

Inner Moray Firth Active Travel Network Planning

October 2021



ARUP





Introduction



Arup was commissioned by HITRANS, the Highlands and Islands Transport Partnership, to identify a future active travel network connecting the main settlements within the Inner Moray Firth (IMF) Region. A network has been identified, informed through extensive desktop review work, site audits and stakeholder engagement.

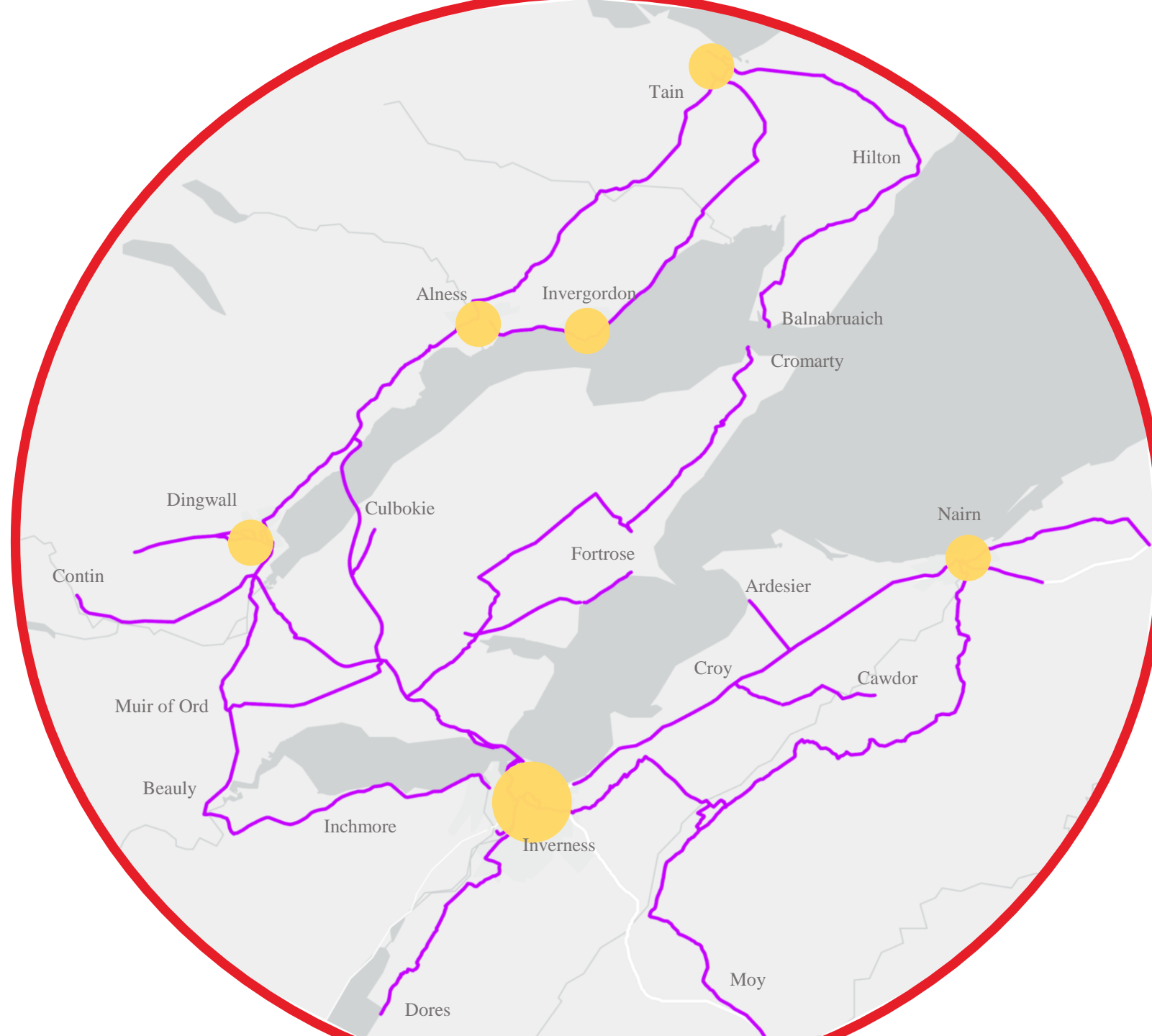
Delivery of the network will provide significant new opportunities for enabling walking, wheeling and cycling within the region, connecting smaller and larger settlements with shared services and improving existing commuting, everyday and recreational trips between them.

A record of the desktop review and site audit work can be found within the masterplan reports. The stakeholder engagement work that was carried out to inform the network can be found in Appendix A.

This network is subject to further feasibility and consultation work, which will include the assessment of topographic surveys, public utilities, land ownership, planning and environmental constraints, traffic data and further stakeholder engagement. It is expected that this network would be supported by a network of local active travel routes within settlements and on quieter roads.

The Network

-  IMF Active Travel Network
-  Active Travel Masterplan Areas
(see list of local masterplans below)



Local Masterplans

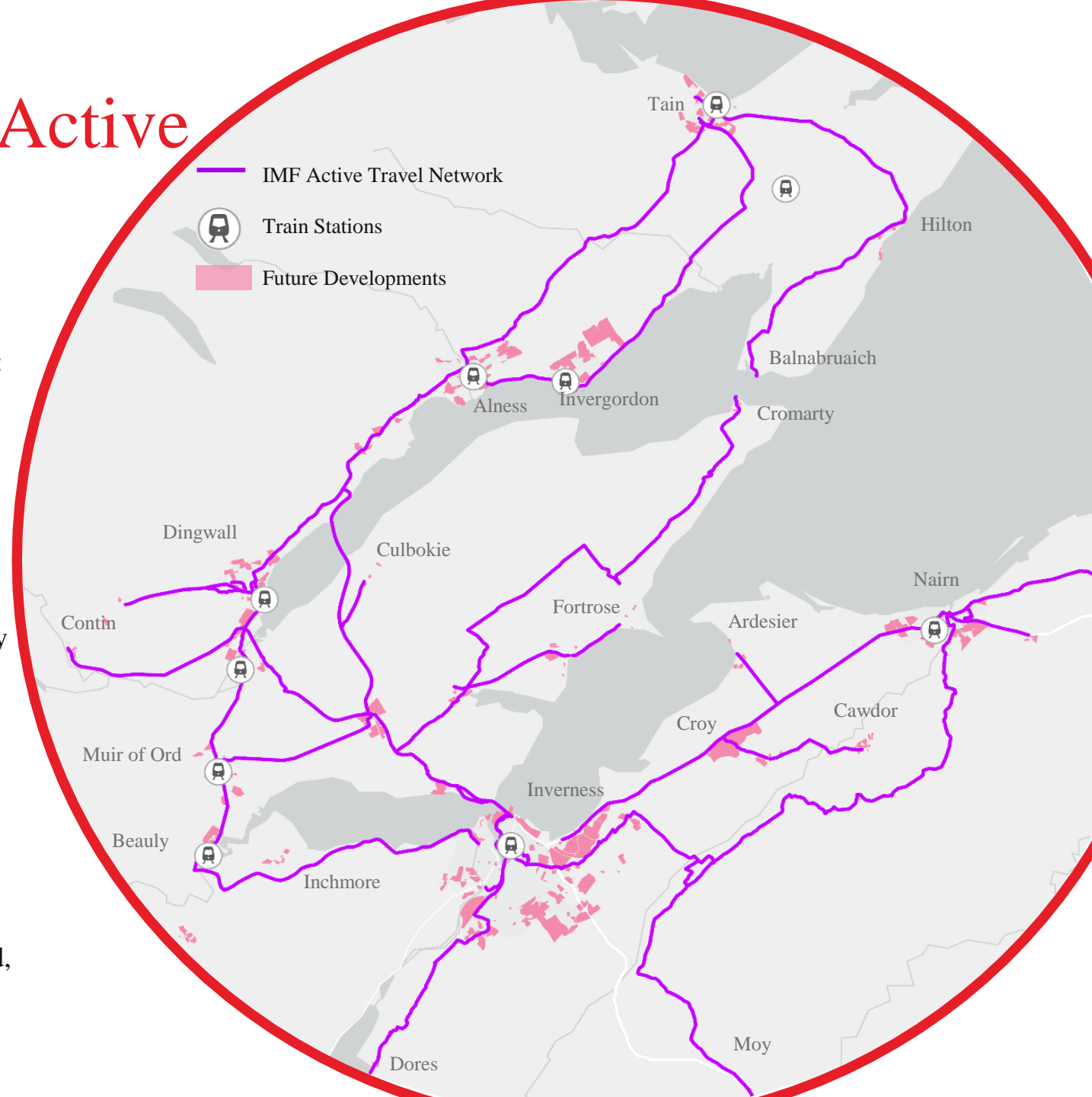
- Nairn Active Travel Masterplan
- Inverness Active Travel Masterplan
- Dingwall Active Travel Masterplan
- Alness & Invergordon Active Travel Masterplan
- Tain Active Travel Masterplan

Why Develop a Regional Active Travel Network?

The IMF connecting Active Travel Network, if delivered, would provide a network of walking, wheeling and cycling routes that connect places, key attractors and public transport hubs for multimodal journeys. The importance of this is summarised below:

- To connect smaller settlements with larger settlements which they rely on for a variety of services, including healthcare, education, employment, retail etc.
- To create walking, wheeling and cycling routes to public transport hubs so people can adopt sustainable multimodal options for longer journeys which are less likely to be walked, wheeled or cycled.
- To reduce the reliance on vehicles associated with future developments by ensuring people have options to travel actively and sustainably for everyday journeys ideally from the outset.
- To reduce inequalities related to transport by providing safe, affordable options for travelling through walking, wheeling and cycling.
- To create safe routes to school to promote active travel among younger generations and reduce congestion around schools.
- To encourage physical activity for all abilities and ages to improve physical and mental health.

The adjacent map provides a snapshot of the data and information reviewed to assess the need for places and services to be connected, more details on this can be found within Appendix B.



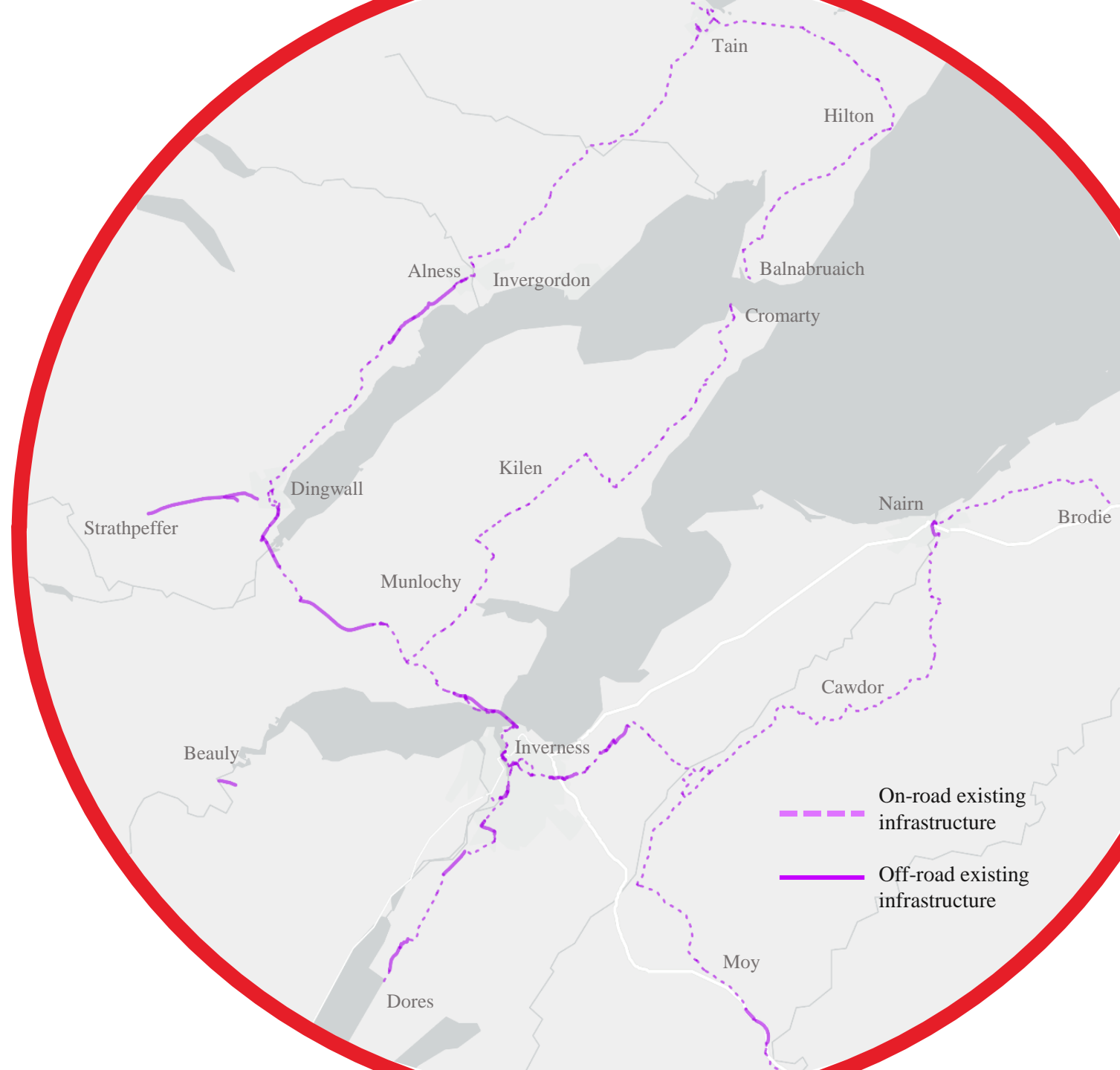
Existing Routes

Existing active travel routes across the IMF primarily consist of the National Cycle Network (NCN) Route 1, which is a combination of on-road and off-road active travel infrastructure.

Off-road routes are typically found around urban areas such as Inverness, Nairn and Dingwall. These routes are typically shared footway/cycleways adjacent to the carriageway or detached shared use paths not adjacent to motor traffic.

On-road infrastructure is generally located within rural areas of the IMF such as Cromarty and Balmuchy. These routes are typically rural roads with low traffic volumes and residential streets with NCN directional signage.

It is proposed that minor improvements be made to the off-road infrastructure including improved signage, resurfacing and warnings to vehicles to be aware of pedestrians and cyclists. Any improvements should meet Transport Scotland's [Cycling by Design guidance](#).



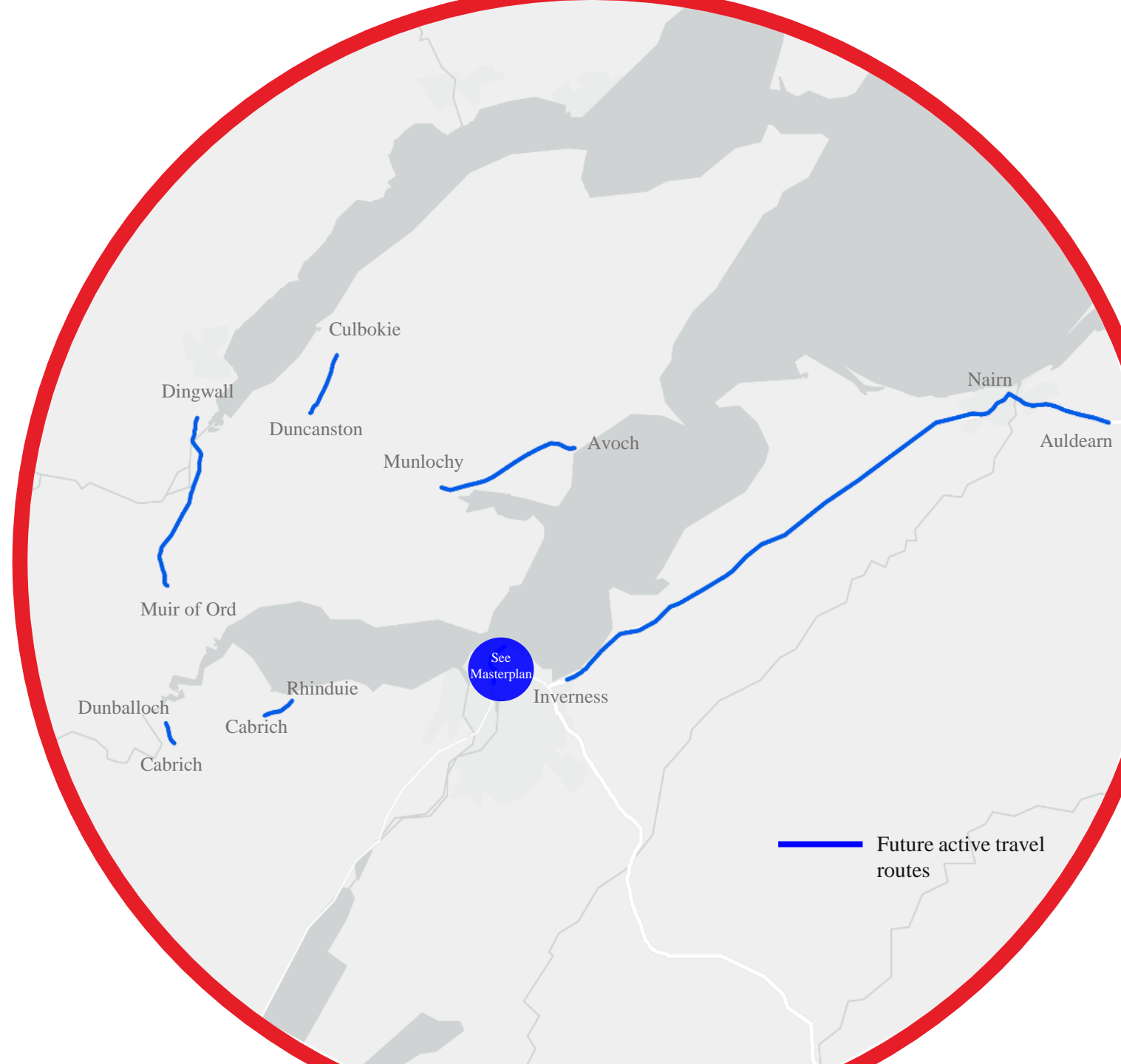
Committed Routes

There are numerous active travel routes across the IMF being progressed by active travel partners, which will connect key towns with rural settlements and support the delivery of an IMF active travel network.

There are active travel routes being delivered through the Sustrans Scotland Places for Everyone scheme, including Avoch to Mulochy, Culbokie to Duncanston and Inchmore to Rhinduie. Other Sustrans funded projects include the Muir of Ord to Conon Bridge feasibility study.

In addition, active travel improvements are being delivered as part of the A96 dualling scheme between Inverness and Nairn, which will satisfy a long-term desire for active travel connectivity between these places.

There are also various active and sustainable travel projects being delivered within the Inverness city region, which will have a strategic impact across the IMF, see the Inverness Active Travel Masterplan for more detail.



Desired Routes

There are numerous desired active travel routes that have been identified through this network planning exercise, which included desktop research, virtual site audits and stakeholder and community engagement.






Desired routes link rural settlements across the IMF, whilst also connecting surrounding settlements with the main towns and cities within the region.

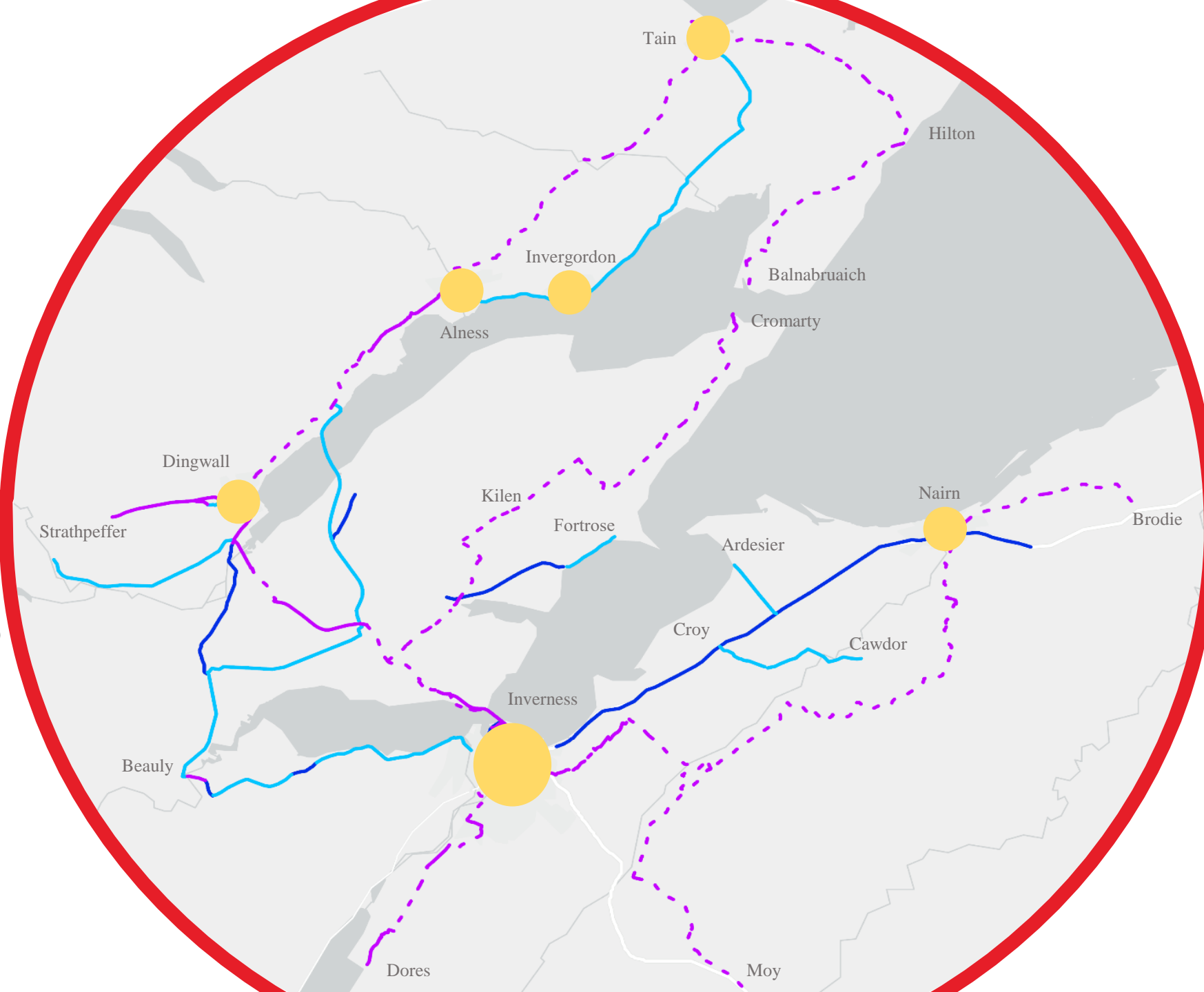
These routes also link with ongoing active travel projects being delivered by key partners. The routes also aim to complement the proposals that form part of the active travel masterplans developed for the main towns and cities across the IMF.

Additional routes were explored, however these were considered to primarily be long distance leisure routes and have not been included in the network, these routes have been identified in Appendix B. Please also see the Active Travel Masterplans for desired routes within Nairn, Inverness, Dingwall, Invergordon & Alness and Tain, [click here for links](#).



The Network

-  On-road existing infrastructure
-  Off-road existing infrastructure
-  Committed active travel routes
-  Desired active travel routes
-  Active Travel Masterplan Areas (to see local masterplans [click here](#))





Summary

The IMF active travel network has been developed through consideration of existing infrastructure and ongoing active travel projects being delivered across the region.

The network strives to facilitate more walking, wheeling and cycling opportunities and ensure strategic, continuous active travel connectivity across the region through linking cities, towns and rural settlements.

It is considered that the delivery of this network and other active travel improvements across the region will help facilitate a shift towards more active and sustainable modes by providing safer and more convenient options. The infrastructure improvements alongside marketing and promotional campaigns for behavioural change initiatives has the potential to transform travel behaviour across the IMF.

Appendix A

Public Engagement Responses



[View Comments](#)

Appendix B

Network Decision Making Note

Subject IMF Strategic Network

Date 24 September 2021

Job No/Ref 279859-00

1 Introduction

This short note sets out some of the decision making and thinking behind the development of the Inner Moray Firth (IMF) Strategic Network. The following datasets and aspects of the region were considered in the process of developing the network:

- The reliance of smaller areas on larger settlements for a variety of services.
- The location of public transport hubs, in particular train stations, to promote sustainable multi-modal journeys.
- The location of future development sites identified within the IMF Local Development Plan (LDP).
- The condition of roads that are desire lines for active travel users, based on the responses from the public engagement.
- The condition of existing infrastructure, such as the National Cycle Network (NCN), and recommended improvements.

The purpose of the network is to enable walking, wheeling and cycling within the region. Connecting smaller and larger settlements with shared services and improving existing commuting, everyday and recreational trips between them. There were a number of routes explored that were considered to be longer-distance, leisure routes that would therefore not fit the purpose of the network. It is proposed that these be brought forward as individual projects with more of a focus on tourism and leisure, these routes have been identified within Section 7.

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2 Shared Services

The IMF region is located within the Scottish Highlands and therefore contains a lot of smaller, rural settlements that are reliant on larger settlements for services. Below is a list of the larger settlements, their key services and the smaller settlements reliant on them.

2.1 Inverness

The key services within Inverness are listed below:

- Public transport hubs at Inverness Train Station and Bus Station.
- Key employment area with a mix of different types of employment.
- Education, see below the catchments (Figure 1 and Figure 2) for schools within Inverness.
- Healthcare at Raigmore Hospital, New Craigs Hospital, The Royal Northern Infirmary and numerous medical practices.
- Retail opportunities within the centre of Inverness, as well as Inshes Retail Park and Inverness Shopping Centre.
- Leisure and entertainment facilities, such as Inverness Leisure.

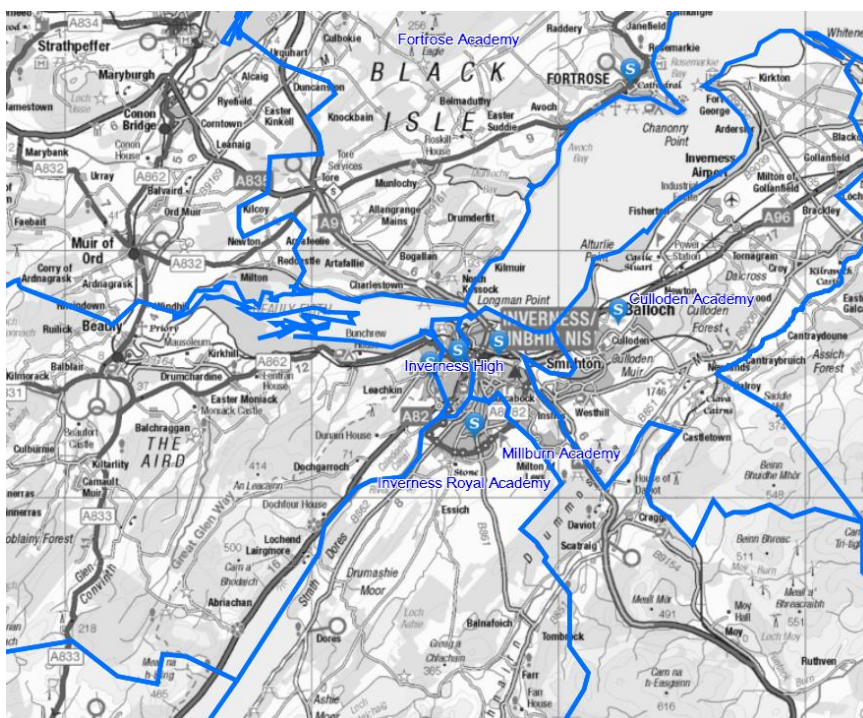


Figure 1- Inverness Secondary School Catchments (©Highland Council)

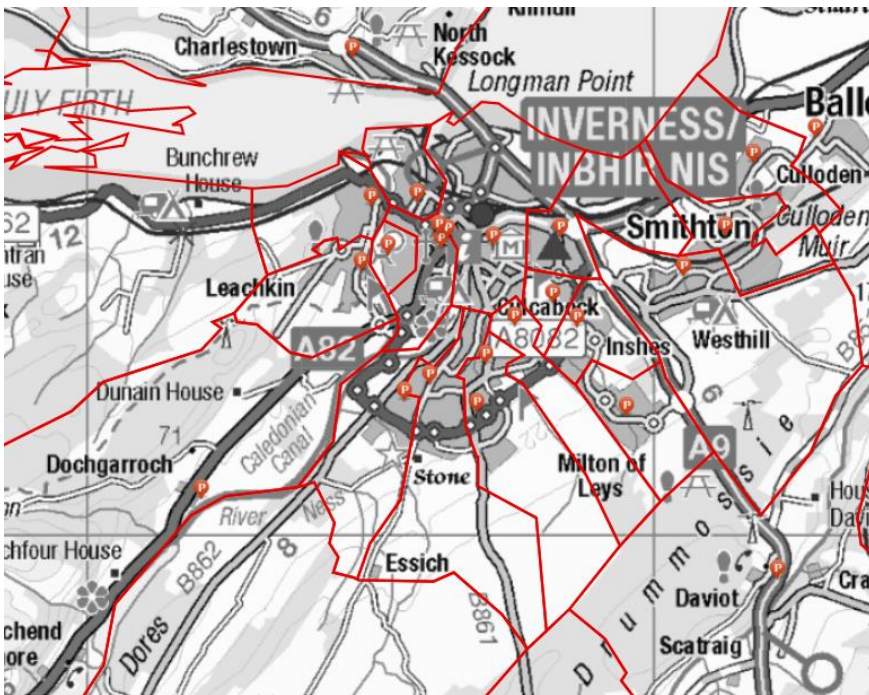


Figure 2 - Inverness Primary School Catchments (©Highland Council)

The smaller settlements reliant on Inverness includes:

Inverness is the largest settlement within the Highlands and the only city, it therefore will attract trips from areas throughout the region of IMF.

2.2 Nairn

The key services within Nairn are listed below:

- Public transport hubs at Nairn Train Station and Bus Station.
- Key employment area with a mix of different types of employment.
- Education, see below the catchments (Figure 3 and Figure 4) for schools within Nairn.
- Healthcare at Nairn Town and County Hospital.
- Retail opportunities within the Nairn High Street.
- Leisure and entertainment facilities, such as Nairn Beach and Lochloy Holiday Park.

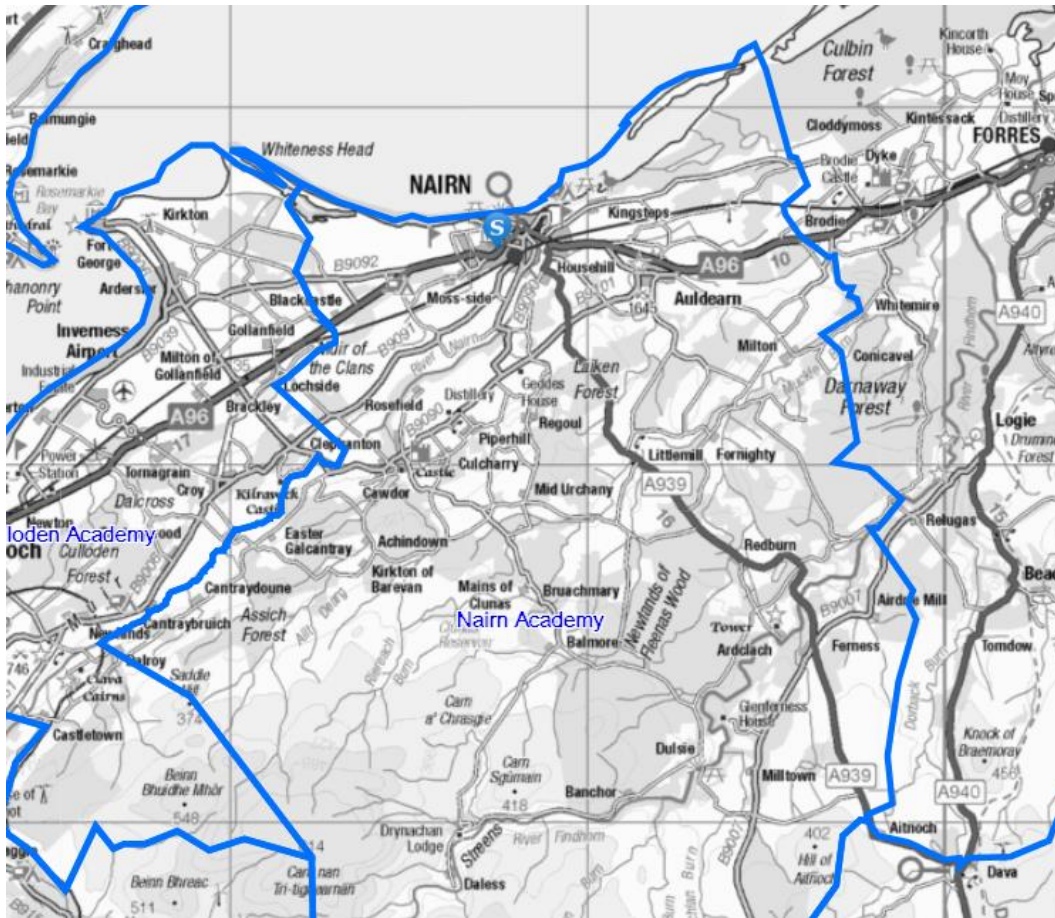


Figure 3 - Nairn Secondary School Catchment (©Highland Council)

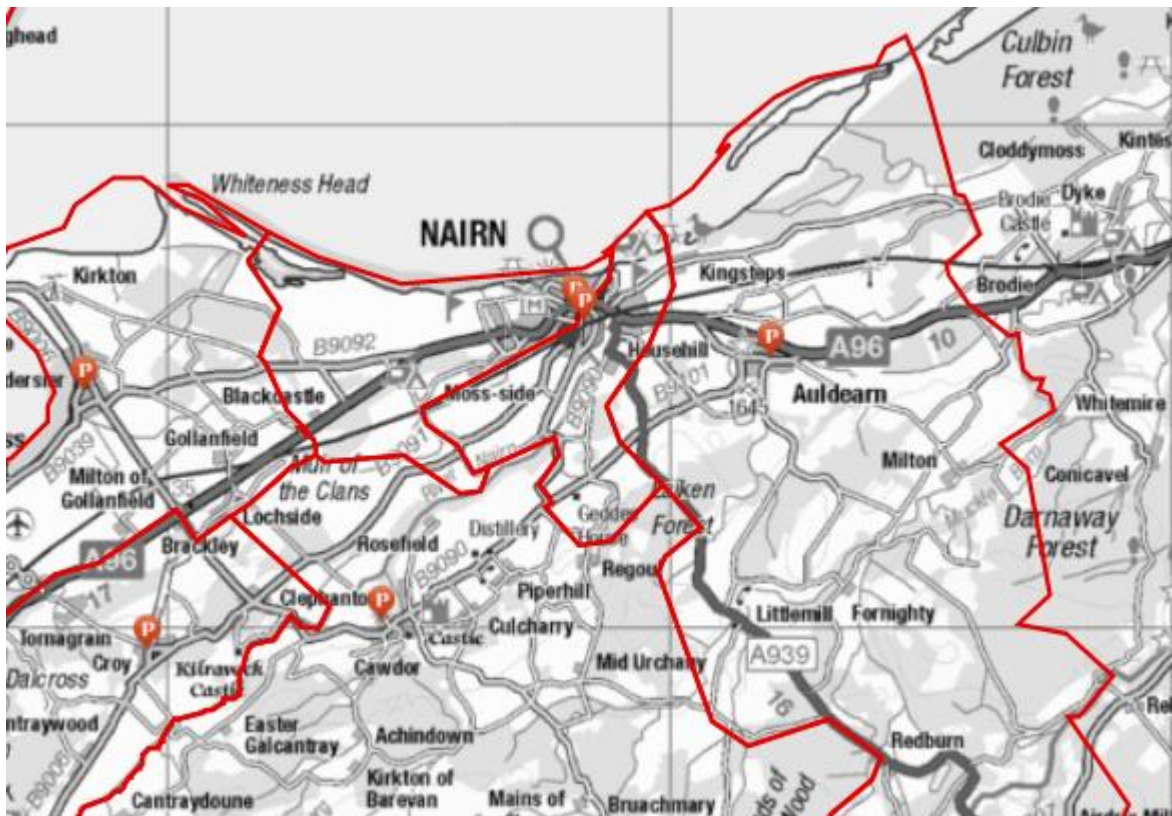


Figure 4 - Nairn Primary School Catchment (©Highland Council)

The smaller settlements reliant on Nairn includes:

- Auldearn
- Milton
- Cawdor
- Ardesier
- Croy
- Piperhill
- Littlemill

2.3 Dingwall

The key services within Dingwall are listed below:

- Public transport hub at Dingwall Train Station.
- Key employment area with predominantly industrial/business parks.
- Education, see below the catchments (Figure 5 and Figure 6) for schools within Dingwall.
- Healthcare at Ross Memorial Hospital.
- Retail opportunities within the Dingwall High Street and supermarkets.

- Leisure and entertainment facilities, such as Ross County Stadium.

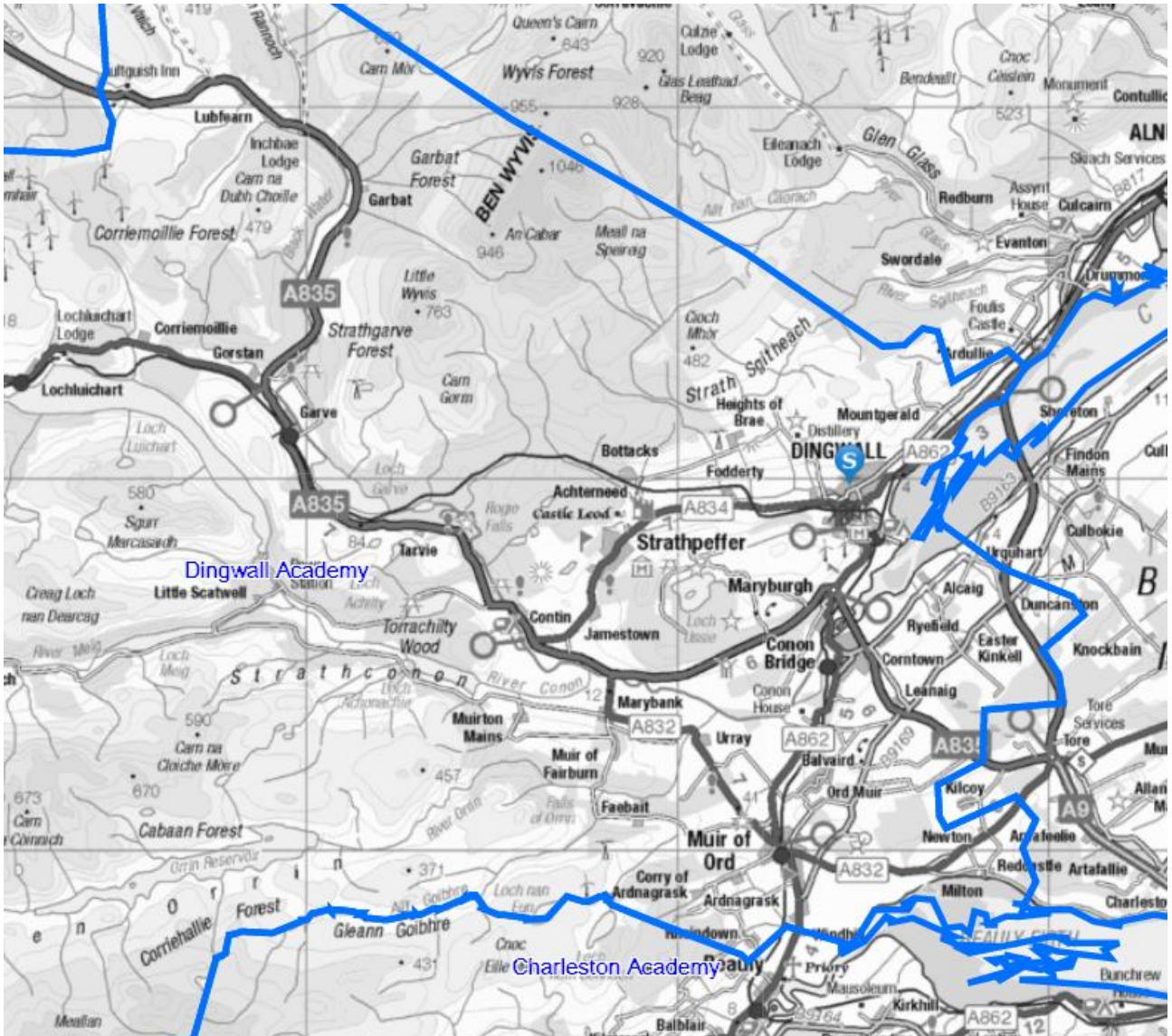


Figure 5 - Dingwall Secondary School Catchment (©Highland Council)

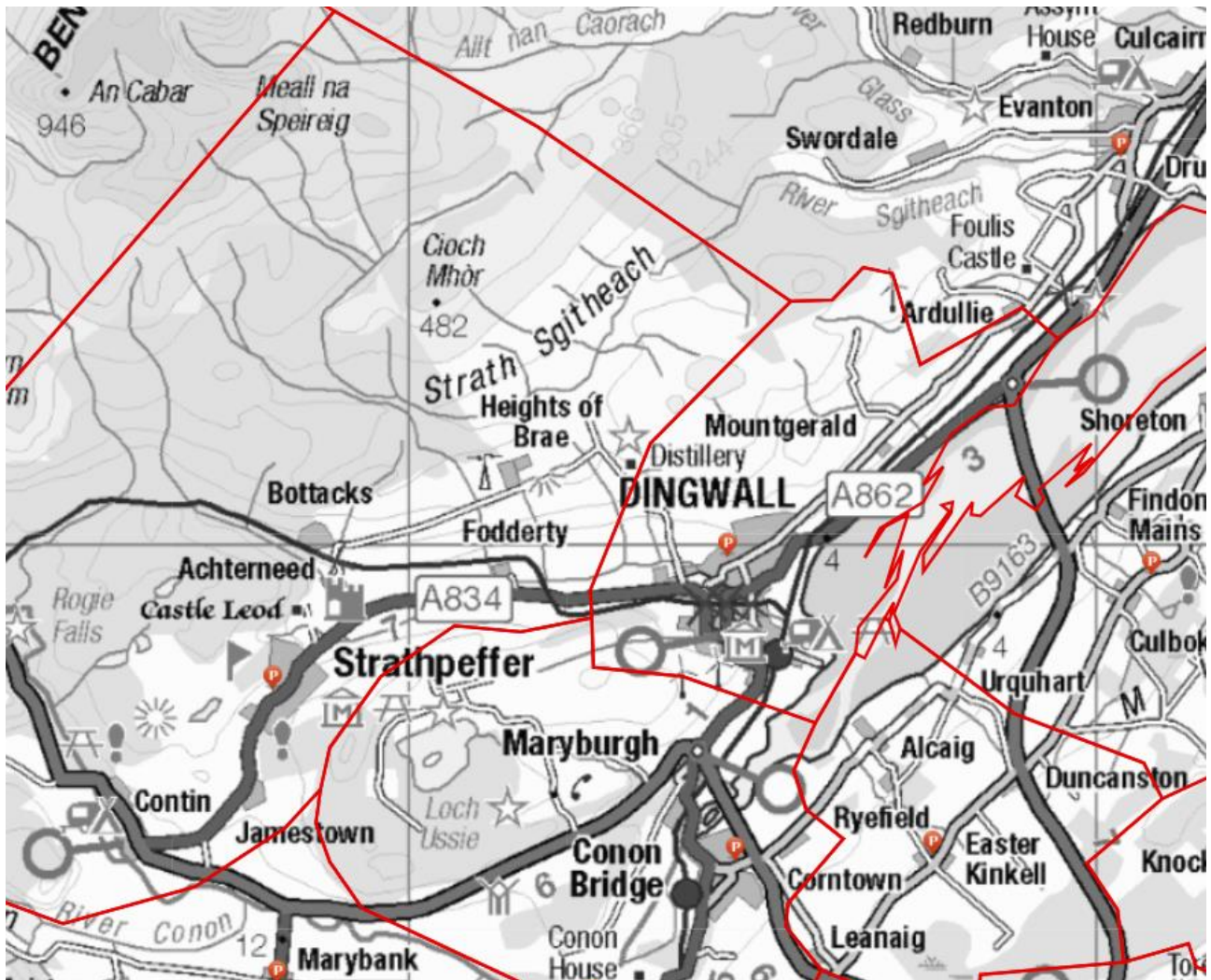


Figure 6 - Dingwall Primary School Catchments (©Highland Council)

The smaller settlements reliant on Dingwall includes:

- Maryburgh
- Strathpeffer
- Jamestown
- Contin
- Marybank
- Conon Bridge
- Muir of Ord
- Evanton

2.4 Alness & Invergordon

The key services within Alness and Invergordon are listed below:

- Public transport hubs at Alness and Invergordon Train Stations.

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- Key employment areas with mix of different types of employment.
- Education, see below the catchments (Figure 7 and Figure 8) for schools within Alness and Invergordon.
- Healthcare at Alness and Invergordon Medical Group and County Community Hospital.
- Retail opportunities within the Alness and Invergordon High Streets and supermarkets in Alness.
- Leisure and entertainment facilities, such as Dalmore Distillery and Invergordon Port.

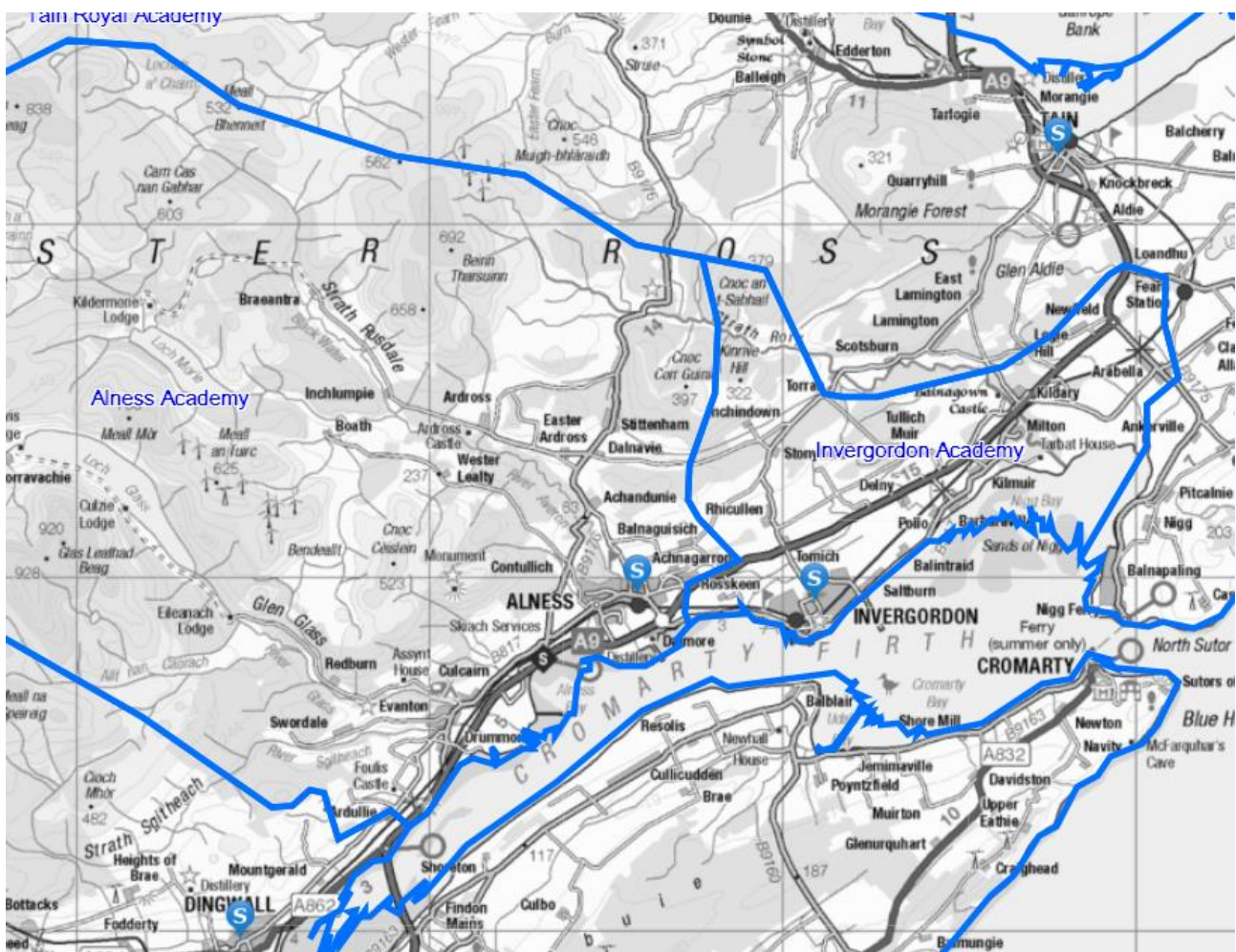


Figure 7 - Alness and Invergordon Secondary School Catchments (©Highland Council)

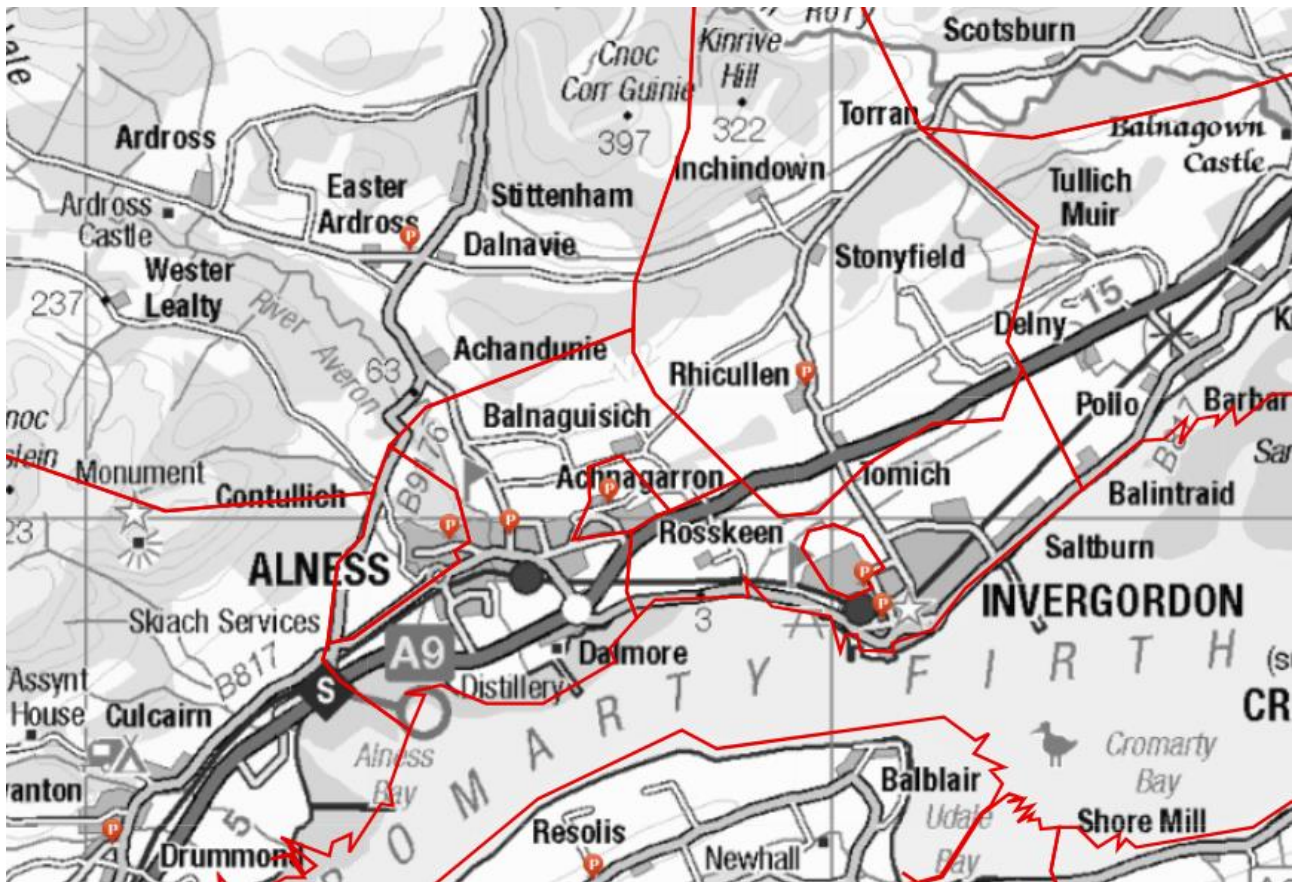


Figure 8 - Alness and Invergordon Primary School Catchments (©Highland Council)

The smaller settlements reliant on Alness and Invergordon includes:

- Evanton
- Drummond
- Ardross
- Daltdurn
- Barbaraville
- Kilmuir
- Kildary

2.5 Tain

The key services within Tain are listed below:

- Public transport hub at Tain Train Station.
- Key employment area with mix of different types of employment.
- Education, see below the catchments (Figure 9 and Figure 10) for schools within Tain.
- Healthcare at Tain and District Medical Group.

- Retail opportunities on Lamington Street and Shore Road, as well as Knockbreck Retail Park which is likely to grow.
- Leisure and entertainment facilities, such as Glenmorangie Distillery.

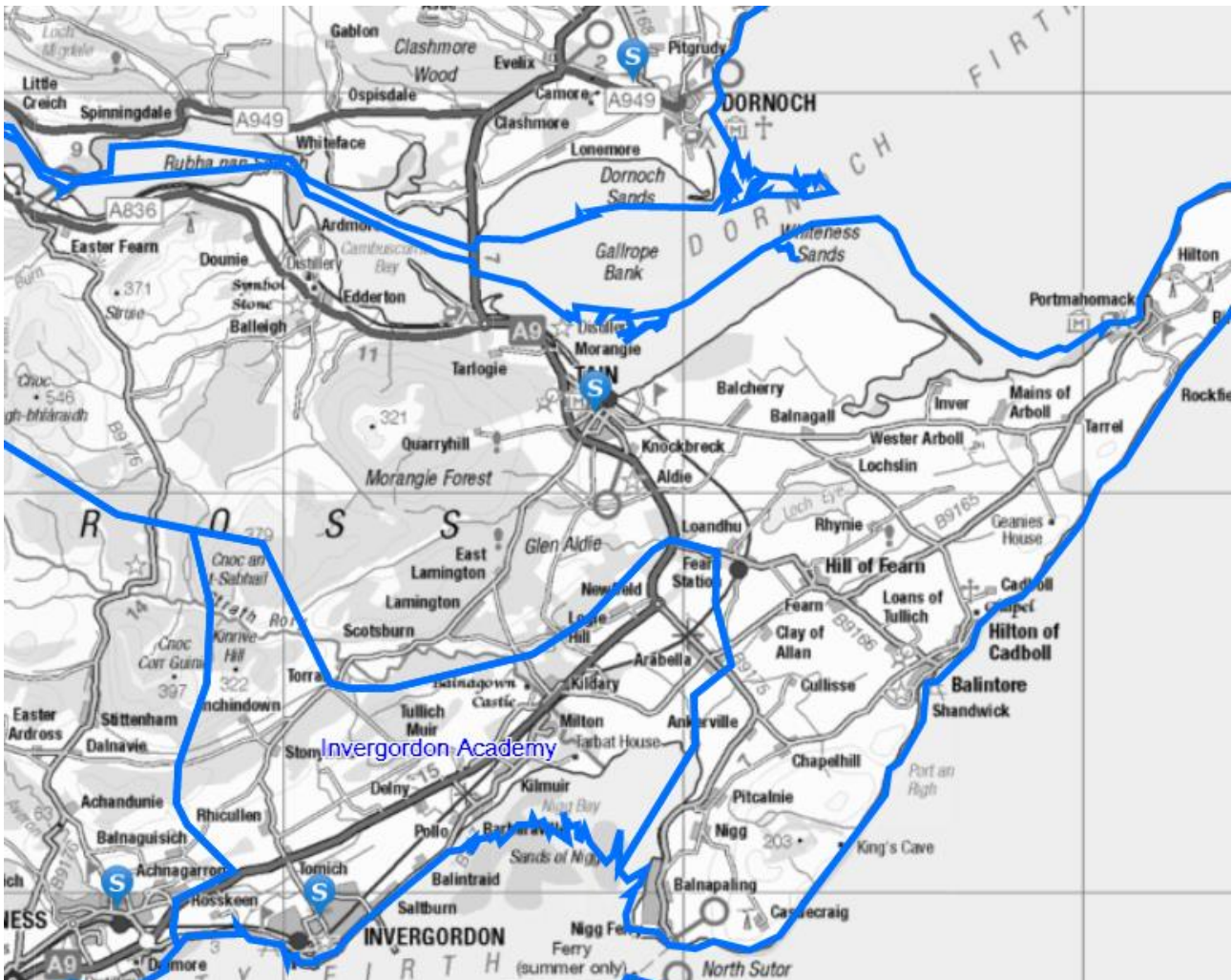


Figure 9 - Tain Secondary School Catchment (©Highland Council)

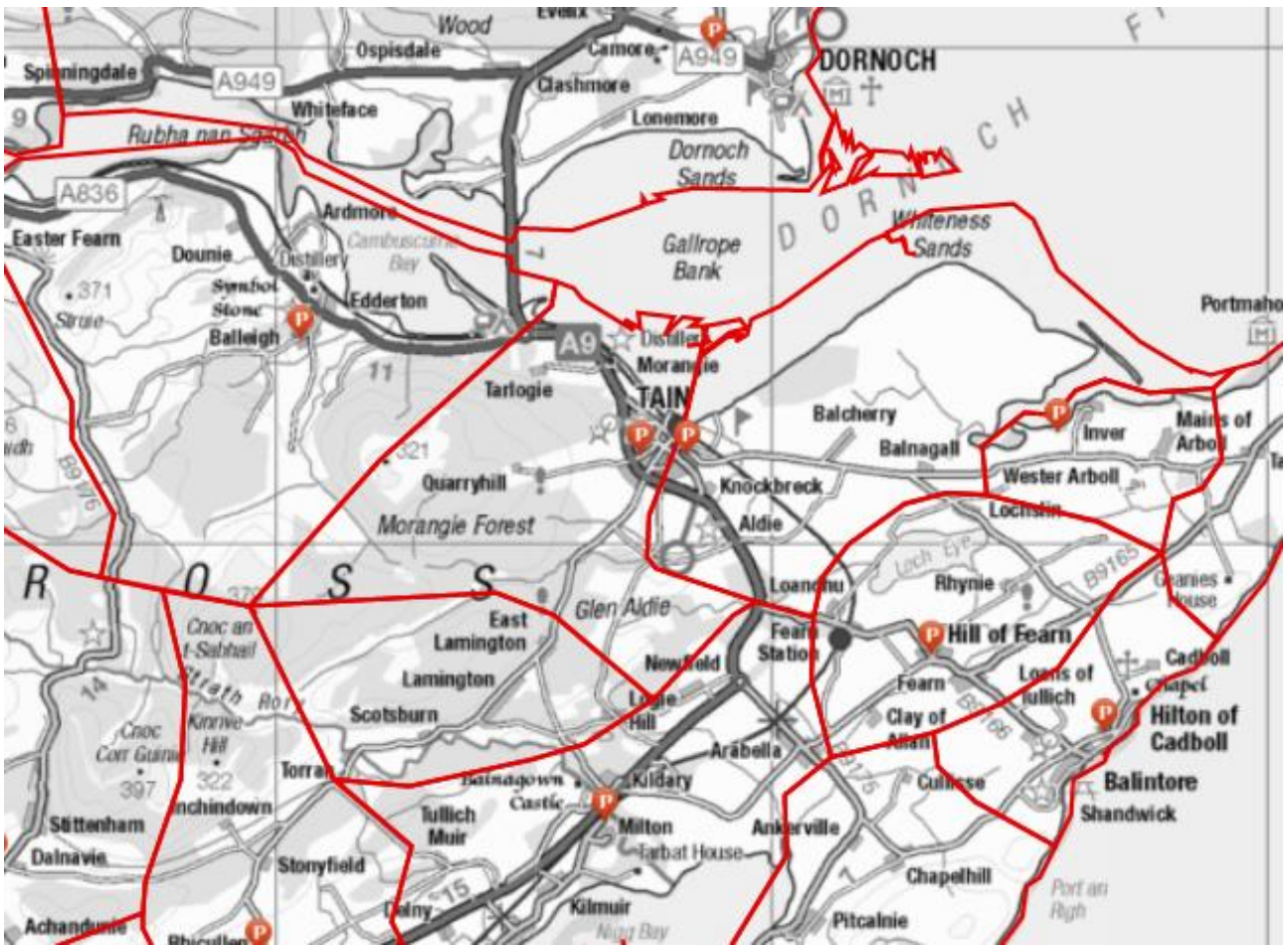


Figure 10 - Tain Primary School Catchments (©Highland Council)

The smaller settlements reliant on Tain includes:

- Aldie
- Morangie
- Tarlogie
- Loandhu
- Hill of Fearn
- Balnagall
- Lochsln
- Lamington

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3 Public Transport

The location of public transport facilities was identified, and links to them included where appropriate to promote sustainable multimodal journeys. It is recognised that it is unlikely people will walk, wheel or cycle some of the distances between places within IMF, therefore, integration between public transport and active travel routes is vital. Figure 11 below shows the identified IMF Active Travel Network and the location of Train Stations.

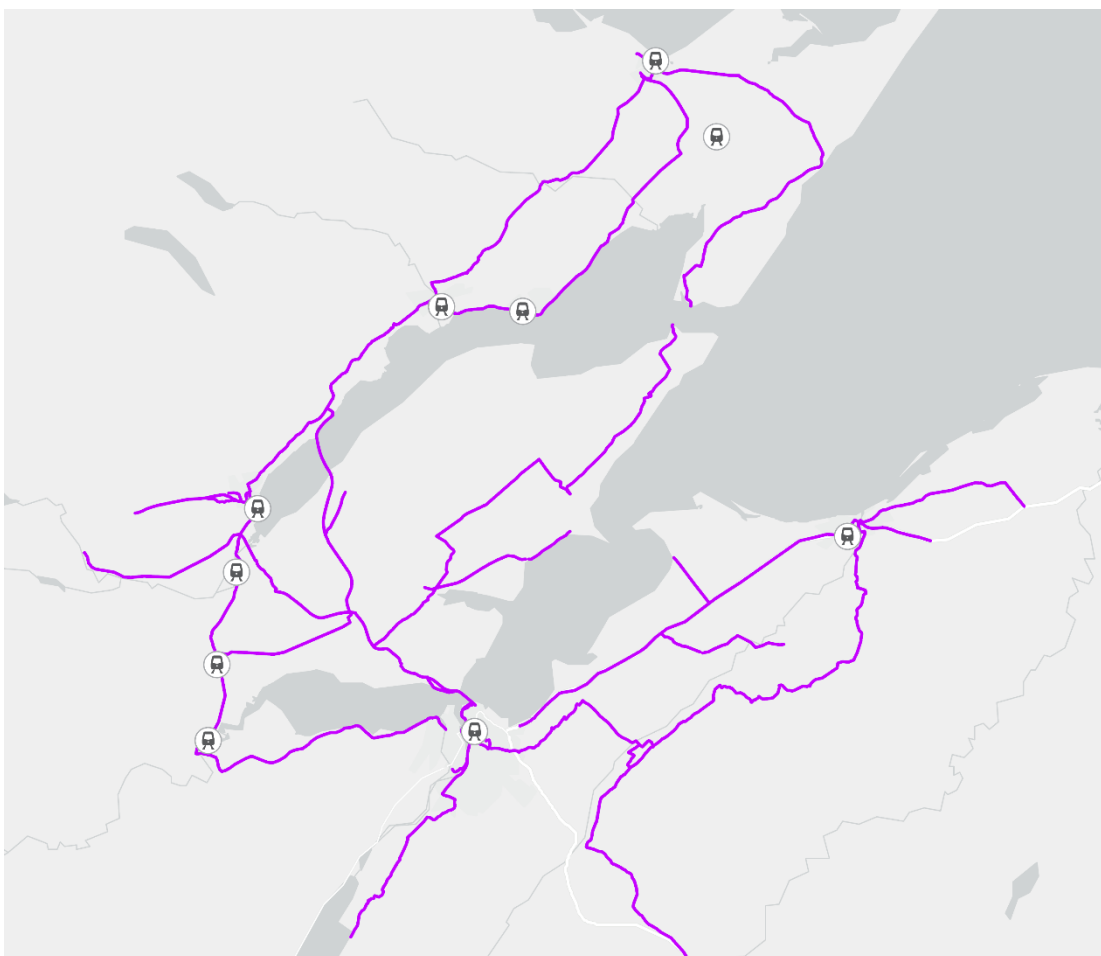


Figure 11 - Train Stations and the IMF Active Travel Network (©Esri_UK)

Figure 12 below shows the identified IMF Active Travel Network and the location of bus stops within the region. The figure highlights where the network provides linkages to nearby bus stops where there is currently no existing infrastructure or gaps in the network. It should also be noted that some of stops highlighted on the map may not provide a frequent service and/or may serve one purpose, such as school buses. Locations where gaps within the network exist but the active travel network would infill these are notable in the following locations:

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- Scotsburn Road between Tain and Alness, where there is no frequent bus service and distances between stops can be over 3km.
- The area to the south east of Tain, which includes Balnagall, Lochslin, Fearn, Tarrel, Balaldie etc. Bus services are infrequent (approx. 4 buses a day) and distances between stops can range from 3 to over 5km.
- The area within the centre and north east of the Black Isle, which includes Killen, Belmaduthy, Knockbain, Craighead, Eathie etc. Their nearest bus stops to these areas are over 5km.
- The A832 between Muir of Ord and Tore, there are no bus stops along this section of road.
- Remote areas to the south west of Nairn, there are a number of small settlements which have infrequent bus services (maximum 5 buses a day) and distances between the stops can be over 2km.

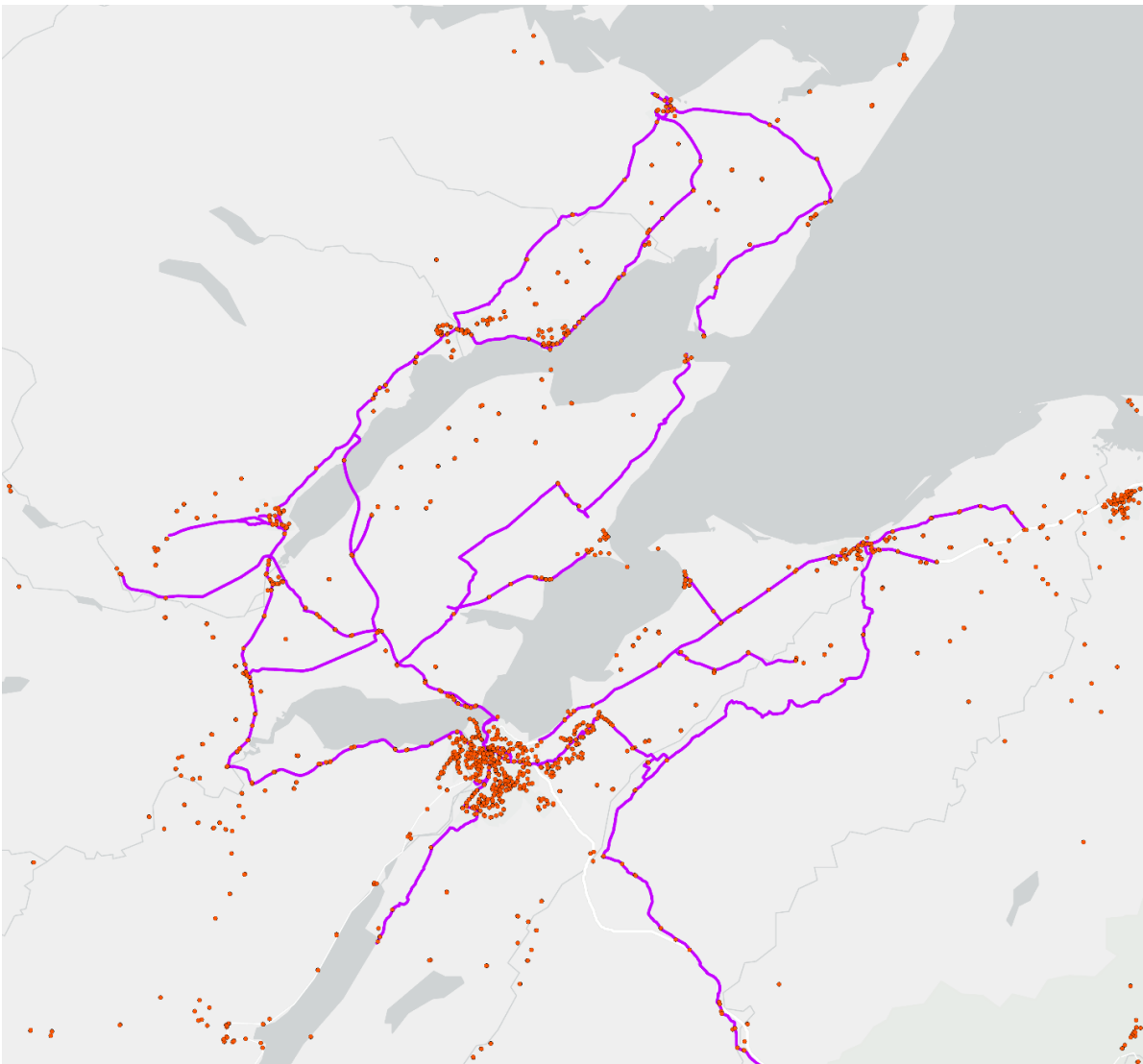


Figure 12 – Bus Stops and the IMF Active Travel Network (©Esri_UK)

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4 Future Developments

The location of the IMF LDP sites were also identified. It is important that the regional network meets requirements of current travel patterns but also that it will meet future demand. The network aims to link into new developments so that users and visitors are encouraged to travel more sustainably from the outset. Figure 13 below is a map that highlights the development sites and the network that will serve them.

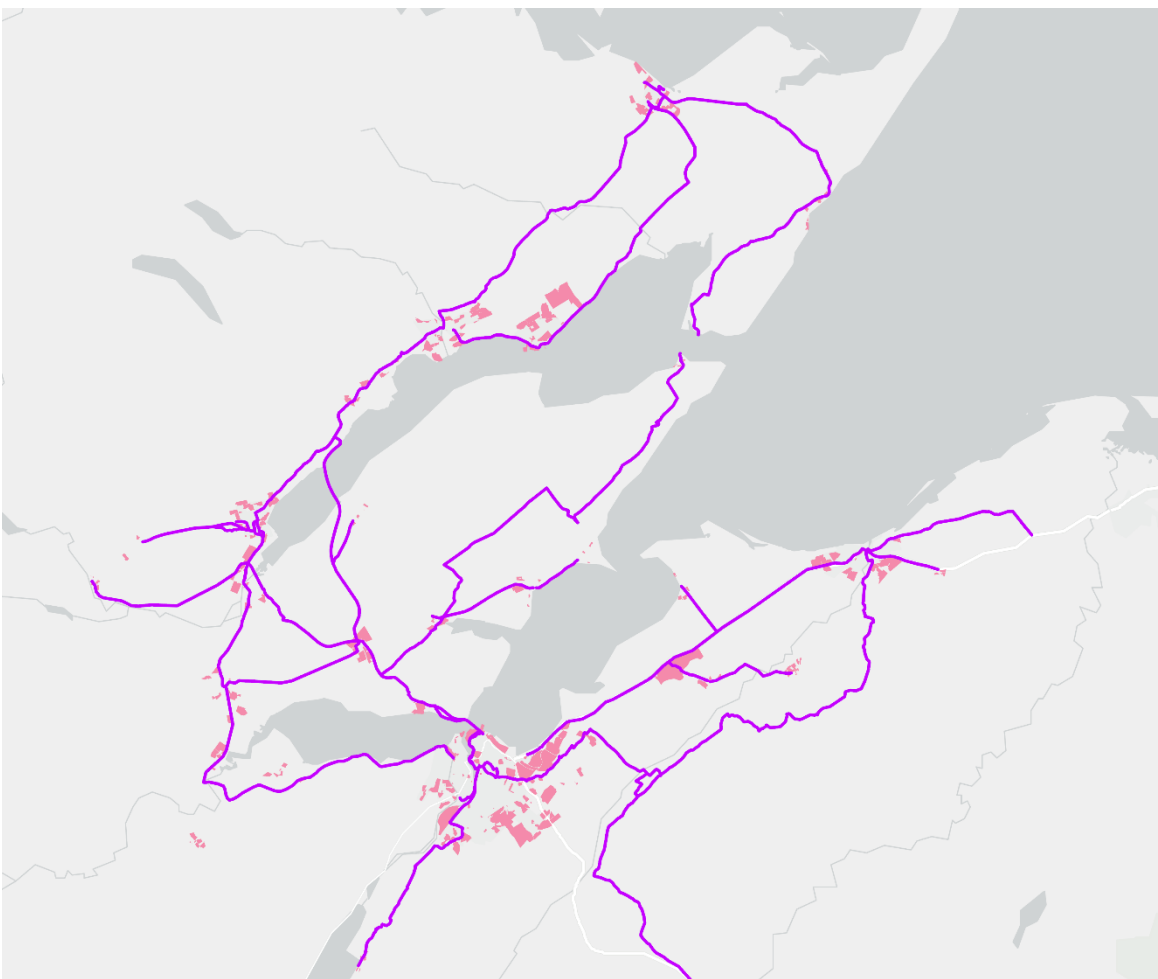


Figure 13 - IMF LDP Development Sites and IMF Active Travel Network (©Esri_UK)

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5 Desire Lines

A number of desire lines were identified through engagement with the public, a full record of comments received from the public can be found in Appendix A of the IMF Active Travel Network Report. The following roads were identified through the public engagement as desire lines that are becurrantly unsafe for active travel users:

- The A9 between Drummond and Kessock.
- The A835 between Contin and Maryburgh.
- The A832 between Muir of Ord and Tore.
- The A862 between Muir of Ord and Beauly.
- The A862 between Rhinduaie and Inverness.

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6 NCN Network

The NCN spans across the full IMF region, the NCN 1 connects Tain, Alness, Dingwall, Inverness and Nairn. However, large sections of the network are on-road, it is therefore recommended that minor improvements such as improved signage and resurfacing be made on the on-road sections of the network, including:

- Tain to Alness.
- Tain to Balnabruaich.
- Cromarty to Croftnacreich.
- Evanton to Dingwall.
- Balloch to Cawdor.
- Cawdor to Nairn.
- Nairn to Brodie.
- Balloch to Moy.

The on-road routes should meet current design guidance, [Cycling by Design guidance](#).

7 Leisure Routes

The following routes have been identified as longer-distance, leisure routes that could be brought forward as individual projects with a focus on tourism and leisure:

- Fort Augustus to Drumnadrochit.
- Drumnadrochit to Cannich/Tomich.
- Drumnadrochit to Inverness.
- Foyers to Dores.

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8 Summary

This note is supplementary to the IMF Active Travel Network Planning Report, it provides more detail on the following: The reliance of smaller areas on larger settlements for a variety of services; the location of public transport hubs, in particular train stations, to promote sustainable multi-modal journeys; the location of future development sites identified within the IMF LDP; the condition of roads that are desire lines for active travel users, based on the responses from the public engagement; and the condition of existing infrastructure, such as the NCN, and recommended improvements.