

8 Emerging Views and Action Plan

8.1 Introduction

- 8.1.1 The real value of the A862 corridor as a route for cycling is for leisure. As shown by some of the route options within this report a high quality, distinctive attraction capable of appealing to a variety of tourists (day trippers, overseas visitors, short break visitors and local people) requires foresight and vision and be embraced and supported by the Highland Council as well as local community groups. A long term strategy for the project supported by a range of partners can be successful in securing funding from more than one budget. Attractions that protect and enhance the environment, encourage physical activity, ease congestion, improve air quality, increase tourism, support existing tourism strategies and support the local economy can vie for funding from many different organisations and it is the cross-cutting themes that cycling supports that puts a major tourism project like this in a strong position.
- 8.1.2 A route using the existing verges is possible, but as seen in appendix G, users would have to cross the road five times, some at locations where visibility is unfavourable and at some points, the route would pass directly in front of residents' windows. Cycle routes built to similar standards such as this are often seen as undesirable. The key to encouraging more people to cycle and importantly, to cycle and spend money at local businesses is to provide a superior facility that takes advantage of the scenery and local attractions such as bird wildlife and dolphins.
- 8.1.3 It is possible to fund and build projects of this kind, providing there is a sound business case. The following is four case studies that show the potential of walking and cycling routes and facilities to observe local wildlife and how they can encourage tourism.

8.2 Case studies

Case Study 1: The Camel Trail

- 8.2.1 The Camel Trail is a long established route for walkers, cyclists and in some places horse riders that runs along the Camel Estuary in Cornwall on a disused railway track. The 14 mile trail links the three small towns of Padstow, Wadebridge and Bodmin and its development demonstrates the value of creating new routes for cyclists and pedestrians. The trail raises around £45,000 each year from the sale of license fees paid for by the three bike hire companies on the route (a total of 750 bicycles are licensed.) The trail is a permissive right of way and the local authority charges the companies a license for each bicycle they rent. This revenue contributes directly to a site ranger's salary and maintenance. Studies have shown that 44 local jobs can be directly attributed to an increase in visitor spend along the trail and brings £3.5 million into the local economy annually. The route has also spawned an NHS sponsored physical activity project called 'Pedal Back the Years' to encourage more local people to take exercise.

8.2.2 The flat, scenic route is extremely popular with families and people who do not normally cycle: in a 2002 survey 54% of people cycling the Camel Trail described themselves as novice cyclists. The route has seen an increase of 94% between 1998 and 2002 with approximately half a million people using the trail each year with 3% of all trips used by local people as a commuter route. Cornwall County Council are now seeking £6 million to extend the route and there is evidence that businesses not on the existing trail were 'very jealous' of those able to benefit from the increase in passing trade.

Case Study 2: The Tarka Trail

8.2.3 The Tarka Trail is thirty mile traffic free route in North Devon that attracts 150,000 cycle journeys a year. In a survey, nearly half of all the people using the trail said it was the deciding factor in visiting the area. Cyclists and walkers using the route are estimated to spend £19 million per year with around £6.6 million spent by visitors who came specifically to use the route.

Case Study 3: Scottish Seabird Centre

8.2.4 The Scottish Seabird Centre overlooking the Firth of Forth opened in May 2000. The project was developed as a community project which now runs as a registered charity aiming to raise greater awareness, appreciation and understanding of Scotland's natural heritage. The centre is open everyday of the year and features live cameras which enable visitors to view and hear the wildlife. The centre is a successful wildlife tourism initiative which attracts 250,000 people and £1 million per year and has created the equivalent of 35 full time jobs. Vital to the success of the project is the support of 4000 members and 50 active volunteers. The centre has a five star visitor attraction rating from Visit Scotland and in 2002 won the Scottish Thistle Tourism and Environment Award.

Case Study 4: The Titchwell RSPB Nature Reserve

8.2.5 The Titchwell Marsh Nature Reserve in Norfolk is a Special Area of Conservation (SAC) an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) a Special Protection Area, (SPA) a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and a Ramsar site. A number of organisations worked together to seek funding for a number of improvements to the site including:

- Improvements to bird habitat
- Improvements to visitor facilities
- Improvements to access and interpretation materials

8.2.6 A total of £250,000 was secured for the improvements that included the creation of 3.5 full time jobs. The result of the investment has seen retail income grow by 15% and catering income increase by 37%. The reserve has been awarded a 'Quality Assured Visitor Attraction' award and the visitor centre is the most commercially successful of all RSPB sites nationwide.

8.2.7 The Beauly Firth has the potential to rival all of the above projects in relation to flat and level walking and cycling routes, outstanding scenery and abundance of local wildlife. To combine the two pursuits would create an un-rivalled tourist attraction in Scotland that could benefit the local economy and create jobs, combined with supporting sustainable tourism targets.

8.2.8 Local businesses would have the opportunity to expand and benefit from increased numbers of visitors to the Beauly Firth. There are several hotels, inns, campsites, cafes and restaurants all within the local vicinity that would could market themselves directly to walkers and cyclists and offer specific services such as bike hire and luggage carrying. There is the potential for new business to flourish: craft and gift shops and bike hire, local farms close to the Firth could diversify and develop attractions such as maize mazes, children's playgrounds, tractor rides, lamb feeding etc. According to the Highland Tourism Area Partnership Plan, the top four activities for visitors to the Highlands are in order of popularity: Sightseeing, walking, castles/monuments and wildlife, three of which would be major selling points of a proposed tourist attraction based around the Beauly Firth. The attraction of a cycle route around the Firth with the added value of wildlife and bird watching facilities supports the strategy through several key targets including:

- Significantly improve the range and quality of accommodation, attractions and facilities in the Highlands by 2010.
- Actively engage 75% of communities in tourism issues by 2009.
- Identify opportunities for new visitor attractions and activities, and develop plans for delivering these by 2009.
- Develop Plans for improving roadside amenities, foot/cycle access and access to key monuments/archaeological features by March 2008. (Clachnaharry Monument)
- Extend the range of sporting and outdoor activities, events and facilities available to visitors by 20% by 2015.

8.2.9 A full review of the Partnership Plan is required to fully justify and comprehend how a Beauly Firth cycle route would support the aims and objectives of the strategy and is outwith the scope of this report. However, encouraging sustainable, walking and cycling based tourism can help to:

- Protect the peace, tranquility and natural beauty of the area
- Protect the historic character of towns and villages
- Encourage local distinctiveness and vitality
- Open up new tourism markets
- Promote the area as a place that is readily explored without a car and offers freedom from parking hassles, traffic fumes and congestion
- Make it easier for those without access to a car to enjoy day trips so reducing social exclusion
- Encourage sustainable living

- 8.2.10 A project as ambitious as a round Beauly Firth cycle route would take time and commitment to develop and require collaboration and agreement from various Council departments and should be taken forward through a tourism strategy.
- 8.2.11 In order to take advantage of various funding sources for sustainable transport projects, it would be prudent to plan ahead and take elements of the recommendations within this report to detailed design stage and keep projects 'on the shelf' that can then be implemented should any funding become available.

8.3 Action Plan

- 8.3.1 The delivery of a high quality cycle route from Inverness to Beauly will require a substantial investment of capital that would exceed the typical budgets allocated by local authorities to sustainable transport. To implement this option it would be essential to seek funding from other budgets and to widen the scope of the project into a broader tourism function.
- 8.3.2 However, there are some relatively low-cost projects that can aid cyclists and could be delivered within a relatively short timescale.

(i) Short term

- Consider the introduction of Advanced Stop Lines at the signalised junctions at King Brude Road and Clachnaharry to tie into the existing advisory cycle lanes through Clachnaharry. Install cyclist activated signals at bridge over railway at Clachnaharry. Renew the advisory cycle lanes.
- 8.3.3 This is a relatively low cost option that will go some way to improving the safety of existing cyclists at these junctions. Renewed advisory cycle lanes will help reinforce the road as a place where cyclists are likely to be. This intervention is unlikely to encourage new cyclists to the route
- Investigate proposals for signalised one-way working at Lovat Bridge
- 8.3.4 Regardless of whether a cycle route from Inverness to Beauly is implemented, in its current state, Lovat Bridge will remain a difficult obstacle for vulnerable road users. One way working would also enable some space to be freed up for pedestrians and would help reduce the number of damage only incidents involving motorists.
- Develop a maintenance schedule for existing off road cycle track from Inchmore to Easter Moniack
- 8.3.5 The community led construction of the path from Inchmore to Easter Moniack is an indication of the strength of concern regarding facilities for pedestrians and cyclists in the area and it is vital important that the facility does not fall into disrepair. The path was initially maintained by volunteers and is now managed with help from The Highland Council. Proper agreements between the two organisations will enable a structured approach to maintenance to be ensuring the path is preserved.

- Consider installing cycle parking in Beauly
- 8.3.6 There is great scope for encouraging people living in Beauly to make more local journeys by bike and the provision of cycle parking is one tool to help people choose cycling. Cycle parking within the main square, as close to the shops should be provided.
- Consider the inclusion of a cycle route between Inverness and Beauly in the Local Transport Strategy
- 8.3.7 There is widespread local support for a cycle route between Inverness and Beauly, combined with its potential for tourism, consideration should be given for its inclusion within the Local Transport Strategy.

ii) Medium Term

- Investigate proposals for a cycle track from Inchmore to Kirkhill
- 8.3.8 An off road cycle track to Inchmore will be an important link that will enable the community to access the network of quiet lanes and walks south of Inchmore. The route is also supports the aims and objectives of the Kirkhill Primary School Travel Plan.
- Investigate proposals for a bridge from Ferrybrae to Beauly (Ferry Road) including landownership details, planning permission and environmental considerations
- 8.3.9 A new link between the communities of Beauly and Kirkhill is capable of being a standalone project that has many benefits for local people. People from Kirkhill will be able to access services in Beauly via the shortest and safest route and leisure opportunities for the residents of Beauly would be opened up considerably.
- 8.3.10 The Millennium Bridge on the banks of the River Ouse in York was built for pedestrians and cyclists in 2001. Since then, usage of the routes on the banks of the Ouse has risen by 59%. One year after installation pedestrians trips had increased by 73%, cycling trips increased by 31% and utility trips to work and shops saw a 141% increase.
- Consult local landowners to determine support for verge options identified within this report
- 8.3.11 There are sections of verge along the A862 that could provide a high quality cycle route. In order to investigate fully the scope for a cycle track in the verge discussions with landowners should take place. Through this dialogue a full picture of the land available and support for a cycle track can be determined.
- Consult on the potential for a working group in Beauly to take forward cycle promotion, signing of local routes and cycle training for all ages

- 8.3.12 There are a considerable number of short journeys within Beauly that could be transferred to more sustainable modes. The impact of this could be a town centre that could be freed up from cars to create more spaces for people. Lifestyle changes are very difficult to accomplish and are best achieved through collaboration between the community and the local authority. Working with young people to walk and cycle more can help encourage positive attitudes towards those modes for life and 'pester power' is a very potent force for persuading parents and adults to change their behaviour too. For this reason school children should be at the heart of a branded campaign: 'Bike It in Beauly!' and 'Beauly by Bike' are two possible strap lines.
- 8.3.13 Cycle training is an effective way of increasing cycling as many people cite 'fear of traffic' as the main deterrent to cycling. A 'one to one' cycle training programme for adults has been provided free of charge in a number of London boroughs and in a survey commissioned by Transport for London to discover the effectiveness of the scheme found that:
- 81% claimed to cycle more or more confidently
 - 75% claimed the training made them feel safer cycling on road
 - The number of trainees cycling three to four days per week increased by 242% and five days or more by 157%

(iii) Long Term

- Consult on the potential for a working group to take forward proposals for a cycle route from Inverness to Beauly and to harness the potential of wildlife viewing and develop into a major tourist attraction.
- 8.3.14 The true potential for cycling and walking between Beauly and Inverness can only be accomplished through a high quality, traffic free track that provides the most scenic route possible with attractions and services along it's length. This would require a large amount of capital investment, but it also has the potential to yield significant economic benefits for the area and local businesses.
- 8.3.15 A project of this scale needs to be approved and adopted by The Highland Council and have support of many groups. A working group should be established for the project and following is a suggestion of the type of groups that could be involved:
- The Highland Council – Transportation Department
 - The Highland Council – Tourism and Film Unit
 - Kirkhill and Bunchrew Community Trust
 - Kirkhill and Bunchrew Community Council
 - The Highland Cycle Campaign
 - Local Councillors
 - Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH)
 - Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB)
 - HITRANS
 - Scottish Environmental Protection Agency (SEPA)

- Beauly Business Representative
- Highland and Islands Enterprise Network
- VisitScotland
- Local businesses
- Local landowners

8.3.16 The action plan is summarised in table 8.1 overleaf. Indicative costs have also been provided; however, at this stage they should be treated as **indicative only in order to inform the choice of route options and not for budgetary purposes**. They are based on a number of broad assumptions

- Any land acquisition costs and accommodation works not being included (Detailed consultations will be required);
- Professional fees not being included (An estimate can be developed once the preferred way forward has been confirmed);
- No adjustment being made to existing drainage, or lighting;
- No allowance for additional lighting;
- Costs of public utilities protection/diversions works;
- Accommodation works; and,
- Inflation and VAT.

Table 8.1: Inverness to Beauly Cycle Route Feasibility Study - Action Plan

Target	Timescale			Action	Responsibility	Stakeholders	Report Option	Indicative Costs (see 8.3.15)
	Short term	Medium term	Long term					
Introduce advanced stop lines at King Brude junction and cyclist activated signals at bridge over railway at Clachnaharry.	●			Produce detailed design and seek necessary funding and approvals	The Highland Council Transportation Department	The Highland Cycle Campaign	Section A, Option 1	£30,000
Introduce priority system at Lovat Bridge - either through priority give way or traffic signals	●			Discuss options with THC and carry out necessary surveys/trials	The Highland Council Transportation Department	Local Community The Highland Cycle Campaign	Section F, Option B	£50,000
Develop off road cycle track from Inchmore to Kirkhill	●			Produce detailed design and seek necessary funding and approvals	The Highland Council Transportation Department	Local Community The Highland Cycle Campaign	Section H,	Average cost to build cycle track is approximately £105,000 per kilometre. Scheme estimate is £120,000 - £175,000
Develop maintenance agreement of cycle track from Inchmore to Easter Moniak	●			Work with Kirkhill and Bunchrew Community Trust to identify volunteers and develop maintenance schedule	The Highland Council Roads Maintenance	Local Community The Highland Cycle Campaign	Section D	Officer time
Install cycle parking in Beauly town centre	●			Identify suitable sites for cycle parking sites in Beauly and ensure land ownership	The Highland Council Transportation Department	Local Community Local businesses The Highland Cycle Campaign	Section G	Approx £100 per stand including installation
Consider the inclusion of a cycle route between Inverness and Beauly in the Local Transport Strategy	●			Consult with Officers taking forward the LTS	The Highland Council Transportation Department	Local Community The Highland Cycle Campaign	N/A	Officer time

Table 8.1: Inverness to Beauly Cycle Route Feasibility Study - Action Plan

Target	Timescale			Action	Responsibility	Stakeholders	Report Option	Indicative Costs (see 8.3.15)
	Short term	Medium term	Long term					
Have schemes developed in order to take advantage of potential external funding		●		Produce detailed designs for specific schemes such as Kirkhill to Beauly bridge or Inchmore to Kirkhill cycle track that can be kept 'on the shelf'	The Highland Council Transportation Department	Local Community Local businesses The Highland Cycle Campaign	Various, dependent on priorities	Officer time
Build a new bridge from Ferrybrae to Beauly		●		Begin discussions with local landowners and Railtrack and other stakeholders such as SEPA, SNH, planning officers	The Highland Council Transportation Department	Local Community Local businesses The Highland Cycle Campaign	Section J	£600 - £800,000
Develop cycle promotion campaign in Beauly, signing of local routes and cycle training for all ages		●		Establish a working group to take forward initiatives	The Highland Council Road Safety Department	Local Community Local businesses Beauly Primary School The Highland Cycle Campaign	Section G	Officer time Approx £5000 for signing
Establish landownership details for cycle route in verge from Clachnaharry to Inchmore		●		Seek potential support from landowners for verge cycle track	The Highland Council Transportation Department	Local Community Local businesses The Highland Cycle Campaign	Section B, Option 2 and Section C, Option 1	Officer time
Create working group to investigate feasibility and funding for a wildlife cycle route around the Beauly Firth			●	Establish partners, appoint advisory board and create constitution	To be agreed	As per main report	Whole Route Review, Section B and C	Officer time

8.4 Environmental Considerations

8.4.1 The main environmental constraint to any cycle route (which will certainly be used also by pedestrians) is the proximity of the Beauly Firth SSSI / Inner Moray Firth Ramsar Site and SPA. In terms of direct impacts, this will only be a significant issue for the high cost, “off road” coastal route options. The Clachnaharry option using a seawall extension may be an exception due to its location which straddles the boundary of the SSSI. The issues here will relate predominantly to sea defence and the types of structure that are possible.

8.4.2 All the other options that involve use of machinery for ground movements/import of materials etc have some potential for indirect impacts on the Firth through water pollution at crossings. However, with best practice environmental controls in place during any preliminary technical (engineering) surveys and during construction, these should be negligible.

8.4.3 All options except the signing ones have some potential for effects on biodiversity – even the verge options. Therefore a more substantial route walk is recommended coupled with an extended Phase 1 Habitat survey or suitable variant in order to help with route refinement decisions.

(a) Environmental Recommendations:

8.4.4 If the study and options selection progresses further, more baseline data will be required via the following:

- Compile a constraints map using the Local Plan and other existing information from a desktop study.
- A more detailed habitat survey of the options as they develop (even in verges), possibly with an overview for protected species interest.
- Consultation with SNH, SEPA and local wildlife groups for any specific issues know to them.
- Construction methods and probably maintenance requirements will need more detailed discussion to identify size of plant required, working areas required, additional accesses, compounds etc.
- If any technical engineering surveys are carried out during the options development stage, appropriate environmental protection procedures must be in place before the survey commences.
- All environmental sub-objectives should be reviewed when the preferred options are emerging. e.g. there has been no attempt to identify any waste sites, or contaminated land, and very little has been attempted for Landscape and Visual Amenity aspects
- A Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) would be required for the coastal route option.