7 Route Options

7.1 Introduction

7.1.1 This chapter explores the possible route options for each identified section as well as three whole route options. There is a short description of each along with a table giving more detail and information.

7.1.2 Firstly, options for the entire corridor are discussed. Secondly, the corridor is then broken down into smaller sections for further consideration. The extent of the sections are shown in Appendix G.

- Whole route option A – Signing option (Approx 19km)
- Whole route option B – Low Cost option (Approx 19km)
- Whole route option C – High Cost option (Approx 14km)

- Section A: King Brude Road and Clachnaharry – 1km
- Section B: Clachnaharry to Bunchrew – 2.2km
- Section C: Bunchrew to Inchmore – 6.6km
- Section D: Inchmore to Easter Moniack – 1.8km
- Section E: Easter Moniack to Dunballoch – 3.25km
- Section F: Dunballoch to Beauly train station – 2.1km
- Section G: Beauly train station to Beauly town centre – 1km
- Section H: Inchmore to Kirkhill – 1.5km
- Section I: Kirkhill to Dunballoch – 3.5km
- Section K: Kirkhill to Beauly – 3.8km

7.2 Whole Route Review, Option A – Signing option

7.2.1 During the warmer months, a significant number of cycle tourists can be seen using the A862. During one site visit, nine cycle tourists were seen in one hour, all loaded with panniers and cycling away from Inverness. Regardless of whether cycle facilities are provided on the A862, cyclists will continue to use the route. Direction signing for cyclists and information signs for motorists may highlight the presence of cyclists to motorists and destination signing for cyclist through Kirkhill would provide a section of route away from the A862.

Whole Route Review, Option A – Signing option

Description of option:

Erect signing to alert motorists to the presence of cyclists and signing to take cyclists off the A862 for a section from Dunballoch to Inchmore

Problems and barriers for cyclists:

Some cyclists may perceive an alternative route to be a longer detour – sign information may counteract this

Motorists using the road everyday may become 'blind' or complacent towards signing after a time

Stakeholder feedback:

This option has not been consulted upon

Constraints:

Any non-regulatory signs will need approval from the Scottish Government

Signs may be considered to be street clutter

Opportunities:

Opportunity to monitor scheme to assess if there is any impact

Low cost option

Other comments:

Signs could be erected at specific locations that are difficult for cyclists

Work required:

Sign design and erection

Environmental considerations:

This option will have no significant negative environmental impacts

Potential way forward:

This is a low cost option that could be delivered in a relatively short amount of time

7.3 Whole Route Review, Option B – Low Cost option

7.3.1 A cycle route using the available verges and footways between Inverness and Beauly is possible. Appendix H shows what sections a proposed route could use, marked north and south of the A862. There are areas where no verge is available, but a route could be provided at the edge of fields and as with option A, it is possible to use the existing quiet roads from Dunballoch through to Kirkhill. This option would provide a route, but it would be far from continuous. Cyclists would have to cross the road **five times** and stop/cross at **sixteen** minor access roads. Also, some of the available footpaths, especially through Inchmore are less than 2m wide and would have to be shared with pedestrians which could cause conflict between the users. Part of the route would utilise the old road under the railway bridge near to Phopachy. If this low cost option is pursued, the priority section should be from Bunchrew to Inverness as this has the most potential for creating modal shift for commuting journeys. After this section, priority should be given to a route from Beauly to Dunballoch.

Whole Route Review, Option B – Low Cost option

Section of verge on A862 suitable for cycle track (on approach to Lovat Bridge)

Description:

Use existing footpaths and available verges for off road cycle tracks with on road section from Dunballoch to Inchmore

Problems and barriers for cyclists:

Route will cross the road five times
Poor quality discontinuous cycle routes are unpopular with cyclists and give cycling a negative image
Cycling next to relatively high speed road can be unpleasant

Stakeholder feedback:

This option has not been consulted upon

Constraints:

Land will still need to be purchased in certain sections
Some routes pass residential properties and there may be objections
Shared footway/cycleway schemes can create conflict between users
Shared use footways through Inchmore will be very narrow

Opportunities:

Some sections of verge are adequate and will be suitable for an off road cycle track

Other comments:

Preferred route would link to existing path between Inchmore and Easter Moniack
(continued)

Work required:

Land purchase; Cycle track construction; Cycle track Orders

Environmental considerations:

This option will have some negative environmental impact both in the construction phase and when operational, but mostly during construction. An Extended Phase 1 Habitat Survey is recommended to help refine and decide which side of the road should be used for the cycle track. This particularly applies to the Beauly end where the road is lined on both sides with mature oaks.

Potential way forward:

Although sections of verge could provide a high quality cycle track, the entire route would not be considered a high quality route due to the number of crossings. The route would not be used by more confident cyclists. The number of road crossings for cyclists must be minimised if this option is taken forward.

7.4 Whole Route Review, Option C – High Cost option

7.4.1 A continuous, off road cycle track close to the Beauly Firth, offering an unbroken panorama of the Firth and the Black Isle would be the most attractive but the most expensive option for a cycle route.

7.4.2 There is land available on the coastline that is flat and offers space for a cycle track, but obviously there are many issues surrounding this option, the first one being cost: land purchase and legal fees as well as the cost of construction. The second major issue is environmental. As discussed in Chapter 2, the Beauly Firth is a SSSI, a SAC and a RAMSAR site and any construction projects that impact upon the area would need to be approved by the relevant bodies (Scottish Natural Heritage, Scottish Environmental Protection Agency, Highland Council etc) along with remedial measures.

7.4.3 However, a high quality route next to the coast is far more likely to attract users, especially away from the A862. The beauty of the area is a priceless natural asset and along with the added bonus of abundant wildlife has the potential to become a major tourist attraction. Appendix I shows the potential route of this option.

Whole Route Review, Option C – High Cost option

Example of potential: Route 5 of the National Cycle Network along the Welsh coast

Description:

Build an off road cycle track as close to the coast as possible

Problems and barriers for cyclists:

Route may not link in to all communities
Route will be exposed

Stakeholder feedback:

This option has not been consulted upon

Constraints:

Cost
Land ownership issues
Environmental issues

Opportunities:

Scope of scheme could be widened to take advantage of other tourist attractions such as bird/wildlife

Other comments:

Larger tourism scheme with a sound business plan would secure funding from other sources

Work required:

Land purchase
Cycle track construction
Cycle track Orders

Environmental considerations:

The greatest environmental constraint is the proximity of the Beauly Firth and the disturbance/access potential that a cycle track and walkway would produce. A comparison might be the existing minor road along the north shore of the Firth. Knowledge of how and where birds use the Firth will be essential, therefore views from the statutory bodies and RSPB should be sought at the earliest opportunity in order to gauge whether this option could/should be carried forward.

Potential way forward:

Although this is a scheme is a long term option requiring high levels of funding, it is will be the most attractive to new and returning cyclists and has long term appeal at both the local level and strategic level for tourism.

7.5 Section A: King Brude Road junction and Clachnaharry

7.5.1 A number of options for the section of road from King Brude Road junction to the bridge over the railway in Clachnaharry have been identified and are shown in Appendix J:

- Option 1: Advanced Stop Lines and road markings
- Option 2: Clachnaharry Monument Route
- Option 3: Pedestrian and Cycle Bridge at Clachnaharry
- Option 4: Canal Route

Option 1: Advanced Stop Lines and road markings

7.5.2 This option involves the introduction of advanced stop lines (ASLs) at the junction of King Brude Road and the A862 and at the signals at the bridge over the railway at the western end of Clachnaharry. The advisory cycle lanes should also be renewed and extended to link into both junctions. Traffic calming may be of use on this stretch of road as it has a 30mph limit and street lighting, but this may not be necessary if the 85th%ile speeds are acceptable. It is also likely that the road is designated as a priority route for emergency vehicles which would also make traffic calming difficult to justify. This information would need to be confirmed by The Highland Council. The introduction of cyclist activated warning signs and traffic signals would also improve cyclist safety at the pinch point over the railway in Clachnaharry.

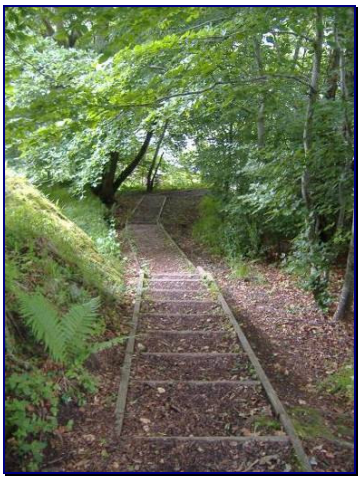
Option 2: Clachnaharry Monument Route

7.5.3 There is a small gap in the wall just before the railway bridge at Clachnaharry that leads to a set of steps. The steps climb the side of the hill to the Clachnaharry Monument which was erected in 1820 to mark a clash between the Munroe's and the MacKintoshes. The monument was damaged by storms in 1951 but in 2000 The Highland Council improved the steps to the monument and installed fencing to protect the remains. The gap in the wall provides access to the woodland at the base of the cliff where the monument stands and it is possible to walk through the woods parallel to the railway line. A cycle track through these woods would provide a traffic free alternative to the narrow railway bridge; however, the path would be on the edge of a steep cliff with large rocky outcrops and boulders. Practically, a cycle track on this side of the railway would eventually have to cross over the railway and possibly the road.

Option 3: Pedestrian and Cycle Bridge at Clachnaharry

7.5.4 A new pedestrian and cyclist bridge over the railway bridge at Clachnaharry would be a traffic free alternative to this perceived hazard. Construction of a bridge at this point however would not only be very expensive but would be very disruptive to both road and rail users during erection.

Woodland above railway



Path up to Clachnaharry Monument

Option 4: Canal Route

7.5.5 This option is probably the most ambitious of all. The Caledonian Canal provides a good quality, traffic free route through Inverness that runs to the north of Clachnaharry where it ends at a sea-lock in the Beauly Firth. This option considers a cycle route along the canal to the sea-lock with a bridge to the A862 across the bay. It is highly likely that the residents living in Low Street whose houses look over the bay would object to any structure in this area as it would interrupt their views. A cycle track built on the edge of the shore was also considered, but the track would be directly in front of the residents' homes. This route would also force cyclists to dismount to cross the level crossing at Clachnaharry.

Rear of houses on Low Street

Section A: King Brude Road Junction and Clachnaharry

Option 1: Advanced Stop Lines and road markings

Traffic signals at bridge on western side

Description:

Install advanced stop lines at the junction on King Brude Road and at the bridge over the railway, and renew and improve the existing advisory cycle lanes. Install cyclist activated warning signs and signal operated sensors.

Problems and barriers for cyclists:

Parked cars
Narrow road
Wide junction at King Brude Road/Clachnaharry Road
Pinch point at the bridge over the railway

Stakeholder feedback:

Users regard advisory cycle lanes as ineffective as cars are allowed to park on them
The pinch point at the bridge over the railway was cited as one of the main deterrents on the route into Inverness

Constraints:

Loop detectors for traffic signals will need to be relocated
Capacity of junctions may be affected

Opportunities:

Could potentially be installed/renewed as part of maintenance programme

Other comments:

Destination signing may be helpful in this area
Could explore the possibility of traffic calming, but would need further investigation into traffic speeds and conflict with emergency services routes.
Cyclist activated signs at a crossing in Leicestershire have shown a 10% reduction in vehicle speeds at the cycle facility

Work required:

Install advanced stop lines (ASLs) at King Brude Road junction and at signals at railway bridge including alterations to induction loops
Renew advisory cycle lane markings and tie into ASLs
Install cyclist activated sensors to activate warning signs and traffic signals
Install destination signing for cyclists

Environmental considerations:

The Local plan identifies a Scheduled Ancient Monument (a war memorial) and several listed buildings along the route. None likely to be affected by this option. There are no significant negative impacts on biodiversity or the water environment, landscape, visual amenity or agriculture.

Potential way forward:

This is a low cost option that would improve cyclists safety

Section A: King Brude Road Junction and Clachnaharry

Option 2: Clachnaharry monument route

Rock outcrops above railway line

Access to path to monument

Description:

Use the path towards Clachnaharry monument to access the wooded area south of the railway line and build a cycle route adjacent to railway boundary fence

Problems and barriers for cyclists:

Accessing road from cycle track to go towards Inverness would be difficult – possible to install cyclist activated signals

Stakeholder feedback:

Users not consulted on this option

Constraints:

Route difficult to implement due to rock outcrops and sheer cliff.
Expensive option.

Opportunities:

Ramp up to houses in Scourgie could be provided
Opening up of route and creating opportunities for increased access and natural surveillance may help to address fly tipping in the area

Other comments:

Route is possible, but not along entire length of railway due to properties and level differences although a bridge to take route over railway and possibly road may be possible.
Bridge could be seen as a major architectural feature and gateway to Inverness
Implications for building over a railway

Work required:

Build cycle track parallel to railway through woodland
Alter signals to allow cyclists to return safely to the carriageway
New bridge to leave cycle track

Environmental considerations:

The Local plan identifies a Scheduled Ancient Monument (a war memorial). There is the possibility of the war memorial being affected; however, there may be improved access to the site. There are no significant negative impacts on biodiversity or the water environment, landscape, visual amenity or agriculture.

Potential way forward:

This option is feasible but would be an expensive option.

Section A: King Brude Junction and Clachnaharry

Option 3: Pedestrian and cycle bridge at Clachnaharry

View of span across railway from existing bridge

Description:
Build a new bridge for pedestrians and cyclists to avoid the road bridge over the railway at Clachnaharry

Problems and barriers for cyclists:
If the bridge was designed with poor access and egress commuter cyclists would not use it
A long bridge would be need to avoid steep gradients

Stakeholder feedback:
Users have not been consulted on this option, a bridge to avoid this narrow pinch point with poor visibility is likely to be received very positively by existing and potential users

Constraints:
Tight geometry and lack of space may make the construction of a bridge here very difficult
Expensive option

Opportunities:
Bridge could be seen as a major architectural feature and gateway to Inverness

Other comments:
Any construction in this area will have serious traffic management implications and will require a bridge repossession order from Railtrack

Work required:
New bridge over railway line

Environmental considerations:
The Local plan identifies a Scheduled Ancient Monument (a war memorial) and several listed buildings along the route. None likely to be affected by this option. There are no significant negative impacts on biodiversity or the water environment, landscape, visual amenity or agriculture.

Potential way forward:

This is option is feasible although is likely to be very expensive as well as difficult to construct in relation to traffic management.

Section A: King Brude Road Junction and Clachnaharry

Option 4: Canal Route

Level crossing

Canal path looking towards Inverness

Description:
Paths on either side of the Caledonian Canal could be incorporated as an alternative on road route through Clachnaharry with a new bridge from the end of the canal, across the bay to the A862.

Problems and barriers for cyclists:
Would not be most direct route so may not be used by commuter cyclists
Does not aid cyclists wishing to access the areas to the west of the canal
Cyclists would have to dismount to cross level crossing

Stakeholder feedback:
Users have not been consulted on this option, a bridge to avoid this narrow pinch point with poor visibility is likely to be received very positively by existing and potential users

Constraints:
Cost.
Objections from residents overlooking the bay on Low Street.
Possible environmental constraints.

Opportunities:
Bridge would be a major landmark and raise the profile of the area considerably.

Other comments:
Likely to be objections by local homeowners

Work required:
Liaison with Scottish Waterways
Bridge over bay
Alterations to level crossing

Environmental considerations:
The Local plan identifies a Scheduled Ancient Monument (a war memorial) and several listed buildings along the route. None likely to be affected by this option. There are no significant negative impacts on biodiversity or the water environment, landscape, visual amenity or agriculture.

Potential way forward:

This is an option that would avoid the road through Clachnaharry completely. Unfortunately, the cost to build a bridge combined with likely objections from local homeowners could make proceeding with this option prohibitive.

7.6 Section B: Clachnaharry to Bunchrew

7.6.1 Three options have been identified from Clachnaharry to Bunchrew.

- Option 1: High Level Route
- Option 2: Verge Option
- Option 3: Seawall Option
- Option 4: Track adjacent to Railway

Option 1: High Level Route

7.6.2 This high level route on an unclassified road that runs parallel to the A862 is a spectacular route. Through clearings in the trees there are fantastic views across to the Black Isle and the Beauly Firth. The road is very lightly trafficked single carriageway road with passing places which makes it an excellent route for pedestrians and cyclists. Unfortunately, accessing the road involves very steep climbs both in Scourgie and at Blackpark where the road joins the A862. There are hairpin bends at the Blackpark end of the road and the road surface is pitted and uneven with very poor visibility at the bends. Cyclists descending from Blackpark will require excellent control skills and will need to dismount to go across level crossing.

Section B: Clachnaharry to Bunchrew

Option 1: High level route

View west along unclassified road

Description:

Use existing roads through Scourgie to access unclassified road parallel to A862 to Blackpark. The unclassified road is ideal for cycling as it is a lightly used, single track road with passing places used to access a small number of properties.

Problems and barriers for cyclists:

Very steep climbs to get to single track road
Poor road surface
Poor visibility on hairpin bends on descent from Blackpark
Cyclists will be 'doubling back' on themselves
Cyclists will need to dismount to go across level crossing

Stakeholder feedback:

Not consulted upon

Constraints:

Possible objections from residents
Difficult to promote steep and longer routes to commuter cyclists

Opportunities:

Could be signed as a 'hilly tourist route'

Other comments:

Excellent views to Black Isle

Work required:

Signing for route as an alternative hill, scenic route
Improve road surface

Environmental considerations:

This option would not present any significant negative environmental impacts

Potential way forward:

Not a viable option due to very steep inclines, but could form part of a wider network for cyclists that is advertised as a scenic route with steep inclines.

Option 2: Verge Option

7.6.3 From Clachnaharry for approximately 1.5km the verge on the southern side of the road is wide enough for an off road cycle track. There is one building in the middle of this section that would see cyclists passing directly in front of the residents' windows. Just before the motorcycle sales room the verge on the northern side of the road is also wide enough for an off road cycle track and avoids the pinch points on the southern side of the road through Bunchrew where there is a narrow pavement in front of houses. At the point where a proposed verge route would move from the south side of the road to the north side near the motorcycle showroom, crossing the road is not easy as visibility is poor. Existing footpaths on the south side of the road could be used for a shared use facility for pedestrians and cyclists. The cost of this option is likely to be approximately £600,000.

Section B: Clachnaharry to Bunchrew

Option 2: Verge Route

A862 looking towards Inverness at motorcycle showroom

Description:

Build a 2m – 3m wide cycle track in the existing verges in the A862 between Clachnaharry and Bunchrew

Problems and barriers for cyclists:

Proposed crossing point from southern verge to northern verge near motorcycle showroom will have poor visibility splays
Cycle track would have to abut one property

Stakeholder feedback:

Not consulted upon

Constraints:

Likely to be objection from resident in house where proposed cycle track would pass in southern verge
Crossing point creates a 'discontinuous' route
Poor visibility at crossing point

Opportunities:

Route passes on the same side of the road as Bunchrew Hotel and Bunchrew campsite

Other comments:

Verges are generally wide enough to accommodate a cycle track

Work required:

Determine who relevant landowners are and consult with residents

Environmental considerations:

This option would not present any significant negative environmental impacts subject to some further habitat surveys of verges etc

Potential way forward:

A section of cycle track in the southern side of the verge is a viable option due to lack of obstacles. Further work is necessary to establish ownership of land and support of landowners for this to proceed as a workable five mile route from Bunchrew to Inverness. This project is capable of a standalone project but a longer route past Bunchrew would be prohibitive due to the number of crossings points that would be required.

Option 3: Seawall Option

7.6.4 The A862 from Clachnaharry to the motorcycle showroom is directly next to the existing seawall. It is possible to build a cycle track on the seaward side of the seawall either through a reclaimed land scheme or an elevated cycle track on stilts. An assessment of the existing seawall, tides, overtopping and projected sea level increases may rule out this option, however, it could be seen as an opportunity to overhaul and improve sea defences.

Section B: Clachnaharry to Bunchrew
Option 3: Seawall Option 
Description:
Build a new cycle track north of the seawall
Problems and barriers for cyclists:
Must have high quality access and egress No protection from wind
Stakeholder feedback:
Not consulted upon
Constraints:
SNH and SEPA may object on environmental grounds Cost Maintenance costs – damage from water/tides
Opportunities:
Most scenic option Opportunity to reinforce/upgrade sea defences
Other comments:
Would provide a continuous, highly scenic off road cycle track
Work required:
Scheme would need to have cross departmental support within Highland Council to be taken forward as a major scheme
Environmental considerations:
The SSSI boundary starts about midway along this section, however the concept of a cycle track here may have a relatively low impact as some 10-15m from the sea wall is comprised of coarse storm beach cobbles. Several stream crossings are along this section draining to the SSSI.
Potential way forward:
Option should be considered with wider tourism benefits such as potential RSPB visitor centre, lay-bys for bird watching, picnics etc

Option 4: Track adjacent to railway

7.6.5 The Thurso/Wick railway line runs adjacent to the road to Beauly and the potential for a cycle track running on the south side of the line has been investigated. Access to the southern side of the track is relatively easy via the path to the Clachnaharry Monument discussed in Section A, Option 2 but there is an area of large rock outcrops and a sheer drop to the railway line that would make the construction of a cycle track here an expensive option. After this rock outcrop, the woodland becomes fairly flat until the outskirts of Bunchrew and an adjacent cycle track here is feasible. Unfortunately after this point, the railway line bridges a number of roads and goes through a cutting, again, making the delivery of an adjacent cycle track a very expensive option.

Section B: Clachnaharry to Bunchrew

Option 4: Track adjacent to railway

Examples of spans that would require bridging for cycle track adjacent to railway line

Description:
Build a cycle track adjacent to southern side of the Thurso/Wick railway line
Problems and barriers for cyclists:
Track would be very dark because of tree cover, especially in winter Falling leaves would make track slippery in winter
Stakeholder feedback:
Not consulted on
Constraints:
Cost of construction and problems associated with working next to railway (bridge repossessions etc) Objection from Railtrack Objection from residents who have properties adjacent to the track
Opportunities:
Direct and traffic free route
Other comments:
Would provide a continuous off road cycle track
Work required:
Discussions required with Network Rail
Environmental considerations:
This option would not present any significant negative environmental impacts subject to some further habitat surveys of verges etc
Potential way forward:
Option is feasible, but engineering constraints and complications associated with working next to railway makes this option prohibitive.

7.7 Section C: Bunchrew to Inchmore

Option 1: Verge Option

7.7.1 There are sections of verge and land available that could be used to build an off road cycle track, however, the cycle track would have to cross the road three times where there are buildings or significant structures such as the stone wall running west from Berryfield House. The section of old road where the railway crosses above the A862 could also be utilised to avoid the narrow footways under the bridge. The footway on the northern side of theA862 is the most continuous and most suitable for a shared use footway/cycle track, however, it would be under the minimum recommended width for this facility as the footway is less than 2m wide. Some sections of the track would have to be constructed within fields.

Section C: Bunchrew to Inchmore

Option 1: Verge Option

Narrow verge at Berryfield House

Narrow footways through Inchmore

Description:
Use the existing verges to build an off road cycle track

Problems and barriers for cyclists:
The cycle track would not be continuous - cyclists would have to cross the road three times
Possible conflict between pedestrians and cyclists through Inchmore

Stakeholder feedback:
Not consulted upon

Constraints:
Some sections would have to built within farmers field and the land may not be available
Cost

Opportunities:
Use old road under railway bridge

Other comments:
Route is relatively flat

Work required:
Land purchase
Construction of cycle track

Environmental considerations:
This option would not present any significant environmental impacts subject to habitat survey work before construction

Potential way forward:

Option is feasible, but should not be considered as it would create a poor quality facility

Option 2: Coastal Option

7.7.2 A cycle track could be built as close to the coast as possible on the northern side of the railway. This would provide a highly scenic route away from traffic. There are a number of disadvantages to this option: the cycle track would have to cross the road and the railway track, ground conditions may not be suitable for a cycle track and any structure or road close to the sea will suffer from the harsh environmental conditions. Also, this option could have detrimental impacts on the various designations (SSSI, SAC, and RAMSAR) although remedial measures may lessen any damage.

Section C: Bunchrew to Inchmore

Option 2: Coastal Option

Railway near Groam, cycle track could be built on left hand side of railway

Description:

Build a cycle track along the coast, north of the railway between Bunchrew and Kirkhill

Problems and barriers for cyclists:

Track would be exposed to coastal winds and sea spray
Track may be remote from some communities

Stakeholder feedback:

Not consulted upon

Constraints:

Cost
Objection from Railtrack
Impact on environment
May require land reclamation or elevated cycle track

Work required:

Land purchase
Agreement with relevant environmental bodies: SNH, SEPA, THC

Environmental considerations:

The Local Plan shows the coastal strip of land by Bunchrew and the land south of the A862 from Rhindui to Inchmore as being 'Prime Agricultural Land.' There is potential for disturbance of the SSSI from walkers with dogs and fast moving, colourful cyclists. Some landscaping works may be possible to alleviate disturbance effects. Seasonal considerations of disturbance by cyclists will be relevant as there may be lower usage in the autumn/winter/spring when the area is most heavily used by birds. Walkers with dogs are most likely to use the cycle track all year round.
There is an obvious area of reed-bed immediately west of Lentran Point which will be of wildlife value in the locality.
Several stream crossings are along this section, draining to the SSSI.

Potential way forward:

Option is feasible but costly. Should be considered as part of a wider tourism strategy.

7.8 Section D: Inchmore to Easter Moniack

Maintenance Partnership

7.8.1 Only one option has been identified for this section of A862 from Inchmore to Easter Moniack which contains the cycle track that was built as a result of community action. The 2m wide path is adequate for walking and cycling but unfortunately, the path is suffering from lack of maintenance and the surface has invasive weeds (horsetail) growing through it.

Section D: Inchmore to Easter Moniack
Improved maintenance  Detail of path requiring maintenance
Description:
Carry out regular maintenance of existing cycle track
Problems and barriers for cyclists:
Overgrown and poorly maintained paths discourage use
Stakeholder feedback:
Not consulted upon
Constraints:
Cost
Opportunities:
Community are willing to take part in maintenance
Other comments:
Maintenance is required as soon as possible
Work required:
Local Authority Roads Maintenance to develop maintenance schedule in partnership with local community
Environmental considerations:
No significant impacts predicted in retaining this section. Any herbicide use associated with weed removal from the track surface should be by a trained and competent person.
Potential way forward:
This option should be considered a priority in order to protect the fabric of the existing route and to prevent its demise

7.9 Section E: Easter Moniack to Dunballoch

Option 1: Verge Option

7.9.1 The southern side of the A862 from Easter Moniack to Dunballoch provides plenty of opportunity for an off road cycle track except for a short section near to the A833. At this point there is limited verge width due to the close proximity of a house. There is also one pinch point just west of Easter Moniack where the A862 crosses the Moniack Burn, but the 1.8m wide footpath over the bridge should be acceptable for cyclists over this short stretch. Although the verge on the southern side of the A862 is narrow in sections, there is the opportunity to build a track on the edge of the fields.

Section E: Easter Moniack to Dunballoch
Option 1: Verge Option    Southern side of verge
Description:
Build a new cycle track on the southern verge
Problems and barriers for cyclists:
Pinch point over Moniack Burn Possible discontinuous route if cycle track moves to northern verge near A833
Stakeholder feedback:
Not consulted upon
Constraints:
Landowner may object to cycle track on field edge Track on southern verge near A833 is dependant on agreement of local homeowner
Opportunities:
Cycle track could link into signed cycle routes, signposted at Dunballoch Cycle track on southern verge would link into existing one from Inchmore to Easter Moniack
Other comments:
Would provide a continuous off road cycle track
Work required:
Begin consultation with local landowners and homeowners to determine support for cycle track and willingness to release land
Environmental considerations:
This option would not present any significant negative environmental impacts subject to habitat survey work before construction
Potential way forward:
Discussions should be entered into with landowners to enable option to be ruled in or out.

Option 2: Track next to railway

7.9.2 The shortest route from Inchmore to Beauly is the route of the railway line. As discussed in Section B Option 4, it would be problematic and expensive to build a cycle track next to the railway line here, but the flat plains north of Kirkhill offers plenty of opportunity for a cycle track. A cycle track adjacent to the railway from Groam to Beauly would be the shortest route to Beauly as well as a flat and scenic one.

Section E: Easter Moniack to Dunballoch

Option 2: Track next to railway

View looking east from Groam

View looking west from Groam

Description:
Build a new cycle south of the railway from Groam to bridge at Wester Lovat

Problems and barriers for cyclists:
Getting to track may be a considerable detour
No protection from wind
Cyclists will need to dismount to access track across level crossing

Stakeholder feedback:
Not consulted upon

Constraints:
Railtrack may object
Landowners may object
Cost
Maintenance costs – damage from water/tides/flooding

Opportunities:
Scenic option
Could form part of a coastal cycle track to Inverness

Other comments:
As with Section B Option 3 (Seawall option) could be delivered through a wider tourism strategy

Work required:
Land purchase
New cycle track

Environmental considerations:
The railway line west from Lentran Point immediately abuts the salt marshes of the SSSI and such a route may not be favoured by SNH for reasons of disturbance. Some landscaping works may be possible to alleviate disturbance effects. Seasonal considerations of disturbance by cyclists will be relevant as there may be lower usage in the autumn/winter/spring when the area is most heavily used by birds. Walkers with dogs are most likely to use the cycle track all year round.
There are some quite extensive reed beds just west of Lentran Point. Most of the section from Lentran through to Wester Lovat is Prime Agricultural Land and part of it is also described in the Local Plan is valued as 'Remote Land', something that the cycle track would affect.
There are a number of streams/water course crossings in the section and also several wells marked on the OS map along the line of the railway towards Wester Lovat.

Potential way forward:
Option should be considered as part of a wider tourism strategy as per Section B Option 3

7.10 Section F: Dunballoch to Beauly train station and Lovat Bridge

(Lovat Bridge is treated as a separate issue within this section.)

Verge Option

7.10.1 The verge on the southern side of the A862 from Dunballoch to Lovat Bridge appears to be the most suitable location for an off road cycle track, however, there is woodland on the northern side of the road that could be used. From Lovat Bridge to the train station there is an existing footpath on the eastern side of the road. There are mature trees adjacent to this path which may make widening it problematic. There are also accesses to two properties that cyclists would have to cross. The western side of the road is bounded by fields and has the opportunity to provide an off road cycle track, however to reach a cycle track on this side of the road, cyclists would have to cross the A831.

Section F: Dunballoch to Beauly Train Station

Verge Option

Path in the eastern verge looking towards Beauly

Description:
Build a new cycle track in either the north or south verge – dependant on landowners

Problems and barriers for cyclists:
Cyclists may need to cross road
Not a flat route - existing incline from Dunballoch and over railway bridge

Stakeholder feedback:
Not consulted on

Constraints:
Landowners may object

Opportunities:
Could form part of a route for people from Kiltarlity
Existing footpath in eastern verge

Other comments:
None

Work required:
Land purchase
New cycle track

Environmental considerations:
Any work in the verges will need to take into account the proximity of the large mature oak trees. This is primarily a visual impact issue but inks to safety. Any clearance work here will damage the feeding routes (the top 250mm) and will not only damage the trees long term health but may also eventually render it unstable/unsafe for passing traffic. Effects on mature trees from root damage may take several years to manifest themselves. If there is no actual surface excavation work, roots will not be severed and could retain their structural/support role. The view of an arboriculture specialist should be sort.
The farmland either side of the existing roads at this point is described in the plan as Prime Agricultural Land.

Potential way forward:
Take advantage of existing infrastructure and widen existing footpath as far as possible up to mature trees. This should provide a track approximately 2m wide.

Lovat Bridge

7.10.2 Lovat Bridge was identified within consultation as a particular barrier for cyclists and pedestrians. Over the years there have been a number of incidents on the bridge involving opposing vehicles on the bridge or its approaches, eight of which were damage only. Three options have been considered.

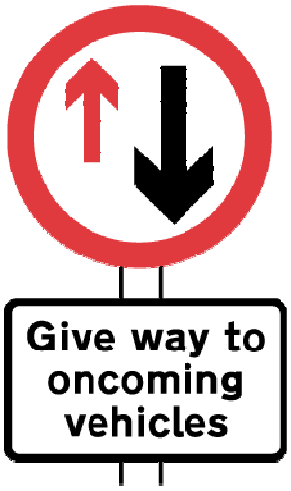
Lovat Bridge Option A: Experimental Priority Give Way

7.10.3 An experimental priority give-way system which would only permit vehicles in one direction to cross the bridge may enable the provision of a footway to be considered. The span of the bridge is 110m which is a considerable distance for shuttle working. A site trial may be a useful tool to determine the effectiveness of such a scheme without committing capital costs. A priority give way could use either Diag 615.1 or use Diag 811.1 for priority over oncoming vehicles.

7.10.4 The installation of a permanent footway or one marked on the carriageway using thermoplastic markings or surface dressing may discourage motorists from abusing this kind of system.

Section F: Dunballoch to Beauly Train Station

Lovat Bridge Option A: Experimental Priority Give Way



Description:
Consider a priority give way system

Problems and barriers for cyclists:
Motorists may not consider cyclists to be vehicles and ignore the give way
Motorists may ignore give way
Cyclists may still perceive road to be a hazard

Stakeholder feedback:
Stakeholders consider this bridge to be a hazard

Constraints:
110m span may be considered too long for a workable give way
Visibility may not be sufficient
Officer time may be limited to carry out trial

Opportunities:
5.5m carriageway could be reduced to provide pedestrian facilities and discourage two way traffic

Other comments:
Relatively low cost option
Work would in some way address accident record at this location

Work required:
Officer time for trial
Signing and lining if successful

Environmental considerations:
There are no significant negative impacts on biodiversity or the water environment, landscape, visual amenity or agriculture; however the erection of signs may be seen as an unwanted visual intrusion, especially in the context of a listed structure.

Potential way forward:
Given the span of the bridge is over 100m, a give way system without traffic lights is probably unworkable.

Lovat Bridge Option B: Installation of Traffic Signals

7.10.5 Two-way traffic signals are proposed to control traffic to one way working. A full assessment including preliminary traffic signal calculations would be required to determine how signals would affect capacity and traffic flows, but it is suggested that in the absence of traffic, a red signal should be displayed on both approaches to the bridge to encourage traffic to slow down. This arrangement would also reduce delay as the signals are able to return right of way to whichever side the vehicle is approaching. Vehicles would obtain a green light seconds after passing over a detector loop. Reducing the bridge to one lane running may enable an area for pedestrians to be marked on the carriageway.

Section F: Dunballoch to Beauly Train Station

Lovat Bridge Option B: Installation of Traffic Signals

Lovat Bridge

Description:
Install traffic signals to create one way working over bridge
Problems and barriers for cyclists:
Care must be taken for design appropriate access to and from road from cycle track Cyclists may still perceive road to be a hazard
Stakeholder feedback:
This option was suggested during consultation with users
Constraints:
Cost Issues relating to works on listed structure
Opportunities:
5.5m carriageway could be reduced to provide pedestrian facilities
Other comments:
Medium cost option
Work required:
Installation of traffic signals and detectors
Environmental considerations:
There are no significant negative impacts on biodiversity or the water environment, landscape, visual amenity or agriculture; however the erection of signs may be seen as an unwanted visual intrusion, especially in the context of a listed structure.
Potential way forward:
Option should be discussed with Highland Council

Lovat Bridge Option C: New pedestrian and cyclist bridge next to Lovat Bridge

7.10.6 The obvious solution to the current problems on Lovat Bridge is to build a new one adjacent to it for the sole use of pedestrians and cyclists. This will remove all conflict between vulnerable road users and motorists, but does not address the existing issues on Lovat Bridge for motorised vehicles. A new bridge requiring a 110m span would an expensive option and there may be objections relating to its close proximity to a listed structure. A new pedestrian and cyclist bridge across the River Beauly would be more appropriate upstream at Ferrybrae providing a shorter route directly into the heart of Beauly.

Section F: Dunballoch to Beauly Train Station

Lovat Bridge Option C: New pedestrian and cyclist bridge adjacent to Lovat Bridge

New pedestrian bridge being installed next to existing road bridge on the Forres to Findhorn cycle route

Description:
Build a new bridge for pedestrians and cyclists adjacent to existing Lovat Bridge
Problems and barriers for cyclists:
Access and egress to bridge should be continuous
Stakeholder feedback:
Stakeholders have not been consulted on this option
Constraints:
Cost Issues relating to new bridge next to listed structure
Opportunities:
None
Other comments:
A new bridge over the River Beauly is better suited downstream to link Kirkhill with Beauly
Work required:
New bridge
Environmental considerations:
Any additional bridges next to Lovat bridge will alter its setting and character in landscape and visual terms. The preferred location for a bridge would be better downstream subject to the usual environmental controls being put in place from the outset when geotechnical surveys are required.
Potential way forward:
Option should only be considered as a new bridge would be of more use to the community closer to Beauly

7.11 Section G: Beauly train station to Beauly town centre

Promotion and Traffic Surveys

7.11.1 The section of road from the Beauly train station to Beauly town centre is within a 30mph zone and had an annual average daily traffic flow of 4851 in 2004. The amount of traffic and the existing speed limit suggest that on-road cycle facilities are appropriate. There are no figures available for classification of vehicles so it would be advisable to carry out a survey to determine if the amount of HGVs are under the 15% threshold for on road cycle facilities. A survey to determine the 85th%ile speed should also be carried out to ensure there is compliance with the speed limit.

7.11.2 If there is a problem with speeding traffic, consideration could be given to traffic management solutions such as chicanes or speed reduction measures. There is also an opportunity to provide cycle parking within the town.

7.11.3 One of the most effective ways to promote cycling and improve the safety of cyclists is to offer cycle training, especially in town centres where space to provide specific cycle facilities is limited. Interpretation boards showing places to walk and cycle with signing for routes could also be considered as part of a package to encourage more cycling.

Section G: Beauly Train Station to Beauly Town Centre

Promotion and Traffic Surveys

Beauly Town Centre

Description:
Traffic management and promotion based activities to encourage more cycling within the town
Problems and barriers for cyclists:
On road cycle routes are less likely to attract novice or young cyclists Cyclists must still contend with issues such as on road parking, car doors opening etc
Stakeholder feedback:
No feedback received
Constraints:
'Soft measures' require revenue funding Potential objections to traffic management schemes
Opportunities:
School could be a key player in encouraging more cycling within the town
Other comments:
Options for alternative routes for HGVs may be difficult
Work required:
Carry out surveys to verify speeds are within the 85th%ile and there are less than 15% HGVs Consider traffic management solution if there is a problem with speeding traffic Consider holistic approach to encourage more cycling with training, cycle parking and signing should be established to carry forward initiatives within the town
Environmental considerations:
This option would not present any significant negative environmental impacts
Potential way forward:
As Census data shows there are a significant number of short car journeys within Beauly (15% of all journeys within the survey) hence there is potential to create modal shift. Option should be discussed with local partners including the business community, local residents, Community Council and school.

7.12 Section H: Inchmore to Kirkhill

New Cycle track

7.12.1 The road to Kirkhill from Inchmore (B9164) is a key route for residents in Kirkhill. The road leads to the main route (A862), the Old North Inn and also links via the toucan crossing, to the existing cycle track and other local routes for walking and cycling off this. The road currently has a footpath on the eastern side, but it is not wide enough for two people to walk side by side and it is not designated as a cycle route. Within the Kirkhill Primary School Travel Plan the Action Plan has highlighted the need for the footpath to Inchmore to be widened to allow cycling and for the introduction of advisory cycle lanes within Kirkhill.

7.12.2 Within Kirkhill there is an advisory 20mph zone around the school with traffic calming and a zebra crossing.

Section H: Inchmore to Kirkhill

Build New Cycle Track

Advisory 20mph zone

Existing footway to Kirkhill

Description:

Support measures detailed within Kirkhill Primary School Travel Plan:
Create 2m wide footway/cycle track from Inchmore to Kirkhill
Install advisory cycle lanes on B9134 through Kirkhill

Problems and barriers for cyclists:

On road facilities are less likely to attract young and novice cyclists

Stakeholder feedback:

No feedback received

Constraints:

Cost
Objections from local community
Objections from land owner for path widening

Opportunities:

Safer Routes to School funding could be used to fund part or all of the works

Other comments:

None

Work required:

Co-ordination with Safer Routes to School Officer
Consultation with local community
New off road cycle track
Signing and lining

Environmental considerations:

This option would not present any significant environmental impacts

Potential way forward:

Community groups working with a local authority can sometimes become disillusioned if they do not see progress. Work to implement the actions within the Kirkhill Primary School Travel Plan supports those people involved within its development and will encourage them to continue volunteering as they see the results of their grass roots work

7.13 Section I: Kirkhill to Dunballoch

7.13.1 The B9164 from Dunballoch to Kirkhill provides a less trafficked alternative to the A862 for cyclists; however, it is not a flat route. The road is currently ideal for cycling and is signed as part of a local route.

Section I: Kirkhill to Dunballoch

Signed Route

Road looking towards Kirkhill

Description:
Use existing road as a signed cycle route
Problems and barriers for cyclists:
On road cycle routes are less likely to attract novice or young cyclists
Stakeholder feedback:
Stakeholders consider this route to be suitable for cycling
Constraints:
Increased levels of traffic and further residential development may make this route less attractive
Opportunities:
Networks of quiet lanes, footpaths and cycle tracks in the vicinity could be used as the basis of a local map to promote walking and cycling.
Other comments:
Low cost option
Work required:
Signing
Environmental considerations:
This option would not present any significant environmental impacts
Potential way forward:
Work with the local community groups, the Highland Cycle Campaign and The Highland Council to discuss potential and funding for a local map

7.14 Section J: Kirkhill to Beauly

7.14.1 This option proposes a route using the existing roads from Kirkhill, the existing bridge over the railway to Wester Lovat to link to a new off road cycle track between the railway and the river to a new bridge crossing to Ferry Road. Along with the pinch point over the railway at Clachnaharry, a bridge to replace the ferry that stopped running in the 1950's has been the most popular request from the local community groups that have been consulted with for this study. A bridge at this location has a number of advantages:

- It is just over 2km (1.3 miles) shorter from Kirkhill to Beauly than the A862 route via Lovat Bridge
- The access to Beauly along Ferry Road provides an almost traffic free route into the town and avoids the A862
- The route avoids Lovat Bridge – a major deterrent for vulnerable road users
- The route avoids the incline over the railway
- A new bridge in this location would increase access to the river and encourage more leisure use, especially by anglers
- Has the potential to create modal shift for journeys between Kirkhill and Beauly
- Has the support of the local community

7.14.2 There are also a number of disadvantages

- Cost
- Impact on the environment
- Possible negative implications for residents at Ferrybrae
- Ferry Road has flooded in the past (1960s)

7.14.3 Figure 7.1 shows a photograph of Ferry Road flooded by the River Beauly in 1960. Although flooding is not a common occurrence in this area, it is an important consideration. A bridge at this location is capable of being a 'stand alone' project as much of the connecting infrastructure (roads from Kirkhill and Beauly) to link the two communities is already in place.

Figure 7.1: Flooding on Ferry Road, 1960

Section J: Kirkhill to Beauly

New pedestrian and cycle bridge

View across River Beauly from Ferry Road towards Ferrybrae

Ferry Road looking towards Beauly

Description:
Build new bridge from Ferrybrae to Ferry Road in Beauly

Problems and barriers for cyclists:
Hill from Ferrybrae to Kirkhill
On road route may deer some users

Stakeholder feedback:
This option is well supported by all consultees

Constraints:
Cost
Objections from adjacent residents at Ferrybrae
Objections from Railtrack
Ferry Road has flooded severely (1960's)
Possible environmental constraints

Opportunities:
Partnership development would be eligible to seek a variety of funding: sport (angling), transport, leisure, etc

Other comments:
None

Work required:
Consultation with local community
Consultation with affected residents
New off road cycle track; New bridge; Signing

Environmental considerations:
A route using the existing roads from Kirkhill to Wester Lovat would not present any significant negative environmental impacts. For any new cycle track west towards Beauly there is some Prime Agricultural Land north of the railway and habitat surveying will be essential.
A new pedestrian/cycle bridge over the river at Beauly would undoubtedly make the route very attractive. It will be a major construction project requiring the highest standards of environmental protection due to the river location. Habitat and species surveying will also be required beforehand.

Potential way forward:

Establish a working group to take forward the proposal, seek funding and the necessary permissions as this proposal has substantial public support, has the ability to create modal shift for journeys from Kirkhill to Beauly and has added wider access, physical activity and leisure benefits.