-fits-all approach to decriminalised parking or other management tools does not recognise the different positions of each authority on parking management. Some of the wider principles expressed in the strategy around managing supply and demand, and considering different approaches such as 'aires' for campervans are still supported.

Policy ST8k Where new or increased parking charges are introduced, this should be done in combination with improved visitor facilities, including e.g., parking provision, public toilets etc.

Disagree – there are a wide range of factors that need to be considered in relation to introducing new or altered parking charges, and an absolute restriction that links changes solely to visitor facilities neither recognises those factors. Each local authority should still have discretion to consider parking charges in relation to its own strategic position. Collaboration on technology, information provision and sharing best practice would still be welcome.

Policy ST8l Whilst recognising the benefits of motorhome and campervan-based tourism in our region, the RTS acknowledges that it can impact negatively on our communities at certain times of the year. The RTS therefore supports measures to ensure that this demand is sustainably accommodated.

Agree

Policy ST8m Whilst recognising the benefits of cruise tourism in our region, the RTS recognises that catering for this demand can negatively impact on our communities. The RTS therefore supports measures to ensure that this demand is more sustainably accommodated.

Agree

Policy ST8n The RTS supports measures which would allow the benefits of cruise tourism to be more evenly distributed around the region.

Agree

Policy ST8o The RTS supports the principle of bespoke bus services aimed at tourists to address excessive car-based demand at honeypot locations.

Agree

Policy ST8p The RTS recognises that high volumes of tourist traffic are impacting the condition of some roads in our region and that increased central government funding is required that reflects this increased pressure on local transport infrastructure, to support an enhanced repair and maintenance programme.

Agree

Policy ST8q The RTS recognises that high volumes of tourist traffic can lead to slow and inefficient journeys and therefore supports measures to address this.

Agree

Strategy Theme 9: Decarbonising our transport, mitigating the effects of climate change Supporting the decarbonisation of transport through the adoption of zero emission vehicles, vessels, and aircraft.

Policy ST9a The RTS supports the implementation of measures which facilitate the decarbonisation of the public transport vehicle fleet within the region, including commercial vehicles, buses and community transport, rail rolling stock, aircraft and ferries.

Agree

Policy ST9b The RTS recognises the opportunities brought about by the availability of renewable energy in our region, including locally produced green hydrogen. The transport fleet mix and associated infrastructure should reflect this.

Agree

Policy ST9c: The RTS supports the development of vehicle pooling and vehicle sharing services across the region to reduce the need for personal car ownership.

Agree

Policy ST9d The RTS calls for the expansion of EV charging infrastructure to support the decarbonisation of all vehicle based travel in our region.

Agree – and note the work done to date on the Pathfinder project for the strategic expansion of EV charging in partnership with public and private sector bodies.

Policy ST9e The RTS recognises the challenges of distance, topography, climate and short winter daylight hours to the rollout of battery electric powered commercial vehicles and seeks low or zero emission solutions appropriate to our region, and which capitalise on the surplus energy production within our region.

Agree

Policy ST9f The RTS supports the roll-out of other alternative fuels to promote the decarbonisation of our transport networks, ports, ferry terminals, airports and airfields.

Agree

Strategy Theme 10: Embracing new technologies. Capitalising on innovations in new technology.

Policy ST10a The RTS embraces the opportunities provided by new technologies to improve the provision of transport infrastructure and services across the region.

Agree

Policy ST10b The RTS supports consideration of the provision of future innovative personal transport within the design of our active travel network and mobility hubs.

Agree

Policy ST10c: The RTS supports the principle and further development of Mobility-as-a-Service as the technology evolves, particularly through our Go-HI app.

Agree

Policy ST10d The RTS supports opportunities for the more widespread adoption of Connected and Autonomous Vehicles and autonomous buses, whilst recognising the challenges posed in our region.

Agree

Strategy Theme 11: Reducing the cost of travel, particularly for those most in need Improving the connectivity and reducing the peripherality of island and peninsular communities through improved ferry and air services, and potentially fixed links.

Policy ST11a Transport poverty is a complex, dispersed and often hidden problem in our region. The RTS commits to define and evidence this problem and identify appropriate actions to be delivered by HITRANS and our partners.

Agree

Policy ST11b Recognising that, for many in our region (and especially those living in our island communities), transport costs account for a high proportion of household income, the RTS supports a reduction in public transport fares and the introduction of payment plans for multi-journey tickets.

Agree

Policy ST11c: The comparative costs of public transport mean that residents and visitors to the region often choose to travel by car. The RTS therefore supports a reduction in the cost differential between travelling by public transport and car.

Agree

Policy ST11d The RTS supports in principle the roll-out of Road Equivalent Tariff to any ferry routes on which it does not currently apply, including local authority services.

Agree

Policy ST11e The RTS calls for greater cross-industry partnership working and regulatory reform to reduce the cost penalty for interchange within or between modes of transport.

Agree

Policy ST11f The RTS calls for the extension of the National Concessionary Travel Scheme and Under-22s Concessionary Travel Scheme to rail, ferry and air services where these are the main or only mode of public transport in an area.

Agree

Policy ST11g The RTS calls for the retention and expansion of the Air Discount Scheme, including to businesses in the region.

Agree

Policy ST11h National road pricing proposals may emerge in response to the reduction in fuel duty and Value Added Tax as a result of the mass adoption of electric vehicles. If this eventuality materialises, the RTS calls for a road pricing system that recognises the unique characteristics of our region.

Agree

REPORT TO: ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND INFRASTRUCTURE SERVICES COMMITTEE ON 18 JUNE 2024

SUBJECT: INFORMATION REPORT: ELGIN TOWN CENTRE PARKING ENFORCEMENT

BY: DEPUTE CHIEF EXECUTIVE (ECONOMY, ENVIRONMENT AND FINANCE)

1. REASON FOR REPORT

1.1 To inform the Committee of progress on Elgin Town Centre Parking Enforcement.

1.2 This report is submitted to Committee in terms of Section III (F) (17) of the Council's Scheme of Administration relating to traffic and transport management functions, including the preparation and implementation of traffic management schemes.

2. BACKGROUND

2.1 There has been community concern about parking and lack of compliance of parking in Elgin Town Centre. At the car parking stakeholder consultation held in April 2023, it was clearly acknowledged by all parties that the pedestrianised areas of the Plainstones and Batchen Street were being misused for access and parking by drivers.

2.2 At the meeting of this committee on 6 February a report was presented, and a number of options were considered by Committee (paragraph 8 of the minute refers).

2.3 The option to fund additional Police Officer (overtime) hours as part of a memorandum of understanding, was supported by this committee paragraph 8 of the minute refers, for up to six months, up to £10,000, from the Elgin Common Good Fund, this was agreed by Elgin Members, to carry out enforcement in Elgin Town Centre to help to address these concerns.

2.4 The memorandum of understanding was prepared and agreed between Moray Council and Police Scotland.

2.5 The long-term solution for this area has been put forward as traffic control (rise and fall bollards) as part of the wider Elgin Town Centre masterplan project as part of the Levelling Up Fund.

2.6 A media release was sent out on 22 March 2024 advising that enforcement in the town centre would begin and enforcement began on Monday 25 March 2024.

2.7 Police Scotland have now been carrying out enforcement since week commencing 25 March 2024 and this report highlights the work done until 22 May 2024. Based on the funding provided Police Scotland will continue with enforcement work over the summer period.

3. RESULTS OF ENFORCEMENT

3.1 There have currently (as of 22 May 2024) been 533 tickets issued by Police Scotland. These include tickets for a number of different parking offenses including parking on double yellow lines, parking over 30 mins in a 30 min bay, driving through a no entry, parking in a loading bay, parking in a disabled bay without a blue badge and parking in a vehicle prohibition area.

3.2 Over this period there have been 17 days of enforcement carried out. Police Scotland have reported that they are seeing a difference and change in behaviour of drivers in Elgin, with fewer cars being reported on the High Street in particular since the start of the campaign.

4. SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS

(a) **Corporate Plan and 10 Year Plan (Local Outcomes Improvement Plan (LOIP)**
The report encompasses the main aims of the Economic Development programme by maintaining suitable transport facilities and infrastructure designed for their intended use and have vibrant town centres to support local communities.

(b) **Policy and Legal**
The relevant legislation is: -
Road (Scotland) Act 1984
The Transport (Scotland) Act 2019
The Functions of Traffic Wardens (Scotland) Order 1999

(c) **Financial implications**
The cost of this is £10,000 over six months as discussed at this Committee on 6 February 2024 with subsequent approval from Elgin ward members that this was to come from Elgin Common Good Fund or similar Trust.

(d) **Risk Implications**
There were reputational risks to the Council by doing nothing and by paying for enforcement. Police Enforcement is enforcement of traffic regulation orders and is enforcing compliance with the law and is addresses community concern. These risks will be reduced once the current street works are completed and when the traffic control measures are implemented. The Levelling Up Fund project should be completed by March 2026.

(e) Staffing Implications

There are no staffing implications arising from this report.

(f) Property

There are no property implications arising from this report.

(g) Equalities/Socio Economic Impact

There were some impacts on the grounds of disability. Enforcing the restrictions which are already in place may affect people with a disability as they may not be able to get directly to the location they wish, but this is deemed justified as a proportionate way of ensuring safety and accessibility for pedestrians.

(h) Climate Change and Biodiversity Impacts

There are no climate change and biodiversity impacts arising from this report.

(i) Consultations

The Depute Chief Executive (Economy, Environment & Finance), Head of Environmental and Commercial Services; Chief Financial Officer, Legal Services Manager, Equal Opportunities Officer, Climate Change Strategy Officer, Police Scotland and Committee Services Officer (L Rowan) have been consulted and any comments taken into consideration.

5. <u>CONCLUSION</u>

5.1 **Parking Enforcement has been undertaken by Police Scotland over the last couple of months and will continue for the next couple of months.**

5.2 **Police Scotland have issued 533 tickets (as of 22 May 2024).**

5.3 **Police Scotland are reporting a visible change in behaviour since the enforcement began.**

Author of Report: Kelly Wiltshire, Strategic Transport Services Manager

Background Papers: [Parking Enforcement – 6 February 2024 Economic Development and Infrastructure Committee](#) https://newsroom.moray.gov.uk/news/additional-measures-enforced-to-tackle-elgin-parking-issues

Ref: SPMAN-524642768-1107

REPORT TO: **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND INFRASTRUCTURE SERVICES COMMITTEE ON 18 JUNE 2024**

SUBJECT: **INFORMATION REPORT: SUSTAINABLE AVIATION TEST ENVIRONMENT PROJECT**

BY: **DEPUTE CHIEF EXECUTIVE (ECONOMY, ENVIRONMENT AND FINANCE)**

1. REASON FOR REPORT

1.1 To inform and update the Committee of a Hitrans (Highlands and Island Regional Transport Partnership) Sustainable Aviation Test Environment (SATE) project.

1.2 This report is submitted to Committee in terms of Section III (F) (21) of the Council's Scheme of Administration in relation to local transport strategies.

2. BACKGROUND

2.1 SATE created the UK's first low-carbon aviation test centre embedded at a commercial airport, in Kirkwall Orkney. The initial project saw the opening of dedicated hangar facilities and office space for technology developers as well as facilitating a number of demonstration flights of novel aviation technologies. SATE aims to expand on the success that has already been delivered and develop a UK centre of excellence for sustainable regional aviation.

2.2 The project will match innovative aviation technologies with practical use cases in the Highlands and Islands, allowing technology partners to test in a real-world environment, taking them closer to offering sustainable innovation options for commercial use. Identified use cases include Scheduled airline routes; Offshore energy services; National Health Service activities; Island / remote region deliveries; Environmental survey and inspection.

2.3 In addition, SATE aims to establish an unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) hub-and-spoke delivery network and will conduct demonstration flights of technologies including a hydrogen-electric regional aircraft and a drone flight from Scotland to Norway.

2.4   Over the past year or so, insights, reports and data have helped build a picture of where technology from SATE could be best placed in the near future to improve transportation and connectivity in the Highlands and Islands. The main focus of the use cases has been on improving quality of life and supporting economic activity. We are now looking for an opportunity to present these findings to gather feedback and potentially explore further leads to help refine and/or finalise the use cases for the project completion.

2.5   This project has allowed to develop an understanding of the capabilities of the technology. For example, this has included how fast it could travel, in what conditions, load weights, required infrastructure; as well as fine-tuning the law and regulations to allow safe operations. This has been explored in conjunction with governmental and regional ambitions to ensure technology can deliver an overall benefit and support the transition towards these goals. Capturing an understanding of behaviours and choices has been essential to identify the needs and wants transport could provide. This has involved collecting data on car ownership, length of commutes, passenger numbers on ferries, thriving business, demands for services etc.

3.   CASE DEVELOPMENT

3.1   In SATE, for accurate use case development it's important to understand where the technology could help.

3.2   One identified use, the case for the technology emerging from SATE is to deliver tools, equipment and/or services in time-critical emergencies to preserve life. (Across rescue, health, coastguard, fire, animal/veterinary, crime etc). The identified issue is that time-critical emergencies in remote and rural areas can be harder to reach. There's often a reliance on other services to fill gaps, sometimes at an extra expense, driving up the cost of living in remote areas or resulting in a poorer quality of life. Efficiencies of operations can be impacted.

3.3   Benefits of the technology include: Potential speed of deployment; Reduced risk due to remotely piloted systems and less complex technology; Cheaper; Minimal infrastructure.

3.4   There is evidence that the use of new and novel aircraft for emergencies would be the most accepted use. It was also observed emergencies rank top in a 'transportation hierarchy' for access, priority, speed, etc. Specific examples of operation within this use case have been identified and are mirroring real-world developments and demonstrations across the world. This includes using drones for non-confrontational monitoring and assessment of an active crime scene, delivery of life saving equipment such as defibrillator or tourniquet, and mapping of a fire.

4. **SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS**

   (a) Corporate Plan and 10 Year Plan (Local Outcomes Improvement Plan (LOIP)
   This links into our Corporate plan with; People lead healthy lives and have access to quality care when they need it, our businesses and communities prosper and our natural environment thrives for the betterment of all.

   (b) Policy and Legal
   There are no policy or legal implications from this report.

   (c) Financial implications
   There are no financial implications from this report.

   (d) Risk Implications
   There are no risks from this report it is for information purposes only.

   (e) Staffing Implications
   There are no staffing implications from this report.

   (f) Property
   There are no property implications on this report.

   (g) Equalities/Socio Economic Impact
   This project may positively impact equalities in the future by creating technology which may reduce response times to emergencies in rural areas.

   (h) Climate Change and Biodiversity Impacts
   This project may positively impact climate change and biodiversity in the future by making aviation cleaner and less polluting to the environment.

   (i) Consultations
   The Depute Chief Executive (Economy, Environment and Finance), head of Environmental and Commercial Services; Chief Financial Officer, Legal Services Manager, Climate Change Officer, Equal Opportunities Officer and Committee Services Officer (L Rowan) have been consulted and any comments taken into consideration.

5. **CONCLUSION**

5.1 **This is an overview on the SATE project. Further reports will be brought forward if and when there are potential projects in the Moray area.**

Author of Report: Kelly Wiltshire, Strategic Transport Services Manager
Background Papers:
Ref: SPMAN-524642768-1110

REPORT TO: ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND INFRASTRUCTURE SERVICES COMMITTEE ON 18 JUNE 2024

SUBJECT: INFORMATION REPORT: MORAY PATHWAYS LOCAL EMPLOYABILITY PARTNERSHIP ANNUAL INVESTMENT PLAN (2024-2025)

BY: DEPUTE CHIEF EXECUTIVE (ECONOMY, ENVIRONMENT AND FINANCE)

1.   REASON FOR REPORT

1.1   To provide the Committee with the Moray Pathways Local Employability Partnership Annual Investment Plan for 2024-2025.

1.2   This report is submitted to Committee in terms of Section II (A) (2) of the Council's Scheme of Administration relating to long-term financial plans.

2.   BACKGROUND

2.1   Moray Pathways is the local employability partnership (LEP) that includes over 50 support organisations and local employers from the public, private and third sector. It supports individuals who require additional help into fair and sustainable jobs. On behalf of the employability partnership, the Moray Council are the anchor organisation / lead accountable body who co-ordinate the administration of all resources made available for employability support and provision in Moray.

2.2   This diagram below shows the national delivery model and governance of the partnership:

2.3   The Moray Pathways Commissioning Sub Group (CSG) are responsible for evaluating and scoring all financial procurement processes. The organisations within the sub group are; Moray Council, Department for Work and Pensions, Developing Young Workforce (DYW) Moray, Skills Development Scotland and TSI Moray. Employability plays an essential role in delivering national and local aims of tackling poverty, promoting inclusion and social justice and creating a fair and prosperous Scotland. The provision and support we deliver aligns with broader Scottish Government cross cutting policy drivers as shown below:

CROSS SG POLICY DRIVERS

NET ZERO, ENTERPISE AND NEW DEAL FOR BUSINESS

SOCIAL SECURITY SCOTLAND

DEPARTMENT FOR WORK AND PENSIONS

HEALTH

FAIR WORK

EARLY LEARNING AND CHILD-CARE

EMPLOYABILITY

SKILLS

DRUGS POLICY

HOUSING

COMMUNITY JUSTICE

COMMUNITY WEALTH BUILDING

STRATEGIC THIRD SECTOR AND PUBLIC SERVICE LEADERSHIP
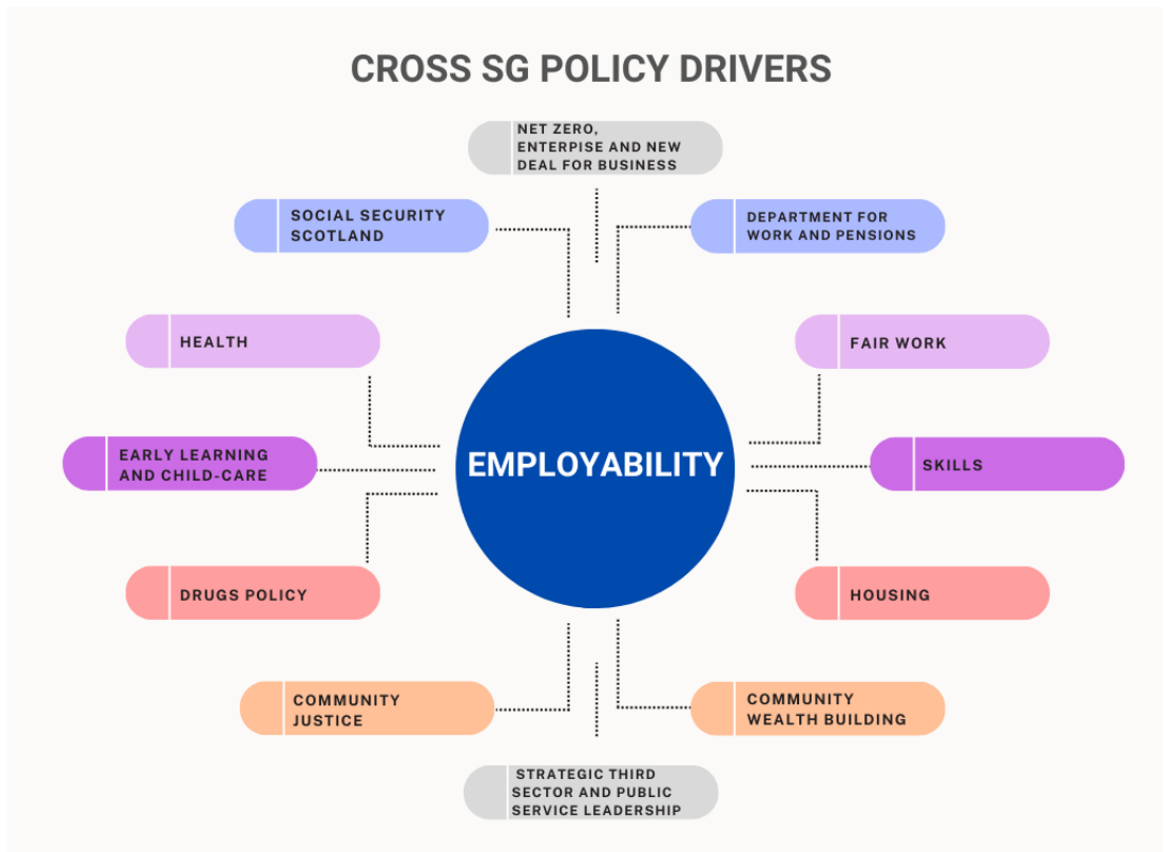
2.4   Further to the Local Employability Partnership Delivery Plan 2022-2025 considered at the Community Planning Board on 22 September 2022 (para 4 of the minute refers), in 2023-2024 Moray Pathways commissioned 3 key programmes, Sector Based Work Academy Programme (SWAP), Counselling Support Network and a Creative Skills Network / Provision. The number of referrals received into Moray Council Employability Team for Keyworker support has increased over the last year - with a notable increase of adults aged 25 plus and parents living in poverty. The partnership also funded a total of 21 local businesses via the Moray Employer Recruitment Incentive (MERI) to provide a 6 month paid job placement (Real Living Wage) for a total of 27 individuals, 17 young people/adults and 10 parents.   The following tables highlight the number of individuals who were supported across the Moray Pathways partnership and outcomes achieved. The numbers carried forward appear high but this is as a result of following up positive destinations for a period of 12 months.

Target Group	New Start (New Registrations) 23/24	Carried Forward 22-23
Young People	185	206
Adults	141	155
Parents in poverty	60 (mix of adults and young parents)	76
TOTALS	326	437
Total number being supported in 23-24	**763**	

Equalities Groups	Number of New Starts (23/24)	Economic Status	New Starts (23/24)
Disability / Mental Health	198	Unemployed	254
Care Experienced Young People	45	Economically Inactive	40
Refugees / Ethnic Minorities	52	Underemployed	31
Criminal Convictions	21		

Participation Outcomes (New Starts 23/24)	Numbers
Sector Based Work Academy Programme (SWAP Vocational training)	90
Barrier Removal Activities Personal Development – 48% Health and Wellbeing – 23% Creative Skills – 19.2 % Life Skills – 9.1 %	102
Employment	58
FE/HE	50
Engagement Phase	26
TOTALS:	326

3. The Annual Investment Plan

3.1 The Annual Investment Plan (**Appendix 1**) sets out proposals for the delivery of employability provision and support. The Annual Investment Plan takes into account identification of local needs as evidenced by local statistical data and input from stakeholders and service users. The plan will address the following priorities:

Reducing Child Poverty	Health and Work (with a particular focus on disability and economic inactivity)
Tackling structural inequalities, including long term unemployment	Increasing awareness and uptake of support
Alignment with Lifelong Learning & Skills	Emerging areas of priority, Net Zero and Just Transitions; Business & Employer Engage

3.2 The Annual Investment Plan (**Appendix 1**) is the annual plan linked to the LEP 3 year Delivery Plan which was approved in 2022. The Annual Investment plan highlights the range of provision and employability support that the LEP plan to deliver and implement to meet the needs of target groups and at the same time deliver a place based approach with partnership outreach support. In particular, the LEP are keen to adopt a specialist supported employment model which will provide intensive support for individuals who are faced with inequalities and at risk of being left behind. The partnership will continue to monitor the range of commissioned provision on offer with a mix of public and third sector providers. There will be quarterly monitoring reports to the LEP and MEP. The commissioning sub group will provide forecast updates to the wider partnership and update any changes to the plan.   The Annual Investment plan also shows the utilisation of a range of funding streams including UK Shared Prosperity Funds, Scottish Government Grant Funds and Moray Council Core Funding.

4. SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS

a) **Corporate Plan and 10 Year Plan (Local Outcomes Improvement Plan (LOIP))**
    The Moray Pathways Local Employability Partnership Annual Investment Plan will contribute to achieve the Corporate Plan priorities to take poverty and inequalities and build a stronger, vibrant and greener economy. The plan also aligns with the LOIP priority of a growing and sustainable economy and in particular the focus on targeted approaches to those furthest from the job market.

b) **Policy and Legal**

The Council considers support for economic development issues on their merits, against the objective to facilitate sustainable economic growth and the desired outcomes of the Ten Year Plan and Corporate Plan.

c) **Financial implications**

The only budget provided by Moray Council is in relation to core staffing needed to manage and support temporary grant funded staffing.

d) **Risk Implications**

None.

e) **Staffing Implications**

Temporary staffing varies from year to year depending on updated focus and exactly what is commissioned.

f) **Property**

No property implications arising from this report.

g) **Equalities/Socio Economic Impact**

The actions and outcomes within the annual investment plan contribute to tackling inequalities in our communities and an equality impact assessment has been sent to Scottish Government.

h) **Climate Change and Biodiversity Impacts**

None.

i) **Consultations**

Consultation has taken place with members of the Local Employability Partnership, Depute Chief Executive (Economy, Environment and Finance), the Head of Economic Growth and Development, Economic Growth and Regenerations Manager, the Legal Services Manager, the Property Assets Manager, the Equal Opportunities Officer, and Lissa Rowan, Committee Services Officer have been consulted and comments received have been incorporated into the report.

5. **CONCLUSION**

5.1 **The report provides information on the Moray Pathways Local Employability Partnership (LEP) Annual Investment Plan for 2024-2025.**

Author of Report: Amy Cruickshank, Employability Team Manager
Background Papers:
Ref:

ANNEX A - Annual Investment Plan - 2024/25

Local Authority - Moray Council	

Service Delivery	
What activity do you intend to deliver within this financial year via the Local Authority, Other Public Sector Bodies, Third Sector and Private Sector…	
To provide flexible, person-centred support under the No One Left Behind All-Age Employability Service – broken down into specific groups identified as a local priority. **How do you intend to monitor this?**	Young People (Mentoring Young Talent Project) - focus on equalities groups, CEYP, Justice, Mental Health, Disability , Young Carers. 1: 1 Keyworker Support (Young People and adults) - focus on equalities groups, economically inactive, LTU, over 50s. MERI paid job placements for LEP priority groups.
To support tackling Child Poverty using No One Left Behind funding - broken down into specific groups identified as a local priority. **How do you intend to monitor this?**	We gained data from a survey of parents with regard to the barriers facing parents with the lack of school aged childcare (SAC) in Moray. We have only 3 after school providers in moray and this is not adequate. We have employed a project officer to deliver on an action plan developed with a working group including elected members, MOD, SGov, SAC providers and other key stakeholders. We are collaborating with education to develop a plan for each locality and follow a place based approach, we are also providing set up business grants for people keen to start a new SAC provision .
To support disabled people	Our new specialist keyworkers and additional placement support will provide the gap in support we currently have, working with an OT will also help this and working closer with NHS in general. We will also refine our support to students with disabilities who we support from their work skills course at UHI Moray,
To support minority ethnic people and others with protected characteristics.	We have a Keyworker who is funded by the local resettlement team within Moray Council which has improved relationships across the services who support refugees / resettlement. We work closely with our CLD colleagues and we have funded an adult learning co-ordinator to support this work.
To address specific local priorities such as reducing inactivity.	We have a priortiy to reduce economic inactivity with increasing numbers. We are implementing a specialist service to support this and using our digital inclusion officer to use digital support as a hook to engagement with DWP customers. Our outreach hubs will also extend our reach to people not looking for work due to mental health and not engaging with any services.

Please describe what external provision you intend to commission in this financial year. **Is this planned new commissioning or are existing providers commissioned over multiple years?**	We are extending 2 existing contracts, only in place for 3 months, due to funding delays 23/24. Counselling and Creative skills network. We also have a 2 year contract using UKSPF for our Moray Pathways SWAP programme. We may tender for personal development provision / contract or we may use CLD / youth work to co-ordinate this work.
What work will be undertaken to design, improve, or support referral pathways in your area?	Refine referrals and feedback to DWP colleagues , implement post school pathway planning meetings to focus on key groups (eg CEYP leavers) , this will increase referrals for specific groups and a targeted approach across the partnership - lead jointly with SDS
Please describe planned engagement with local businesses and any work towards supporting the Green Economy.	Business Engagement Project Officer to focus on employer engagement with new supported employment offer and support the SWAP contract holder (Enable works) with making sure green skils are development within the SWAP contract / voluntary work placements / vocational training. Engaged with a local businesses via MERI development work, job-carving for people who require specialist supported employment. Moray has a large number of Smes/ micro businesses and MERI supports these businesses to grow and provide training to the individuals we support.
Please describe the plans for the provision of ERI placements or other paid work placements.	We have allocated an estimate of £322K of MERI funding for paid job placements this year. £200K for parents and £122K for young people and adults
Please describe plans for the provision of Training Allowances.	Included in the commissioned contract for our Sector Based Work Academy Programme (Moray Pathways SWAP) , additonal funds provided to fund training allowance payments for those who are eligible.
Please describe any challenges, issues or concerns that may affect delivery this financial year. What steps are you taking to address these?	Annual funding is a challenge to commission sustainable contracts and providing continuity for clients we support. Scottish Government are considering bi- annual funding grants in the future. We also don't know the future of the UK Shared Prosperity Funds beyond March 2025.

APPENDIX 1 - Service Delivery Requirements and Approach Template

Local Authority	Moray Council

Plans for Delivery with NOLB Funding

Target Group	Rationale for Intervention	Delivery Method/Description	Delivery Partners	Delivery Partner Sector	Anticipated Start Date	Actual Start Date	Forecast Spend	Other Sources of Investment	Outcomes Expected
All age and groups	Priority 1 - Reach	Project Management of outreach hub delivery (New Elgin)	All Local Employability Partners (LEP)(Public, Private an Third)	Public	Jul-24		£50K	Funding bid into Elgin Town Centre Fund	Numbers participating and sustaining learning, training and work opportunities
All age and groups	Priority 1 - Reach	PR/Marketing of Moray Pathways	To be procured	Private	Aug-24		£10K		Numbers participating and sustaining learning, training and work opportunities
Parents in Poverty	Priority 3 and Priority 5 - Tackling Child Poverty and Skills	Barrier Removal - Counselling Network Contract	Elgin Counselling Centre	Private	Jun-24		£18K - Child Poverty, £18K No-one Left Behind (NOLB)		No participating and sustaining learning, training and work opportunities
Parents in Poverty	Priority 3 & 5 - Tackling Child Poverty and Skills	Barrier Removal Creative Skills Network Contract	M.A.D.E (Moray Arts Development Engagement Network Tailored Provision, Public/ Private and Third	Third	Jun-24		£25K - Child Poverty, £25K No-one Left Behind Fund (NOLB)		No participating and sustaining learning, training and work opportunities
									No participating and sustaining learning, training and work opportunities
Parents in Poverty	Priority 3 and Priority 5- Tackling Child Poverty	Barrier Removal - (Personal Development/Group work /other)	Local Employability Partnership partners across the network , internal and external provision	Public	May-24		£75 K CP, £75,000 NOLB		No participating and sustaining learning, training and work opportunities
Parents in Poverty	Priority 3 - Tackling Child Poverty	School Aged Childcare Business Grants	Business Gateway, local employers / providers	Third	May-24		£70,000 - CP		No participating and sustaining learning, training and work opportunities
Economically Inactive , Disability , Mental Health,. Ethnic Minorities, Care Experienced, Long-term Unemployed, Justice	Priority 3 & 4 - Child Poverty and Health and Work	Supported Employment Specialist Support	Moray Council Employability Team, NHS and Moray Chamber of Commerce	Public	Jun-24		£100K - CP, £100k NOLB		No participating and sustaining learning, training and work opportunities
All age groups and priority / equalities groups	Priority 5	Project Officer -Business Engagement	Developing Young Workforce Moray, Moray Chamber of Commerce, Federation of Small Busineses	Public	Jul-24		£25K CP, £25K NOLB		No participating and sustaining learning, training and work opportunities
All age groups and priority / equalities groups	Priority 3, 4 and 5 , Child Poverty, Health and Work and Skills /Business Engagement	Moray Employer Recruitment Incentive	Moray Council Employability Team, Moray Chamber of Commerce, Local Employers across public, private and third sector	Public	Jun-24		CP - £200K, NOLB - £122K		No participating and sustaining learning, training and work opportunities

When completing the tables above and below, please include the following information:

Target Group - describe the priority groups being provided with support. Please include the groups identified in cells B8-B12 in the Description tab.
Rational for Intervention - describe why this group has been identified, e.g. what statistical evidence has been utilised
Delivery Partners - record whether this is expected to be in-house delivery or input which external partners have been/may be commissioned.
Budget - record the anticipated full year spend on this particular provision.
Anticipated Start Date - when do you expect to start this particular provision.
Forecast New Starts - how many new participants will access/be supported by this provision this financial year?
Forecast Spend - how much do you expect to spend on this particular provision in this financial year?
Other Sources of Investment - give detail if NOLB funding for this provision will be supplemented by any other investment, e.g. LA Core Employability funding, Shared Prosperity Fund, other sources. If known, please provide the expected breakdown from each source of funding in monetary values.
Outcomes Expected - describe the types of outcomes expected and the % of new starts expected to achieve this.

In Year Amendments/Additions to Plans for Delivery With NOLB Funding

Delivery UKSPF or Other Funding

Target Group	Rationale for Intervention	What Funding Source/Delivery Method/Description	Delivery Partners	Delivery Partner Sector	Anticipated Start Date	Actual Start Date	Forecast Spend	Other Sources of Investment	Outcomes Expected
Parents in Poverty	Priority 3 and Priority 5 - Tackling Child Poverty and Skills	Sector Based Work Academy Programme	Enable Works an UHI Moray (Third and public sector)	Third	Apr-24	01/04/2024	£477K		No gaining vocational qualifications , No job starts , no sustaining employment
Priority 4 & 5	Mentoring Young Talent	Moray Council Employablity Team, Education, Childrens Services, Promise Team, Justice, Third Sector Interface, Moray	Public	Public	01/04/2024		£170K	UK Shared Prospertiy Funds and Care Experienced Attainment Funds	No of mentees and mentors matched No participating and sustaining learning, training and work opportunities

In Year Amendments/Additions to Plans for Delivery with LA, UKSPF or Other Funding

NO ONE LEFT BEHIND - VOLUME PROFILES - 2024/25 (SG Funding Only)

Local Authority -	Moray Council

The table below records how many individual participants will access NOLB services each quarter. Input required in white cells ONLY please

TARGET GROUP	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	TOTAL PARTICIPANTS
All Age Employability - Excluding Parents	90 (new starts)	90	90	90	270
Tackling Child Poverty - Parents	25 (new starts)	25	25	25	75
TOTAL PARTICIPANTS	0	115	115	115	345

The data in the table below (self-populated from the data you entered in Annex B) records volumes within your specified Target Groups. The Total will not balance with the data in the table above as individuals could be counted in more than one Target Group i.e. a Parent could be Disabled and also Minority Ethnic, therefore counting in 3 Groups.

Specific Target/Characteristic Groups	Volume
#REF!	#REF!
Parents in Poverty	#REF!
Parents in Poverty	#REF!
#REF!	#REF!
Parents in Poverty	#REF!
Parents in Poverty	#REF!
Parents in Poverty	#REF!
Economically Inactive , Disability , Mental Health,. Ethnic Minorities, Care Experienced, Long-term Unemployed	#REF!
All age groups and priority / equalities groups	#REF!
#REF!	#REF!
#REF!	#REF!
#REF!	#REF!
#REF!	#REF!
#REF!	#REF!
All age groups and priority / equalities groups	#REF!
#REF!	#REF!
#REF!	0
0	#REF!
0	#REF!
0	#REF!

NO ONE LEFT BEHIND - FINANCIAL FORECASTS - 2024/25

Input is required in the white cells only

Budget Lines	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	TOTAL
All Age Employability (SG funding)	£146,250	£146,250	£146,250	£146,250	£585,000
All Age Employability (LG Core)	£56,000	£56,000	£56,000	£56,000	£224,000
All Age Employability (UK SPF)	£59,625	£59,625	£59,625	£59,625	£238,500
All Age Employability (Other)					£0
All Age Employability Total	**£261,875**	**£261,875**	**£261,875**	**£261,875**	**£1,047,500**
Tackling Child Poverty (SG Funding)	£187,000	£187,000	£187,000	£187,000	£748,000
Tackling Child Poverty (LG Core)	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0
Tackling Child Poverty (UK SPF)	£59,625	£59,625	£59,625	£59,625	£238,500
Tackling Child Poverty (Other)					£0
Tackling Child Poverty Total	**£246,625**	**£246,625**	**£246,625**	**£246,625**	**£986,500**
Total Funding (SG Funding)	£333,250	£333,250	£333,250	£333,250	£1,333,000
Total Funding (LG Core)	£56,000	£56,000	£56,000	£56,000	£224,000
Total Funding (UK SPF)	£119,250	£119,250	£119,250	£119,250	£477,000
Total Funding (Other)	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0
Employability Funding Total	**£508,500**	**£508,500**	**£508,500**	**£508,500**	**£2,034,000**

REPORT TO: **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND INFRASTRUCTURE SERVICES COMMITTEE ON 18 JUNE 2024**

SUBJECT: **INFORMATION REPORT: LIST OF PROPERTY TRANSACTIONS CONCLUDED UNDER DELEGATED POWERS**

BY: **DEPUTE CHIEF EXECUTIVE (ECONOMY, ENVIRONMENT & FINANCE)**

1.   <u>REASON FOR REPORT</u>

1.1   To inform the Committee of property transactions which have been dealt with under delegated powers.

1.2   This report is submitted to the Economic Development and Infrastructure Services Committee in terms of Section III F (5) of the Council's Scheme of Administration relating to industrial and commercial development.

2.   <u>BACKGROUND</u>

2.1   In terms of the Council's Scheme of Delegation, the Head of Housing and Property has delegated authority to approve acquisitions of heritable property up to a value of £250,000 where appropriate provisions have been made in the Capital or Revenue Plan.

2.2   In terms of the Council's Scheme of Delegation, the Head of Housing and Property has delegated authority to conduct rent reviews and fix new rents.

2.3   In terms of the Council's Scheme of Delegation, the Head of Housing and Property has delegated authority to grant leases, licenses or other occupation agreements of land and buildings for 25 years or less duration where the initial rent does not exceed £35,000 per annum and sites on long term building leases of up to 125 years duration where the initial rent does not exceed £35,000 per annum.

2.4   In terms of the Council's Scheme of Delegation, the Head of Housing and Property has delegated authority to settle compensation claims to a maximum of £100,000 arising from the Flood Prevention legislation, provided always that payments can be accommodated within approved budgets for the scheme or project.

2.5   In terms of the Council's Scheme of Delegation, the Head of Housing and Property has delegated authority to grant wayleaves or servitudes over

Council owned property.

2.6   In terms of the Council's Scheme of Delegation, the Head of Housing and Property has delegated authority to grant assignations of existing leases where the terms of lease remain substantially unaltered and to authorise sub-lets.

3.   **SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS**

    (a)   Corporate Plan and 10 Year Plan (Local Outcomes Improvement Plan (LOIP))
    The proposals support the aim of delivering financial stability.

    (b)   Policy and Legal
    None.

    (c)   Financial Implications
    Funds for the acquisition of the property detailed in **APPENDIX I** were made from existing provision in the Housing Revenue Account.

    The transactions detailed in **APPENDICES II and III** will generate an income to the Council.

    Funds are available to meet the compensation detailed in **APPENDIX IV.**

    (d)   Risk Implications
    None.

    (e)   Staffing Implications
    None.

    (f)   Property
    None.

    (g)   Equalities/Socio Economic Impact
    None.

    (h)   Climate Change and Biodiversity Impacts
    None.

    (i)   Consultations
    None.

4.   **CONCLUSION**

4.1   **It is recommended that the Committee notes the 1 acquisition of property, 15 rent reviews, 5 leases, 1 flood compensation claim, 1 servitude and 2 assignations set out in APPENDICES I, II, III, IV, V and VI.**

Author of Report: Stuart Beveridge, Asset Manager (Commercial Buildings)
Background Papers:

Ref: SB/JB

REPORT TO THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND INFRASTRUCTURE SERVICES COMMITTEE ON 18 JUNE 2024

LIST OF ACQUISITION OF FEU - SUBMITTED FOR NOTING

Officer Intls	Address	Description	Land Owner	Purchase Price	Declared Surplus	Comments
STBE	84 Douglas Crescent, Buckie	3 bedroom mid terraced house	Macduff Shipyard Ltd	£108,000	N/A	Purchased to add to Council Housing stock.

REPORT TO THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND INFRASTRUCTURE SERVICES COMMITTEE ON 18 JUNE 2024

LIST OF RENT REVIEWS OF BUILDINGS AND SITES - SUBMITTED FOR NOTING

1. Ref No. 2. Valuer's Ints.	1. Address 2. Tenant	1. Building (m²) 2. Site (Ha)	1. Date of Entry 2. Review Period Interval	1. Previous Rent 2. New Rent	Remarks
1. MW/630/2 2. IAWA	1. Kinloss School Lodge, Burghead Road, Kinloss 2. Kinloss Crafty Cool Kids Club	1. 80sqm 2. 0.04Ha	1. 16/2/18 2. 3 years	1. £3,600 p.a. 2. £5,000 p.a.	Permitted Use: Day care/nursery facility.
1. DU/1/304 2. SOAND	1. 7 Dufftown Industrial Estate, Dufftown 2. Alan Duncan	1. - 2. 0.22Ha	1. 3/4/09 2. 5 years	1. £4,520 p.a. 2. £5,500 p.a.	Permitted Use: Classes 5 & 6 General Industrial.
1. EL/510/1 2. SOAND	1. Riverside Caravan Park, West Road, Elgin 2. Christine Mitchell	1. - 2. 6.1Ha	1. 1/4/21 2. 3 years	1. £14,716.24 p.a. 2. £18,882.34 p.a.	Permitted Use: Public non residential caravan site with recreation area & pony grazing.
1. FR/520/1 2. IAWA	1. Kiosk, Grant Park, Victoria Road, Forres 2. Brett Mather & Anna Henderson	1. 22.57sqm 2. -	1. 15/1/18 2. 3 years	1. £2,200p.a. 2. £2,500 p.a.	Permitted Use: Kiosk to sell ice-cream & other confectionery.

1. MO/1/101 2. IAWA	1. 4 Mosstodloch Industrial Estate, Mosstodloch 2. Ian William Gordon	1. - 2. 0.13Ha	1. 1/12/78 2. 3 years	1. £1,838 p.a. 2. £2,000 p.a.	Permitted Use: Motor vehicle repairers & industrial blast cleaners.
1. AL/600/1 2. ALBU	1. 2 Fields, Alves 2. Moray Estates Development Co Ltd	1. - 2. 23.68Ha	1. 28/5/94 2. 5 years	1. £3,600 p.a. 2. £3,600 p.a.	Permitted Use: Agricultural. No increase in rent justified.
1. EL/1/201 2. IAWA	1. 3 Chanonry Spur, Elgin 2. Iain Emslie	1. 174sqm 2. 0.09Ha	1. 17/2/18 2. 3 years	1. £14,600 p.a. 2. £16,975 p.a.	Permitted Use: Storage & maintenance of taxi vehicles.
1. MW/580/1 2. STBE	1. Nether Dallachy Landfill Site, Nether Dallachy 2. Crown Estate Commissioners	1. - 2. 31.54Ha	1. 1/4/93 2. Annually	1. £24,437.50 p.a. 2. £25,488.32 p.a.	Permitted Use: Council landfill site. Council is tenant of Crown Estate Scotland.
1. EL/5/253 2. ALBU	1. 5 Diagonal Road, Elgin 2. Elgin Autos Ltd (SC496553)	1. - 2. 0.07Ha	1. 14/5/99 2. 5years	1. £2,700 p.a. 2. £3,030 p.a.	Permitted Use: Use for vehicle valeting & maintenance in connection with tenant's vehicle sales business.

1. EL/3/204 2. STBE	1. 4 Linkwood Lane, Elgin 2. Environmental Protection	1. 110sqm 2. 0.02Ha	1. 1/8/09 2. 3 years	1. £8,150 p.a. 2. £8,910 p.a.	Permitted Use: Storage of equipment & materials.
1. EL/8/223 2. STBE	1. Unit 23 Tyock Industrial Estate, Elgin 2. City Electrical Factors Ltd	1. 282.2sqm 2. 0.04Ha	1. 11/11/09 2. 3 years	1. £20,500 p.a. 2. £23,700 p.a.	Permitted Use: Storage, distribution & incidental sales of electrical goods & components (with ancillary office & trade counter) in connection with tenant's business. The rent review is with effect from 11/11/24.
1. KE/410/2 2. STBE	1. Strathisla Childrens Centre, Banff Road, Keith 2. Flexible Childcare Services Scotland SCIO	1. 460sqm 2. 0.57Ha	1. 460sqm 2. Annually	1. £10,660 p.a. 2. £15,990 p.a.	Permitted Use: Children's Nursery. Stepped rent increase as per the lease terms. Share of running costs also to increase on stepped basis from £3,592.73 per annum to £7,189.45 per annum.

1. KE/1/207 2. ALBU	1. 4 & 4A Westerton Road North, Keith 2. Colin Gray	1. 212.6sqm 2. 0.04Ha	1. 1/11/20 2. 3 years	1. £12,780 p.a. 2. £15,150 p.a.	Permitted Use: Vehicle maintenance & storage.
1. FR/2/100 2. IAWA	1. 6 Greshop Road, Forres 2. Alan Bartlett & Sons (Chatteris) Ltd	1. - 2. 0.75Ha	1. 1/4/89 2. 5 years	1. £22,500 p.a. 2. £28,775 p.a.	Permitted Use: Food processing.
1. LO/1/106 2. SOAND	1. Unit 6 Coulardbank Industrial Estate, Lossiemouth 2. Moray Motors Ltd	1. - 2. 0.14Ha	1. 18/3/94 2. 5 years	1. £3,870 p.a. 2. £4,920 p.a.	Permitted Use: Car sales, preparation, servicing & repair & sale of car accessories in connection with tenant's business.

REPORT TO THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND INFRASTRUCTURE SERVICES COMMITTEE ON 18 JUNE 2024

LIST OF LEASES OF BUILDINGS AND SITES – SUBMITTED FOR NOTING

1. Reference No. 2. Officer's Ints	1. Address 2. Tenant	1. Building (m²) 2. Site (Ha)	1. Date of Entry 2. Review Period	Rent (per annum)	Remarks
1. EL/645/2 2. SOAND	1. 232 High Street, Elgin 2. Quarriers	1. 132sqm 2. 0.02Ha	1. 15/4/24 2. 3 years	£20,000	Permitted Use: Office use & ancillary uses as a drop-in centre & for staff training.
1. BK/1/209 2. IAWA	1. 3 March Lane, Buckie 2. MSSSAB Ltd, T/A SG Roofing Contractor	1. 60.79sqm 2. 0.02Ha	1. 1/4/24 2. 3 years	£6,050	Permitted Use: Workshop & storage facility for the tenant's roofing business.
1. FR/4/206 2. IAWA	1. 4 Waterford Circle, Forres 2. Connor McGowan, T/A Timberness	1. 70sqm 2. -	1. 22/4/24 2. 3 years	£7,000	Permitted Use: Workshop and store in association with the tenant's joinery business.
1. BK/1/214 2. IAWA	1. 10 March Road East, Buckie 2. Iain Hutcheon	1. 74.97sqm 2. 0.03Ha	1. 1/5/24 2. 3 years	£6,600	Permitted Use: Car mechanics workshop & yard.

1. EL/1/141 2. ALBU	1. 22 Chanonry Road North, Elgin 2. ESL Investments Ltd SC556361	1. - 2. 0.147Ha	1. 2/5/24 2. 5 years	£5,575	Permitted Use: For trade or business within Classes 4, 5 & 6 of Schedule to Town & Country Planning (Use Classes)(Scotland) Order 1997 as amended.

REPORT TO THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND INFRASTRUCTURE SERVICES COMMITTEE ON 18 JUNE 2024

COMPENSATION - SUBMITTED FOR NOTING

Officer Intls	Address	Description	Land Owner	1. Compensation 2.	Comments
STBE	Old Mills Road Elgin	Grazing Land – Flood Compensation & Path Agreement	Hawcos	1. £20,068.45 2.	Flood compensation for loss of land & disturbance £20,068.45 + £1,920 (surveyor's fee).

REPORT TO THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & INFRASTRUCTURE SERVICES COMMITTEE ON 18 JUNE 2024

GRANT OF SERVITUDES AND WAYLEAVES

Officer Intls	File Ref	Address	Description	Price	Comments
CQ	KE/GEN	Site at Banff Road, Keith	Servitude	£0	SGN retrospective agreement to formalize connection to new Moray Council housing development, Banff Road, Keith.

REPORT TO THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND INFRASTRUCTURE SERVICES COMMITTEE ON 18 JUNE 2024

LIST OF ASSIGNATIONS OF SITES/UNITS - SUBMITTED FOR NOTING

1. Ref No 2. Valuer's Ints	1. Assignor 2. Assignee	Address	Lease Details	Remarks
1. EL/1/134 2. ALBU	1. ESL Investments Ltd 2. Gairland Investments Ltd	14 Chanonry Road South, Elgin	Lease Commenced 5/7/18 Lease Term 99(Y), 0(M), 0(D) Rental £14,420	Permitted Use: Development of a depot with workshop, offices & yard.
1. EL/1/131 2. ALBU	1. ESL Investments Ltd SC556361 2. Gairland Investments Ltd SC746684	Chanonry Court, 23 Chanonry Road South, Elgin	Lease Commenced 18/4/19 Lease Term 99(Y), 0(M), 0(D) Rental £22,625	Permitted Use: Development of industrial units & stores with yard & car parking minimum industrial buildings 1,250sqm.