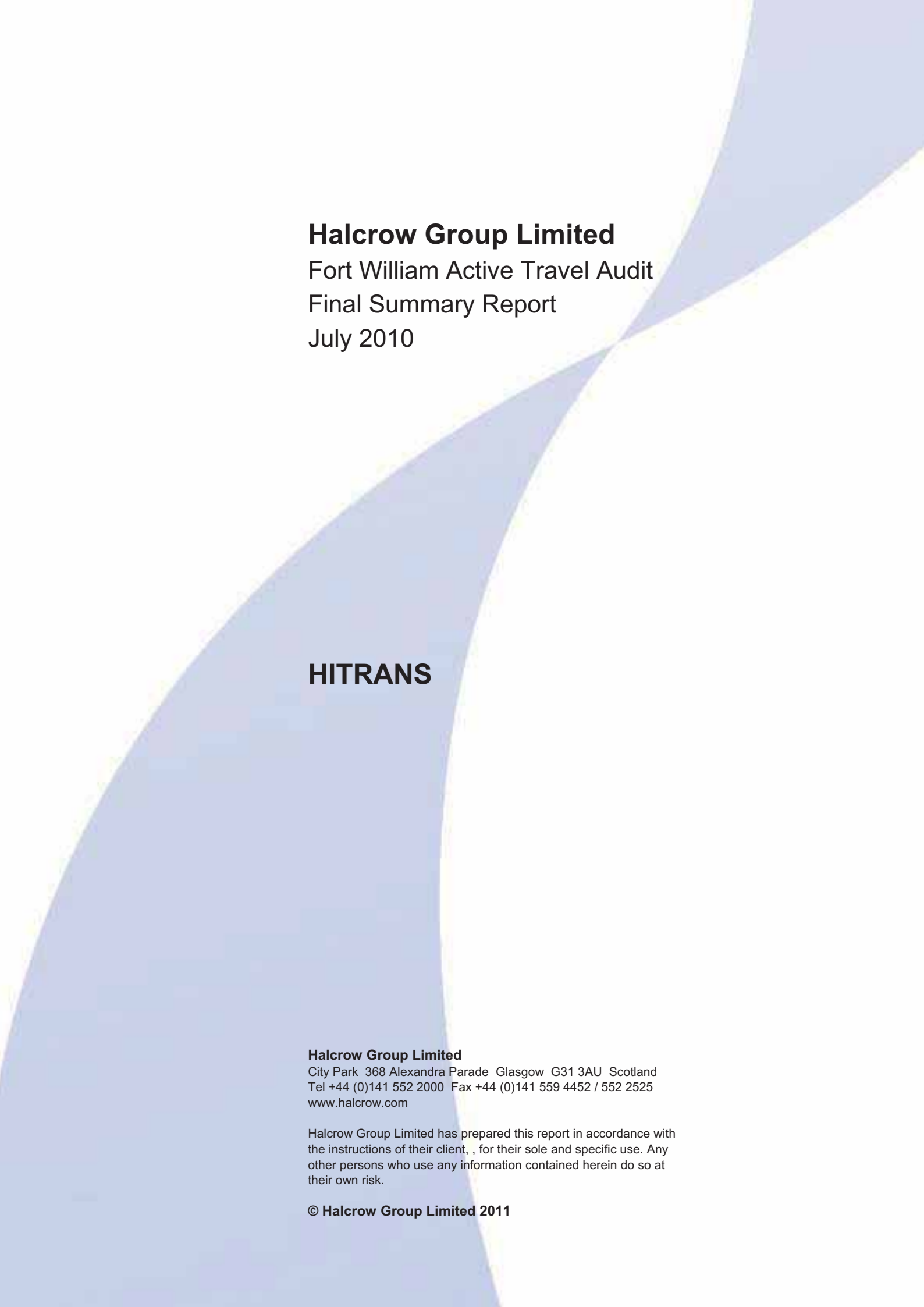


Halcrow Group Limited
Fort William Active Travel Audit
Final Summary Report
July 2010



HITRANS



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Halcrow Group Limited

City Park 368 Alexandra Parade Glasgow G31 3AU Scotland
Tel +44 (0)141 552 2000 Fax +44 (0)141 559 4452 / 552 2525
www.halcrow.com

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City Park 368 Alexandra Parade Glasgow G31 3AU Scotland
Tel +44 (0)141 552 2000 Fax +44 (0)141 559 4452 / 552 2525
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HITRANS

Fort William Active Travel Audit Final Summary Report

Contents Amendment Record

This report has been issued and amended as follows:

Issue	Revision	Description	Date	Approved by
01	-	Draft Summary Report	20/07/09	CK/JP
02	-	Final Summary Report	14/07/10	CK
03	-	Plans moved to Appendix	05/08/11	JP

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1 Introduction

1.1 Background

1.1.1 Halcrow Group Ltd was commissioned by HITRANS, the Highlands and Islands Regional Transportation Partnership to:

- Develop a methodology to audit existing active travel infrastructure
- Provide baseline information on existing infrastructure provision for active travel
- Recommend priorities for future investment

1.1.2 The overall aim is to assess where best to apply available funding in order to increase the potential for active travel and ideally to see an increase in the numbers of people choosing to walk or cycle.

1.1.3 In particular, the key purpose of the audits is to identify:

“A practical network of high quality routes suitable for cycling within each settlement that provides convenient and safe access to all major destinations”

and

“A network of routes for pedestrians focused upon railway stations, bus stations, ferry terminals, major employment areas, local shopping areas, leisure/recreation centres, hospitals and main trip generators.”

1.1.4 This document summarises the main findings of the methodology as applied to the Fort William area.

2 Active Travel Methodology

2.1 What is the methodology?

2.1.1 Halcrow has developed a methodology to assess existing and proposed active travel infrastructure. This methodology is based on the following key parameters:

- A desktop study including demographics, travel to work patterns, public transport information and traffic accident data
- Analysis of main trip generators/attractors
- Consultation with the Local Authority and other interested parties
- On site audits
- Application of a 'prioritisation filter'

2.1.2 The prioritisation filter is an analysis tool to identify those corridors where there is the greatest potential for modal shift. The filter encompasses information from the desktop study such as demographic data, trip generators and attractors, planning proposals and the results of stakeholder consultation. The filter also assesses the 'implementability' of a route compared to its potential usage.

2.1.3 On site audits for walking are carried out utilising the Transport Research Laboratory (TRL) Pedestrian Environment Review System (PERS) whilst an Institution of Highways and Transportation (IHT) cycle audit is undertaken. Both systems audit the condition of existing facilities for pedestrians and cyclists to identify where proposed measures can be effectively targeted.

2.1.4 The outputs from the application of the methodology are:

- An Active Travel Prioritised Action Plan
- An Active Travel Master Plan

2.1.5 The prioritised action plan identifies areas and schemes where there is the greatest potential to achieve modal shift or where there is the greatest need for infrastructure for pedestrians and cyclists. The master plan is a core network for pedestrians and cyclists that provide direct, convenient, safe, attractive and coherent links between journey origins and journey attractors. The proposals contained within the prioritised action plan and master plan will require further investigation and feasibility work.

2.1.6 Consultation plays an integral role in the identification of routes for walking and cycling and also helps to pinpoint, at a very local level, the barriers to active travel. In the Fort William area the following individuals and organisations were consulted:

- The Highland Council: Access Officer, Roads Department,
- Planning Department, School Travel Officer, Public Transport Officer
- Sustrans
- Lochaber Action on Disability
- Local bike shops
- West Highland Wheelers
- Paths for All
- Association of Lochaber Community Councils
- Fort William Community Council

- Inverlochy and Torlundy Community Council
- Great Glen Way Route Manager

3 Walking and Cycling in the Fort William Area

3.1 Overview of current conditions for active travel

3.1.1 The total population in the study area (which comprises of Corpach, Caol, Banavie, Inverlochy and Fort William) is 10,459. Compared to the rest of the Highland area, there are fewer people aged over 65 (15.3%) and more people below the age of 19 (25%) living in the Fort William here. Tables 3-1 and 3-2 below show comparisons of how people travel to work and study in the Fort William area compared to the region and the whole

Table 3-1: Comparison of mode of transport for journeys to work and study – Regional and National comparison

Mode of transport	Fort William area	Highlands	Scotland
% taking Bus	18.8	13	16.5
% Car and passenger	54	56	53
% Cycle	4.1	3	1.3
% Walk	20.4	24	23

(Data supplied by SCROL and Lochaber Local Plan)

Table 3-2: Comparison of mode of transport for journeys to work and study – Fort William Study Area

Mode of transport	Caol	Corpach	Banavie	Fort William North	Fort William South
% taking Bus	15	13	9	9	13
% Car	23	26	38	22	27
% Passenger	10	8	9	8	8
% Cycle	3	4	7	3	1
% Walk	11	7	8	17	16

(Data supplied by SCROL)

3.1.2 Compared to the national picture, bus use across the Highlands is relatively low, but in the Fort William area, it is slightly higher than the national average. Travel to work and study on foot in the area is higher than the regional average and there is a positive result for cycling with levels twice that in the Highlands and over three times more than the Scottish average. Travel by car is on par with the Scottish average, but much higher than the average for the Highlands.

3.1.3 When the Census results for the individual areas within Fort William are studied, there are some obvious trends:

- Banavie has the highest levels of car use and bicycle use
- The highest levels of walking are in Fort William
- The lowest levels of cycling are in the hilliest parts of the study area and the furthest from Fort William town centre
- Caol has the highest levels of bus use

3.1.4 Census data has also been used to provide a snapshot of the distances travelled to work and study in the Fort William area and are shown below in Figures 3-1 to 3-5.

Figure 3-1: Caol -Distance travelled to work

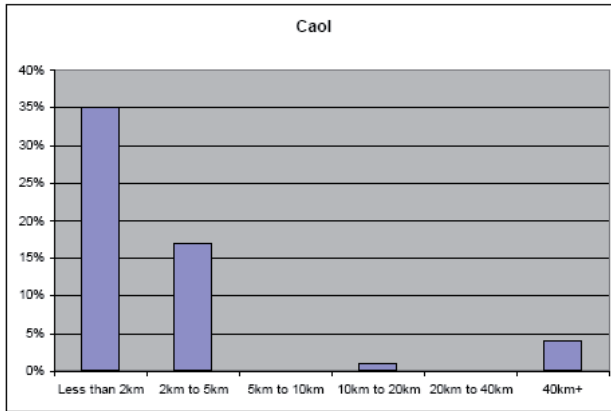


Figure 3-2: Corpach – Distance travelled to work

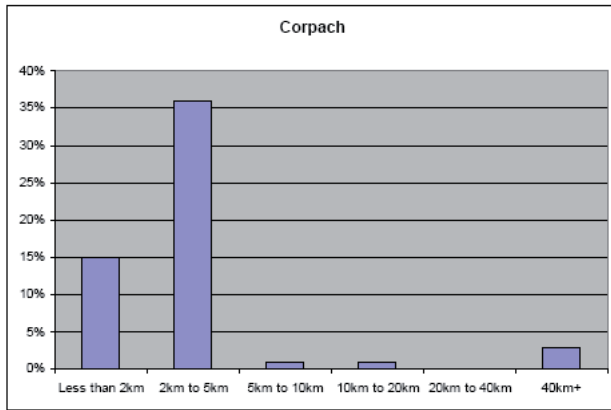


Figure 3-3: Banavie – Distance travelled to work

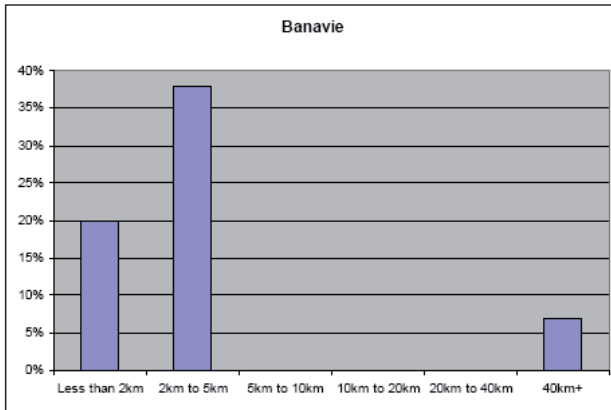


Figure 3-4: Fort William North – Distance travelled to work

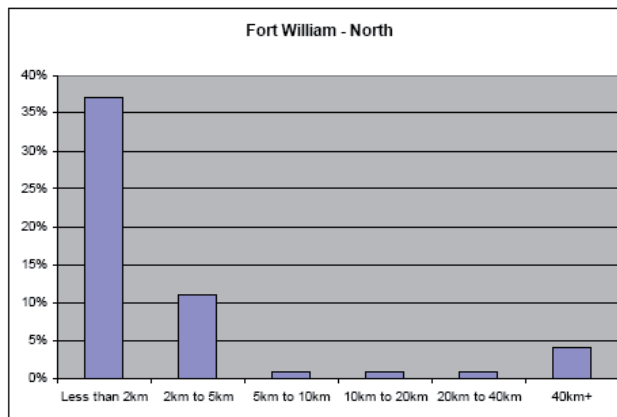
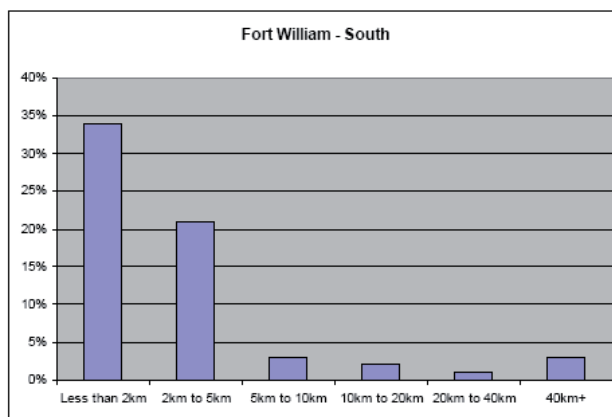


Figure 3-5: Fort William South – Distance travelled to work



3.1.5 In Caol, and Fort William, the majority of journeys to work or study are less than 2km and in Corpach and Banavie, most journeys are less than 5km. Overall, 33% of journeys are less than 2km (which is the equivalent of a 6 minute bike ride) and 51% of all journeys are less than 5km (which is the equivalent of a 16 minute bike ride). As can be seen in the graphs above, most journeys are short, local and could potentially be made on foot or on bike.

3.2 Study area

3.2.1 The study area can be loosely categorised into two parts: firstly, the hilly town of Fort William, which is built onto the side of a hill and secondly, the flat, flood plains to the north incorporating Inverlochy and Caol linking to Corpach and Banavie. Although there are adequate pedestrian facilities in Fort William, the steep gradients of the roads does not lend itself particularly well to walking and cycling. Despite the topography, the town has the highest levels of walking in the study area. In the residential areas of Upper Achintore and Plantation, high above the town centre, there are a number of stepped pedestrian routes that serve as useful shortcuts. The steps are all lit with handrails, but have steep risers. Many of the narrow streets in the steepest part of the town have been made one way to aid vehicular flow. Unfortunately, the one way systems result in longer and more arduous journeys for cyclists which make cycling a less attractive option. Similarly, pedestrians are also disadvantaged in the older parts of Fort William as the footways are often very narrow or non-existent.



Figure 3-6: Typical narrow footway in older parts of Fort William



Figure 3-7: Heavy traffic on A82 in Fort William

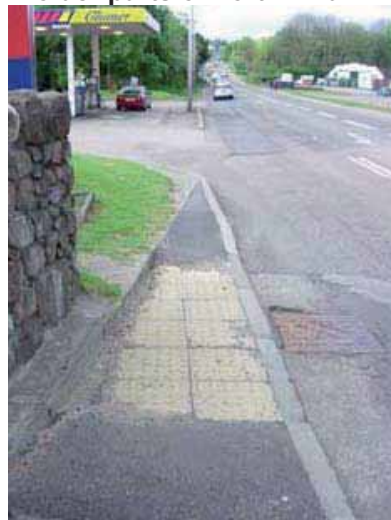


Figure 3-8: Poor quality footway provision on A82



Figure 3-9: Cyclists are prohibited at all times in the pedestrianised area



Figure 3-10: a number of streets in the old part of town benefit from traffic calming



Figure 3-11: Physical restrictions on Belford Road/A82 will make providing for cyclists and pedestrians problematic

- 3.2.2 The town centre is pedestrianised, has attractive seating areas and has subway access under the A82 to connect with the train station, bus station, supermarket, the Nevis Centre and other facilities. The ramped access in the subway is relatively steep for wheelchair and pushchair users and although lit, the subway itself is dark and unattractive.



Figure 3-12: The pedestrianised town centre is busy and vibrant



Figure 3-13: The underpass to the town is unattractive

- 3.2.3 Pedestrian facilities in the outlying areas of Corpach, Caol, Banavie and Inverlochy are adequate and the relatively low traffic volumes in these areas mean there is good permeability. The only exception is the A830 in Corpach – the observed high levels of HGVs can be intimidating when crossing the road in the vicinity of the local shops. Although the land is flat from Fort William to Caol and Corpach, the settlement of Corpach itself is built on the side of a hill.

- 3.2.4 The A82 trunk road through Fort William causes a number of problems for both pedestrians and cyclists, especially through the busiest section between the A830 and the roundabout adjacent to the railway station and supermarket. Data from Transport Scotland shows that between 15,000 and 18,000 vehicles a day use this stretch of road. Pedestrians have the advantage of footways and a number of controlled and uncontrolled crossings, however, cyclists must share the carriageway with general traffic. There is a wide footway adjacent to the dualled section of the A82, with traffic volumes dropping to approximately 10,000 vehicles per day on this section



Figure 3-14: Cyclists are a common sight cycling on the footway on the A82



Figure 3-15: The footway and carriageway along the waterfront are underutilised

3.2.5 There are two long distance paths that end in Fort William:

- The Great Glen Way
- The West Highland Way

3.2.6 Both routes currently end adjacent to the A82: the Great Glen Way at the Old Fort and the West Highland Way at the junction of Belford Road although at the time of writing a statue was being erected in the west end of the High Street to where the West Highland Way was being re-routed to. Both routes are well used and in 2006 over 24,000 people were recorded using the Great Glen Way and approximately 50,000 people a year walk the West Highland Way.

3.2.7 The section of the Great Glen Way from Fort William to Corpach Locks is also well used by local people as a flat walking and cycling route to the town centre. The section of traffic free route from Caol to Corpach has recently been resurfaced, the on-road sections through Caol and Inverlochy are a combination of quiet residential roads, traffic calmed roads and on-road advisory cycle lanes. The section of route through Black Park is well used as it also provides access to Inverlochy Castle and the Torlundy Cycle Route. The wooden 'Soldier's Bridge' across the River Lochy is a narrow bridge with a passing place where cyclists are instructed to dismount. There is a very steep access ramp on the Inverlochy side. Existing provision for cycling

3.3 Existing provision for cycling

3.3.1 Although there are few facilities for cyclists in Fort William it is an important centre for many leisure related cycling activities. The Nevis Range ski area at Aonach Mor offers a wide range of cycling facilities from family friendly trails to what is widely regarded as one of the best downhill mountain bike routes in the world. The sport is well promoted as part of the Fort William's branding as 'The Outdoor Capital of the UK' and there are two busy bike shops in the town – one on the High Street and one in Inverlochy, which also operates a 'Commuter Club' to promote utility cycling. The local cycling club, 'The West Highland Wheelers' participate in road and mountain biking.

3.3.2 Cycling is prohibited in the pedestrianised area but the ban is largely either side of the A830 from Lochaber High School to Banavie Station are designated as shared use, but the surface is poor and the tracks obscured by vegetation in places. A high quality cycle route, funded by Transport Scotland, now provides traffic free access from Inverlochy Castle to Torlundy, a distance of approximately two miles, however, signing for the route from Fort William is virtually none existent and access to the start of the route at the rear of McDonalds fast food restaurant is difficult to find. Sections of this route adjacent to the trunk road need to be included within a regular maintenance regime to remove the accumulation of debris. Long distance touring cyclists are also a common sight in Fort William, many of whom use the A82. It is anticipated that their numbers will continue to rise as the development of the National Cycle Network continues, especially Route 78 from Campbeltown to Oban, Fort William and Inverness. A number of sections are now open; however, the proposals for the route in the Fort William area are still in the feasibility stage. A 'lone' footway/cycle track sign at the old fort appears to designate this area as a shared use facility, but there are no other signs or road markings to show the extent of the designation.

3.4 Existing cycle parking

3.4.1 There is good quality cycle parking in the town centre at key locations as well as at Lochaber Leisure Centre, the train station and the main supermarket. Lockers are also available at the train station, however, there is no information available on how to gain access to them. There are excellent cycle parking facilities at the Health Centre: Sheffield type stands for short stay and lockers for all day use, however, despite these facilities, bicycles were observed locked to drainpipes.



Figure 3-16: Cycle parking in Claggan



Figure 3-17: High quality cycle track to Torlundy



Figure 3-18: Long and short stay cycle parking at the rail station



Figure 3-19: Poor designation of footway/cycle track at the old fort



Figure 3-20: Well used cycle parking in the town centre



Figure 3-21: Cycle parking at the health centre

3.4.2 The existing walking and cycling facilities are shown in Figure A-1 in Appendix A.

3.5 Traffic flow and accident data

3.5.1 As discussed earlier, the A82 trunk road through Fort William carries considerable traffic, especially in the centre of the town. According to the Draft Highland Council Local Transport Strategy, traffic on the A82 near to the swimming pool has increased by 5% since 2003, however in the south of the town, traffic flows are considerably less. This indicates that much of the traffic causing congestion in the town is generated locally.

3.5.2 The Road Safety Plan for Highland has adopted National Targets for accident reduction and is on course to meet the 2010 targets. The Scottish Government has set out road safety targets in their latest Road Safety Framework to 2020 as follows:

- Reduce adult deaths by 40% and reduce the number of serious injuries by 55%
- Reduce child deaths by 50% and reduce the number of serious injuries by 65%

3.5.3 Pedestrian and cyclist accident data for 2006 to 2009 was obtained from The Highland Council. During this period there were no pedestrian deaths, but there was one cyclist who died. A total of six pedestrian accidents were recorded, two of which suffered severe injuries and a total of six other cyclist accidents, one of which was severe. All other accidents are recorded as slight.

3.5.4 The majority of pedestrian accidents have happened on local residential roads in Caol and Lundavra. Two pedestrians have been in accidents on the A82: one pedestrian was hit by a car crossing at the pedestrian crossing near to the Camusnagaul ferry pier, the other on North Road.

3.5.5 In contrast, all but one of the cyclist accidents have occurred on the A82 and A830. Four accidents took place on the A82 on the narrow section between Belford Hospital and Carrs Corner Industrial Estate and two were on the A830

3.5.6 More detailed accident data is required to determine the cause of these accidents and the ages of those involved, but it appears that cyclists are particularly at risk on the A82. There were no reported accidents between pedestrians and cyclists.

3.6 Public transport

3.6.1 The outlying areas of Corpach, Banavie, and Caol are well served by the local bus service which is branded as 'Fort Link'. During peak times buses are every fifteen minutes, hourly in the evenings, with the cost of a single fare to Caol priced at £1.05. Local buses also serve the health centre next to the High School, but not before 9am. Feedback from Lochaber Action on Disability reveals that there is a lack of confidence for disabled people using local buses as they report that not all buses are accessible.

3.6.2 Most people alighting from local buses in Fort William use the bus stop on the A82 at the top of the High Street. As shown below in Figure 3-24, the area around the bus stop is very narrow and could be improved to be made more attractive and functional. The main bus stop for passengers leaving Fort William on local bus services is on Middle Street. This bus stop is well used and is accessed via a traffic free path from The Parade with a controlled crossing point.

3.6.3 Fort William is also accessible by train services from Mallaig and south of Scotland and from various national destinations by intercity coach services which depart from the bus station on Macfarlane Way near the train station. The ScotRail Caledonian Sleeper service to London Euston is available from Fort William.

- 3.6.4 Although the bus and train station are only a short distance from the town centre, the presence of the A82 is a considerable physical and psychological barrier between them.
- 3.6.5 Cycle carriage on trains is available (6 bikes on 2 cars) which is particularly important when promoting sustainable transport for key events such as the world mountain bike championships at Aonach Mor.
- 3.6.6 Folding and boxed bicycles can also be carried on long distance buses provided they are suitably covered.
- 3.6.7 Table 3-3 below is a summary of the current bus service in the study area and Figure 3-25 at the end of the chapter shows where The Highland Council consider that services may need to be extended with regards to new developments in the area.
- 3.6.8 The main recommendations in relation to public transport are:
- Ensure new developments provide first rate bus stops and shelters at the main entrances
 - Bus routes to new developments should be as direct as possible from the existing bus network
 - New developments need to make significant contributions to the existing bus network especially where there will be any sizeable trip generators
 - Improve existing bus stop facilities especially on Middle Street and main stop into Fort William on the A62



Figure 3-22: Local buses picking up passengers on Middle Street

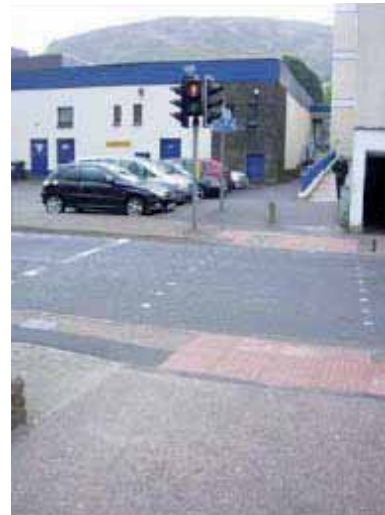


Figure 3-23: Crossing point from town centre to bus stop on Middle Street



Figure 3-24: Inadequate bus stop provision for services into Fort William

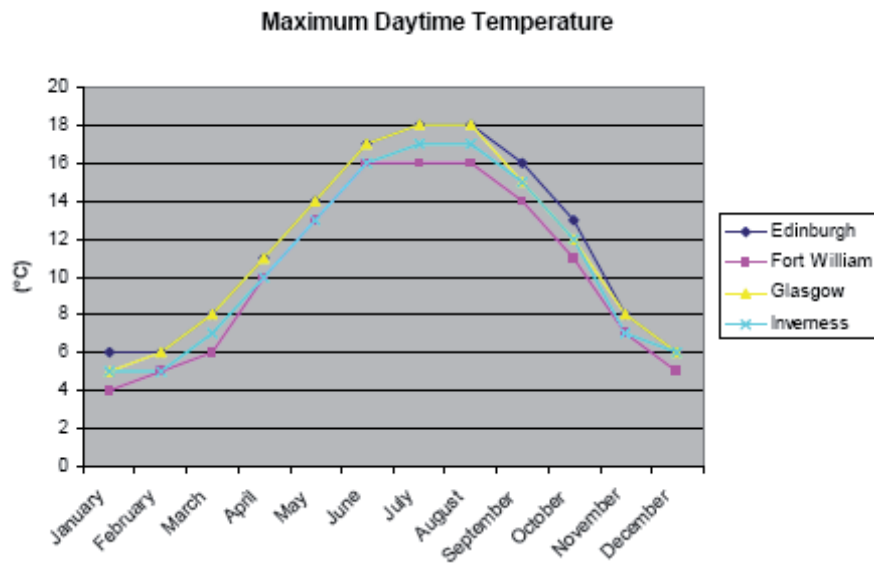
Table 3-3: Bus services in the Fort William Study Area

Route	From	To	Via	Weekday		Saturday		Sunday		Note
				Daytime	Evening	Daytime	Evening	Daytime	Evening	
Stagecoach 45A	Corpach	Upper Achintore/ lantation	Fort William town centre	5	5	8	5	-	-	Midweek evening service serves Health Centre. Serves Iverlochy and Claggan.
Stagecoach 45	Corpach	Upper Achintore/ Plantation	Fort William town centre	20	3	13	3	9	6	Midweek daytime service serves Health Centre. Servis Inverlochy and Claggan.
Stagecoach 46	Corpach	Upper Achintore/ Plantation	Fort William town centre	20	2	14	2	2	-	Midweek service serves Health Centre. Serves Inverlochy and Claggan.
Stagecoach 41	Fort William	Spean Bridge	Caol, Health Centre and Glen Nevis Youth Hostel	8	2	6	2	7	2	2 services a day to Caol during the week, 1 on Saturday and 4 on Sunday. Serves Health Centre everyday except Sunday.
Stagecoach 44	Fort William	Kinlochleven	Ballachulish	12	4	10	3	2	1	Serves Camanachd Crescent (excepting Sunday) and properties on A82 south of Fort William.

3.6.9 Weather

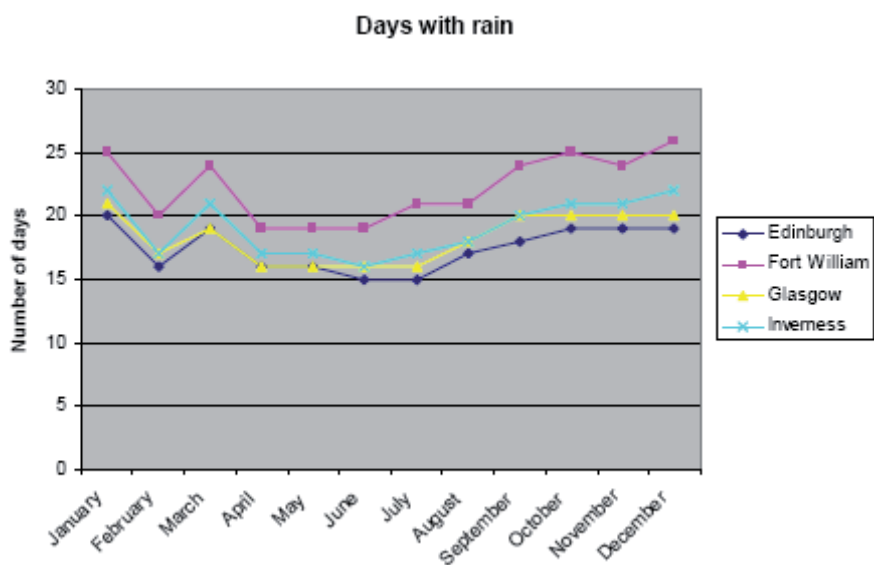
3.6.10 Fort William is often described as one of the wettest places in Scotland and data from the Met Office confirms this. Tables 3-4 through 3-6 below show that Fort William is considerably wetter than Glasgow, Edinburgh and Inverness, has the most days of rain and is also colder. Consistently wet and cold weather can be a deterrent to walking and cycling, however, existing levels of walking and cycling in the area are relatively high for an area with this relative high level of rainfall.

Table 3-4: Comparison of average maximum day temperature (2008)



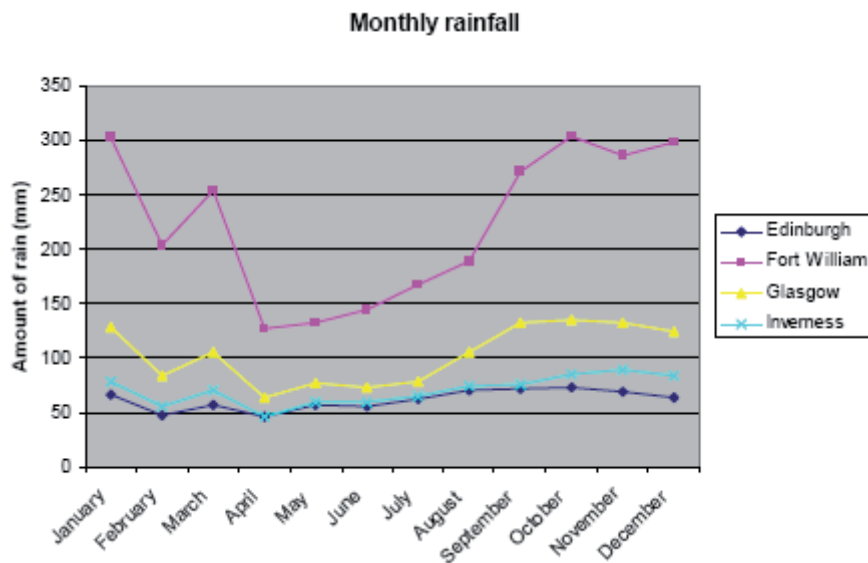
Source: The Met Office (2008)

Table 3-5: Comparison of average number of days with rain



Source: The Met Office (2008)

Table 3-6: Comparison of Average monthly rainfall



Source: The Met Office (2008)

3.7 Fort William mountain bike championships

3.7.1 In 2001 the Forestry Commission and the Nevis Range ski resort began building facilities for mountain biking in the Fort William area. What began initially as a single track trail has now expanded into a downhill trail, a 4X trail and a cross country course. The combination of terrain and trail quality has now made Fort William into one of the best mountain biking venues in the world. In 2002 the world cycling body used Fort William for a Downhill and 4X World Cup and added a Cross Country World cup in 2003 and in 2007, the Mountain Bike and Trials World Championships were held in Fort William the first time the event had been held in the UK since the competition began in 1990.

3.7.2 Following the event in 2007 HITRANS commissioned a report to evaluate ‘the effectiveness of the information provided about transport for the event and to further action to promote sustainable transport options for future events’¹. This was particularly important as the event attracted over 40,000 people over the six days. The evaluation consisted of an online survey to 1000 tourism operators. The results estimate that although the majority of people travelled to the Lochaber area by car, there was an increase in sustainable modes to access the championships. The traffic management plan for the event contained an Event Travel Plan to encourage people to travel to the competition sustainably. This was predominantly an information portal providing details to ticket holders, hoteliers and the general public on the facilities such as the shuttle bus, walking and cycling route, cycle parking and the nine park and ride sites. The report suggests that most people found information about travel to the event via an email newsletter and the world cup website.

¹ Sustainable Transport Report, Fort William World Mountain Bike Championships 2007, Vipre, 15/01/2008

3.7.3 Survey results from the event show how successful the alternative transport options were. On the final busiest day of the competition, over 11,000 people attended. Of these:

- 9239 used the shuttle buses
- 600 used the free cycle parking
- 800 travelled by car

And encouragingly it is estimated that there were at least four people in each car. Respondents would have liked more accurate and more readily available information about shuttle bus times and more information about the new walking cycling route and free cycle parking

3.7.4 The main recommendations from the report were to:

- Continue to use websites and emails to promote sustainable transport
- Provide more information locally through the Tourist Information Centre and posters
- Promote the event with transport providers such as ScotRail and coach companies with the possibility of integrated ticketing
- Better signing of car parks and the cycle route
- Use 'Information Ambassadors' in key locations to aid the public,
- Provide more shuttle buses during peak event times
- Promote sustainability to the area year round

3.8 The Highland Council policy documents

3.8.1 The Lochaber Local Plan (Deposit Draft 2008) outlines the following developments within the study area:

- Waterfront development including extensive land reclamation
- 300 new homes in Caol/Lochyside
- Potential relocation of hospital and police headquarters
- New homes in Upper Achintore with possible new primary school
- Potential new housing off Lundavra Road
- Possible kayak club adjacent to Inverlochry Castle
- Potential new housing in Banavie
- Possible expansion at Torlundy
- Developments at former mill at Corpach
- Development on Blar Mor
- Improvements to existing High School

- 3.8.2 In addition, a proposed new link road to Coal is included in the Local Plan and land is being reserved to safeguard its alignment. Targeted road improvements on the A82 are identified within Transport Scotland's 'Strategic Transport Projects Review' from 2012 – 2022 and are likely to include work to the south of Fort William.
- 3.8.3 A review of primary school provision is currently underway by The Highland Council, the results of which may have an impact on school travel if any schools are closed or relocated.
- 3.8.4 After serious flooding in 2005, Scott Wilson Scotland Ltd carried out a feasibility study to develop proposals to reduce the risk of flooding in the area. The feasibility study has been completed and a Draft Flood Prevention Order is being pursued to enable construction works to prevent future flooding in the area.
- 3.8.5 Of the nine objectives within the draft Local Transport Strategy for the Highlands 2009-2012 (LTS), five have a direct impact on the encouragement and increase of walking and cycling:
- Social Inclusion: Facilitate travel to enable economic/social involvement and improve access/travel choices to essential services for those without access to a private car
 - Environment: Manage/reduce the impacts of transport on the natural and built environment
 - Health: Increase levels of cycling and walking to promote health improvement and modal shift
 - Personal Safety: Address issues of perceived safety and personal security particularly where they are a barrier to walking, cycling and public transport
 - Traffic Reduction: Where appropriate consider targets for reducing traffic, although noting the variation in conditions and requirements between rural and urban areas
- 3.8.6 In addition, the LTS also incorporates local outcome 10.1 of The Highland Council's Single Outcome Agreement to increase the number of children walking and cycling to school.
- 3.8.7 A study to improve the relationship between the west end of the High Street and the pedestrianised area in Fort William is currently being progressed by The Highland Council.

3.9 Fort William Waterfront Master Plan

- 3.9.1 A report outlining the design proposals for 'Enhancing Fort William's Waterfront'² was published in August 2009 although in April 2010 it has been confirmed that the developer is withdrawing its plans due to current global economic situation. The report was commissioned by The Highland Council and sets out a design framework that will '*promote the physical and economic enhancement of Fort William's wider waterfront.*' There are two master plans within the document, an Optimum Masterplan Proposal and a Secondary Masterplan. The Optimum plan is based on funding through a joint venture whilst the Secondary plan shows the opportunities without joint venture funding.

² Enhancing Fort William's Waterfront, Design Proposals, The Highland Council, W.A. Fairhurst and Partners, WSD Scotland Ltd, August 2009

3.9.2 Both masterplans have been developed using the same design principles which are:

- Establishing visual links
- Improving pedestrian priority
- Increasing connectivity and continuity of development
- Adaptability (of buildings and public space)

3.9.3 The current proposals do not provide sufficient detail of pedestrian and cyclist infrastructure, however the report highlights a number of key issues:

- Key sites such as existing green spaces and the waterfront are currently 'cut off' from the town centre
- Pedestrian links are compromised due to the dominance of the A82
- Making walking and cycling more attractive can encourage reduced use of cars for short journeys
- Fort William is dominated by car parking
- Middle Street could be improved to encourage more street activity
- The train station and West End roundabout are key gateways where the visual quality of the areas could be improved.

3.9.4 For each master plan, the report sets out in general terms how these problems would be addressed. Much of the report relates to the built form and its visual appearance, but there is a strong emphasis on how access needs to be improved for pedestrians and cyclists, including improved at grade crossings on the A82, especially from the train station to the High Street. The report states: *'The masterplan seeks to establish high quality pedestrian and cycle routes by strengthening existing pedestrian links from the town centre to the waterfront, as well as providing alternative routes and removing unnecessary traffic from local roads. The proposals make negotiating existing routes safer and more pleasant for non vehicle users. Ultimately, by making walking and cycling a safer and more pleasant experience, residents and visitors will be more likely to refrain from using their cars for short journeys.'*

3.9.5 The proposals for both master plans are very positive with regards to active travel and if executed well, will have the potential to transform Fort William and radically improve conditions for pedestrians and cyclists, but there is no sufficient detail at this stage to determine if the proposals will give priority to pedestrians and reduce the dominance of the A82. Although the report acknowledges the visual dominance of parked cars and seeks to reduce this by limited on street parking and redesigning parking areas there is a proposal to increase the overall level of parking provision in the town through the Optimum masterplan with the creation of an underground 800 space car park. There is a considerable amount of new development, both residential and commercial within the Optimum masterplan which could be designed to favour the used of walking and cycling over car journeys through the provision of high quality walking and cycling routes that have distinct time and physical advantages over using a car and convenient and secure cycle parking. Both master plans also fail to record/recognise the existing traffic free route from Wades Road to the fast food restaurant and the under capacity dual carriageway along the waterfront is maintained.

3.10 Current issues

3.10.1 The audit process identified a number of key issues that act as a disincentive for active travel:

- 1) **A82**
 - The volume of traffic between the Belford Hospital and North
 - Road means that it is unsuitable for on road cycle facilities

- Speed limits in some parts of the town are more than 40mph
- 2) **Hilly terrain**
- The steepness of roads in the residential areas of Fort William will be a deterrent to increasing walking and cycling in the area
- 3) **Lack of cycle facilities**
- It is difficult to promote cycling where there are few dedicated cycling facilities, including deficiencies in cycle parking
- 4) **Wet weather**
- The relatively wet weather in the area will be a major hurdle in the promotion of walking and cycling
- 5) **Unattractive gateway between public transport and town centre**
- The subway under the A82 is unattractive
 - Cycling is not permitted in the subway
 - Steep access ramps
 - Ill defined pedestrian/cycle route from subway to supermarket
 - No access by bicycle from town centre to railway station

3.11 SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) Analysis of Active Travel in the Fort William area

Strengths	Weaknesses
<p>Flat terrain to Banavie, Corpach and Caol from Fort William Area is known nationally and internationally for mountain biking</p> <p>Large numbers of visitors specifically come to the area for recreational walking and cycling</p> <p>Attractive, pedestrianised town centre with good quality cycle parking</p> <p>High quality cycle route to Torlundy/Aonach Mor</p> <p>Relatively high levels of walking and cycling to work</p> <p>Good quality bike shops</p> <p>Good network of pedestrian footways</p> <p>Fort William Waterfront Master Plan recognises importance of creating high quality pedestrian and cyclist environment</p>	<p>Steep terrain in Fort William</p> <p>Relatively wet weather</p> <p>Poor quality cycle parking at a number of main trip generators outside of town centre</p> <p>No signing of cycle routes</p> <p>Poor orientation from bus station/railway station to town centre</p> <p>Poor connectivity from end of Great Glen Way to town centre</p> <p>Volume and speed of traffic on A82</p>
Opportunities	Threats
<p>Development of long distance cycle route from Oban to Fort William</p> <p>Build on tradition of recreational walking and Cycling Improve existing Great Glen Way to encourage more utility trips</p> <p>A number of large scale residential and commercial developments are in progress and could make a positive contribution to active travel infrastructure</p> <p>Existing network of cycle enthusiasts to help promote cycling</p>	<p>Lack of provision for pedestrians and cyclists in new developments</p> <p>Potentially wetter and more unpredictable weather as a result of climate change</p> <p>Lack of funding and drive to improve/ build active travel infrastructure</p>

4 Potential Fort William Area Active Travel Network

4.1 Introduction

4.1.1 The active travel audit identified potential walking and cycling routes that could link residential areas to the main trip generators and attractors to form a strategic network for the area. The main trip generators are:

- The Belford Hospital
- Railway and Bus Station with adjacent supermarket
- Fort William Town Centre
- Health Centre/Lochaber High School
- Lochaber Leisure Centre
- Torlundy/Nevis Range
- Great Glen Way
- West Highland Way
- Ben Nevis Industrial Estate
- Residential and industrial areas in Corpach
- Caol
- Banavie
- Blar Mhor and Ben Nevis Industrial Estates
- British Alcan
- Lochaber College

4.1.2 The study has developed a set of long term objectives for encouraging walking and cycling as follows:

Objective 1: Develop a high quality spine route for walking and cycling through the Fort William area

Objective 2: Create an Active Travel Task Force to spearhead the development of walking and cycling routes and secure funding from as many sources as possible

Objective 3: Work with local businesses to improve trip end facilities to encourage commuter walking and cycling

Objective 4: Improve pedestrian and cycle links between retail area/public transport interchange and town centre

- 4.1.3 The focus of the network is the existing routes in the flatter parts of the study area, namely the route out to Caol, Corpach and Banavie via Inverlochy. There are no proposals in the Strategic Transport Review to relieve the congestion in the town so the transfer of short local journeys currently made by car, to walking and cycling could have a very beneficial effect in terms of reduced congestion, reduced CO2 emissions, reduced noise pollution as well as the many health benefits associated with being physically active. As shown in Chapter 2, the majority of journeys to work in the area are less than 5km – an ideal distance for cycling.
- 4.1.4 Clearly, the relatively wet weather will be a difficult hurdle to overcome when promoting walking and cycling, but despite this, existing levels of cycling are over three times the national average and twice the average for the Highlands. The provision of good quality trip end facilities will be need to be a major element of a walking and cycling strategy. Businesses will need to be encouraged to supply, covered bicycle storage areas, drying areas for wet clothes as well as showering and changing facilities.

4.2 Active Travel Network

- 4.2.1 The following corridors have been identified as having the potential to provide the most direct and coherent network of routes to the destinations listed in 4.1.1. The routes are:

- Fort William Spine Route
- Torlundy Spur
- Caol Links
- Outer Orbital Route
- College Link
- Town Centre Links (pedestrian only)
- Puggy Line Link

- 4.2.2 A full description of the routes with suggested improvements subject to consultation, feasibility and design are included in Appendix 1 of this report. The action plan in the following sections identifies the key priorities in the development of the aforementioned routes along with 'softer' initiatives to encourage active travel in the area. Figure A-3 in Appendix A shows the extent of the potential Active Travel Network in relation to the Local Plan.

5 Prioritised Action Plan

5.1 The Priorities

5.1.1 This prioritised Active Travel Plan sets out the key measures needed to encourage walking and cycling in the Fort William area. As well as incorporating parts of the strategic walking and cycling network, it also includes promotion and ‘soft’ measures which form part of a package of works which have been used successfully in those towns and cities where there has been an increase in sustainable modes.

5.1.2 The following measures are the key priorities for encouraging active travel in and around Fort William:

Priority 1: Route Signing Strategy

Priority 2: Establish Fort William Active Travel Action Group

Priority 3: Fort William Spine Route

Priority 4: Caol Links

Priority 5: College Link

Priority 6: Outer Orbital Route

5.1.3 Each of these individual priorities are summarised below and form part of the wider Fort William Area Active Travel Network outlined in chapter 4.

5.2 Priority 1 Recommendation: Route Signing Strategy

5.2.1 The shared use walking and cycling route to Torlundy implemented by Transport Scotland is an excellent route that provides a traffic free route to the Nevis Range from Fort William. Unfortunately, without local knowledge, the route is very difficult to find, although there is destination signing at Victoria Bridge and Torlundy. Similarly, although the route of the Great Glen Way connects Banavie, Caol and Corpach to Fort William and is well signed using the Great Glen Way branding, there is no destination or distance signing for pedestrians and cyclists in the local area.

5.2.2 Providing destination signing with distances is not only an obvious tool to aid wayfinding, but is also a way to promote and publicise walking and cycling routes. It should not be taken for granted that local people ‘know’ where routes go or what routes are available. If people don’t normally walk or cycle they are less likely to know that it is possible to access local areas without using main roads. Destination signing is relatively inexpensive and is a ‘quick win’ in terms of developing a local walking and cycling network.

5.2.3 The recommendations are summarised below in Table 5-1.

Table 5-1: Priority 1 Recommendations Summary Table – Route Signing Strategy

Description

- Provide signing to Corpach, Banavie, Caol and Torlundy from Fort William

Issues for consideration

- Route signing could incorporate branding for the Great Glen Way



Figure 5.1: Uncoordinated destination signing in Fort William



Figure 5.2: Destination signing on cycle route is incomplete

5.3 Priority 2 Recommendation: Establish Fort William Active Travel Action Group

- 5.3.1 Fort William is in the fortunate position of already having a positive identity with regards to outdoors activities, especially cycling. Many people who visit or live in the area, do so specifically to take advantage of the facilities for recreational walking and cycling, so much so that Fort William has been able to brand itself as the ‘Outdoor Capital of the UK’. The outstanding reputation of Fort William as a world class centre for mountain biking has brought with it many individuals who are active in promoting cycling, not only for leisure but also for transport as shown by the promotional activities carried out by local bicycle shops and the Fort William Wheelers. The website www.ridefortwilliam.co.uk is an example of how groups in the area have taken the initiative to work together to promote cycling. It is proposed that these existing partnerships are strengthened, expanded and formalised to enable a wider range of promotional and route building activities to take place.
- 5.3.2 The existing groups and individuals would be advised to create a constituted partnership to promote active travel which can then take ownership of a long term strategic approach to develop walking and cycling in the area. One of the priorities for action for the group should be the development of trip end facilities at major employers in the area and main trip generators and attractors. The group could work with Cycling Scotland to promote the Cycle Friendly Employers Award which can incentivise businesses to improve storage

and changing facilities for people who walk and cycle (especially in wet weather) but also help develop an understanding of the fiscal benefits of having a fitter workforce with less onus on carbon heavy transport.

- 5.3.3 An independent group also has the added advantage of being able to access funding from a range of sources unavailable to the Local Authority. For example, community groups are currently eligible to apply for a number of grants such as: Awards for All, Climate Challenge Fund, Scotland Rural Development Fund, the Community Cycling Innovation Fund and Landfill Communities Funding.
- 5.3.4 In addition, if such a group were established, it could be considered as a statutory consultee with regards to planning applications to ensure the needs of pedestrians and cyclists are considered from the outset in any new developments. There are several large scale proposals in the pipeline that have the potential to incorporate significant improvements for pedestrians and cyclists: new housing at Caol which could help to improve the existing route to Blar Mhor Industrial Estate and the waterfront development which could significantly improve connectivity to the town centre. The group can help elevate the profile of vulnerable road users within these developments and ensure the proposed infrastructure is of sufficient quality to encourage modal shift.
- 5.3.5 Another function of the group could be to work with Transport Scotland to improve conditions for pedestrians and cyclists on the A82 in Fort William (see Priority 5 Recommendation.) The recommendations are summarised below in Table 5-2.

Table 5-2: Priority 2 Recommendations Summary Table – Fort William Active Travel Action

Group
Description
<p>Create a multi-agency partnership to promote walking and cycling and access funding</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider making the group a consultee with regards to planning applications
Issues for consideration
<p>Businesses may be hindered from providing facilities for pedestrians and cyclists by budget constraints</p> <p>Training may be required to help the group make informed decisions with regards to planning applications</p>

5.4 Priority 3 Recommendations: Fort William Spine Route

- 5.4.1 The main priority for the development of walking and cycling in the Fort William area should be the improvement of the existing route of the Great Glen Way from Corpach to Fort William town centre. A large part of the route is already in place and is already well used both by long distance walkers and local people and as the route is largely flat and has a number of traffic free sections, it has the potential to be a high quality, well used route. The improvements required are focussed on specific locations outlined below in Table 5-3 and in Appendix A.

Table 5-3: Priority 3 Recommendations Summary Table – Fort William Spine Route

Description

Improve the quality of the existing route of the Great Glen Way from Corpach to Fort William

Issues for consideration

Support for any proposals from the Great Glen Way Route Manager is imperative

- Needs of local community and Great Glen Way users must be balanced
- Signing of the existing route is vital

Recommended Intervention (subject to feasibility and design)

Corpach

Consider improving the quality of the route surface along the southern side of the canal from Station Road to the existing traffic free route to Caol, especially from Station Road to the locks.

Caol

Consider supplementing the existing traffic calmed Erracht Drive/Glenmallie Road with a 20mph speed limit

Provide flush dropped crossings with tactile paving on Erracht Drive/Glenmallie Road and access to shopping centre

Note: during the audit a new traffic free path along Erracht Drive was being constructed. The path was approximately 1.2m wide which may cause conflict between pedestrians and cyclists in the future.

Consider the removal of the centre line on Lochyside Road³

Resurface section of carriageway where there are advisory cycle lanes and re-line Diag 1004 showing extent of cycle lanes

Provide flush dropped crossings with tactile paving at side roads on Lochyside Road

Improve bus stop facilities at Lochyside Primary School where people currently alight onto carriageway

³ See Appendix B for case studies on centre line removal

Soldier's Bridge and Black Park

Investigate the potential to provide a new, wider bridge to accommodate pedestrians and cyclists and access ramps suitable for wheelchair users

Improve drainage on carriageway through Black Park

Inverlochy

Consider the implementation of a 20mph zone on Wades Road and Lochiel Road and improve condition of carriageway

Consider junction improvements at Wades Road/Montrose Avenue to aid cyclist and pedestrian movements with improved footway provision to local shops

Provide flush dropped crossings with tactile paving at side roads on Wades Road and Lochiel Road

Camanachd Crescent

Investigate options for providing for cyclists on Camanachd Crescent from 20mph zone to Macfarlane Way

Undertake preliminary design of a shared use footway/cycle track on Macfarlane Way from Camanachd Crescent between bus and train stations to existing underpass to town centre, utilising existing footways where feasible

A82 Underpass

Improve lighting and aesthetics of underpass

Investigate options for improving gradients of ramps for wheelchair users including the provision of an at grade crossing

Pedestrianised High Street

Consider removal of cyclist restrictions outside peak hours (10am to 4pm) to aid commuter cyclists following consultation and possible trial

High Street (West)

Improve pedestrian and cyclist linkages between the pedestrianised zone and High Street

Consider the provision of facilities to encourage cycling such as on road cycle lanes

Achintore Road

Provide flush dropped crossings and tactile paving at the roundabout at Achintore Road/High Street

Investigate options for providing for cyclists on Achintore Road and the roundabout to access High Street

Provide flush dropped crossings and tactile paving at all side roads

5.5 Priority 4 Recommendation: Caol Links

- 5.5.1 After the creation of a high quality spine route, connecting links in the Caol area should then be created. The potential links in Caol would create a network of routes linking to Blar Mhor Industrial Estate, Lochaber High School, Banavie train station and the local shops, primary school, and library. Caol is relatively flat and is bordered to the north and south by existing cycle routes and has good links to recreational cycling on the canal.
- 5.5.2 The implementation of the links in Caol is based on improving a number of existing routes, specifically the access barriers on Moor Road, connectivity between Blar Mnor Road and Torlundy Road and investigating ways to make Kilmallie Road more attractive to cyclists.
- 5.5.3 The most ambitious proposal would be to upgrade the existing route from Moor Road and Castle Drive to Blar Mhor Industrial Estate. This route is important as it has the potential to become a mostly traffic free route from Caol to the high school. There are currently proposals to build houses in this area and the improvements could be delivered as part of planning gain, or if this is not possible, the line of the route preserved for implementation in the future.
- 5.5.4 The recommendations are summarised below in Table 5-4 and in Appendix A

Table 5-4: Priority 4 Recommendations Summary Table – Caol Links

Description

- Create a network of routes in the Caol area to link to local services and the existing active travel routes

Issues for consideration

Kilmallie Road is a bus route

- Local Plan has outlined a new road in the area
- There are proposals to build 300 new homes in the area south of the railway line

Recommended Intervention (subject to feasibility and design)

Consider the provision of a signed route from A830 to Kilmallie Road via Torlundy Road/Blar Mhor

Road/MacKay Crescent and Ardgour Road, improving the no through section at Torlundy Road for Cyclists

Investigate options for improving Kilmallie Road for cyclists

Improve pedestrian and cyclist access to local shops at Glenloy Street

Improve the access barriers on Moor Road to allow access to cyclists/pushchairs/wheelchair users whilst preventing through traffic

Work with developers to ensure the route from Moor Road/Castle Drive is either implemented or preserved

5.6 Priority 5 Recommendation: College Link

- 5.6.1 Lochaber College is part of the University of Highlands and Islands, one of five campus's in Lochaber serving a total of over 1000 students. Access to the college without a car is via an informal route through the supermarket car park to Carmichael Way. An underwater training centre is also located on the same campus as well as the Fort William and Ballachulish Registration Office. Access for cyclists is via the busy roundabout which is the main vehicle access to the supermarket. A number of signs for the Great Glen Way are also erected directing people across the supermarket car park, a rather ignominious route for a high profile tourist attraction.
- 5.6.2 Potentially, this is a very difficult link to implement as any improvements to pedestrian and cyclist routes to Carmichael Way will need to be negotiated with a number of landowners, especially the supermarket. The supermarket car park is well used and it is unlikely the owners will support proposals that involve the loss of car parking spaces. However, there is still a need to investigate and pursue a safe walking and cycling route to the services in Carmichael Way.
- 5.6.3 In addition there is access to a traffic free walking and cycling route which currently ends behind the fast food restaurant. An improved walking and cycling route to the college would also improve connectivity to this section of route.
- 5.6.4 The recommendations are summarised below in Table 5-5 and in Appendix A.

Table 5-5: Priority 5 Recommendations Summary Table – College Link

Description

- Investigate the provision of a walking and cycling route from the bus station/train station/Fort William Spine Route to Carmichael Way

Issues for consideration

- Any new route would be dependant on co-operation with landowners in the area
- Pedestrian and cyclist crossing points required at roundabout
- New route could also form part of the Great Glen Way

Recommended Intervention (subject to feasibility and design)

Work with all interested parties to determine solutions for an improved route from bus station/train station to Carmichael Way

Improve crossing points on roundabout with consideration for cyclists

Consider provision of shared use footway/cycle tracks on Carmichael Way

Improve access to the existing traffic free route and improve sections of track that have deteriorated

5.7 Priority 6 Recommendation: Outer Orbital Route

- 5.7.1 The Outer Orbital Route (OOR) is essentially the route of the A830 and A82 in the study area which links Corpach, Banavie, the high school and health centre, British Alcan, the swimming pool/leisure centre and Belford Hospital. The route from Lochaber High School to Banavie Station already has shared use footways on both sides of the main road, although they are in need of some routine maintenance such as sweeping and cutting back of vegetation. The A830 and A82 are trunk roads and are the responsibility of Transport Scotland, hence any proposals that affect these roads would need to be developed in close consultation with Transport Scotland and approved by them.
- 5.7.2 Solutions to improve safety and journey attractiveness in the built up area of Fort William where there is a 30mph limit will be more difficult to find. Based on design guidance, pedestrians and cyclists should be segregated from general traffic here as there are more than 10,000 vehicles a day, however, there are limited opportunities for providing traffic free routes such as widening footways.
- 5.7.3 A summary of the potential recommendations are shown below in Table 5-5 and Appendix 1, however, any proposals will need to be developed with Transport Scotland and they should be engaged at the earliest opportunity prior to any work on developing proposals.

Table 5-6: Priority 6 Recommendations Summary Table – Outer Orbital Route (OOR)

Description

- Work with Transport Scotland to develop safe walking and cycling routes on the A830 and A82

Issues for consideration

Traffic volumes on Belford Road and North Road suggest that segregated facilities are necessary

- Maintenance regimes for existing and new infrastructure need to be in place

Recommended Intervention (subject to feasibility and design)

Corpach and Banavie

Investigate the potential to use existing footway on the northern side of the A830 as a shared use footway and cycle track with localised widenings and crossing points at Corpach shops and Banavie Primary School

Existing cycle tracks on A830

Provide regular maintenance to sweep tracks and cut back vegetation

Consider provision of improved cycle track crossing at entrance to Blar Mhor Industrial Estate

Lochaber High School/health centre

Extend the existing shared use footway/cycle track from the junction of the health centre and high school to the A82 and improve the crossing facilities at the junction

A82 (A830 to Inverlochy junction)

Investigate potential to provide a shared use footway on the eastern side of the carriageway with crossing point at British Alcan

Inverlochy junction

Improve junction for pedestrians and cyclists

A82 (Inverlochy junction to High Street)

Investigate ways of improving the safety and journey experience of pedestrians and cyclists maintaining access to leisure centre and Belford Hospital

6 Conclusions

- 6.1.1 The terrain and relatively wet weather in the study area will make the challenge of increasing walking and cycling more difficult. Despite this, there are already relatively high levels of active travel for journeys to work and in addition, there is support from the community in improving the infrastructure in the town to make walking and cycling safer and more attractive.
- 6.1.2 There are two key priorities identified within this report: the first is to amalgamate existing groups and individuals into a formal group who are able to vigorously drive forward an active travel strategy for the area, including writing funding bids. There is a great deal of funding available to community groups, especially for projects that encourage walking and cycling as the potential outcomes target a considerable number of cross cutting themes such as health, environment, carbon reduction and social exclusion.
- 6.1.3 The second priority relates to the existing infrastructure for pedestrians and cyclists, much of which is of good quality and well used. The top priority is to carry out a comprehensive signing scheme on the Fort William spine route and route out to Torlundy and the second is to target and improve a number of sections on the route. Much of the spine route is part of the Great Glen Way and the signing and improvements must support the long term aims and objectives of this important tourist attraction which is of great importance to the local economy in the Highlands.
- 6.1.4 In addition, as the proposals for the Fort William Masterplan develop, it is imperative that the needs of pedestrians and cyclists are considered from the outset to ensure its objectives are realised and the over dominance of vehicle traffic in the town is addressed.