

Appendix C: Progress on the previous Highland Strategy

3.1 Introduction

This section looks back at the Highland LTS 2000-06, and reports progress made on key elements. Targets were set in the LTS 2000 against a number of indicators, as a measure of the achievements of the last LTS. Progress against the targets set are discussed below.

3.2 T1 – Capital Budget.

The Council proposed that with an increase in capital budget of £3m pa for road infrastructure it would be better able to achieve its targets. Capital spending has only increased by £1.242m pa (from base of £4.217m).

3.3 T2 – Revenue resources.

The Council set a target to increase the amount spent on road maintenance, to £17.95m by 2005, in order to sustain road conditions in Highland. This increase would have required greater investment from central government. However, this has not been met, with actual spending at £16.87m in 2007/8.

3.4 T4 – Increased number of journeys undertaken by bicycle

Inverness already has a level of cycling above the national and Scottish average. The 2001 census recorded cycling at 6% of all trips in Inverness, with the Scottish average at 1.7%, and the UK average at 2%. A specific Scottish target for cycling is being developed as part of the Cycling Action Plan for Scotland (CAPS). The consultation target (subject to consultation) is 10% of all journeys taken in Scotland by 2010 will be by bicycle. The Highland Council aims to continue providing better facilities to encourage cycling.

3.5 T5 – Improved quality and increased use of public transport

Targets were set to increase the attractiveness and use of public transport. Interchange facilities were improved at Aviemore, and there were bus station improvements at Portree and Fort William during the plan period. In addition, Inverness Bus Station was re-developed to provide a high quality interchange

facility. Across the whole area a target of introducing new bus shelters has been met with approximately 20 new ones every year.

Bus priority, traffic lights and bus lanes, and rerouting of general traffic, was introduced in Inverness, with further measures to follow in the next plan period.

The Bus Route Development Grant has made a significant difference to public transport across the Highland Council area in recent years, amounting to £3m to Highland Council since 2005. This Grant is now part of the single allocation to local authorities.

On the rail network, improvements have been achieved with a new station at Beauly; faster train journey times, notably on the Inverness to Wick route; and punctuality improvements on Invernet routes, with trains running at between 80-100% of the timetable. The Invernet rail network was introduced since the previous LTS in 2005, using monies from Scottish Government Public Transport Fund.

The Scottish Government Public Transport Fund overall has contributed £4m to the Highland Council area since the last LTS.

For both rail and bus networks there is now the national comprehensive timetable information, TRAVELINE, available.

These measures combined with investment from the major bus operators have helped increase the number of journeys to work by public transport. On 'Invernet' routes an increase of 20% has been seen, with a high proportion of commuting trips from north of Inverness.

3.6 T6 – Increased provision of community transport and other unconventional transport

There has been an increase in provision of dial-a-bus and subsidised taxi services in remote rural areas.

3.7 T7 – Reduction in amount of non-essential traffic in town centres

In general for Inverness and the Inner Moray Firth area, the target for traffic growth was to limit growth to the lower national growth rate of 2.5% per year. On average the trunk road traffic numbers grew by +2% pa, but on some routes notably the A9 it was +10% on some sections.

3.8 T9 – Reduction in numbers of road accidents

Targets for road safety are set at a national level. For fatal and serious road accident casualties in Highland the target of less than 205 by the year 2010 has already been met, with a total of 177 by 2006. The target for the number of child casualties is less than 17 by 2010, which by 2006 was at a total of 11.

3.9 T11 – Encourage improved air services

Within the region efforts to improve air services, with some subsidy to services and the Air Discount Scheme for residents, the change from 2000 to 2006 in passenger movements showed an increase at Inverness of +74%, and on average Highlands/Islands airports there was an increase of +13% (although this includes some outside Highland area). The number of aircraft movements at Inverness increased +49% and at Wick +29%.

3.10 Implications of progress 2000-2006

The new LTS provides an opportunity to refocus on priorities for the Highland area, and address areas where further progress is still required.

In particular:

- More ambitious targets are required for road safety
- Greater levels of investment continue to be required to maintain and improve transport services and infrastructure, although the economic climate makes this a considerable challenge
- Greater effort is required to limit the rate of traffic growth, particularly on key corridors

- The Highland Council needs to continue to work with regional partners to achieve coordinated improvements to public transport across and within boundaries, seeking innovative and non-conventional sources of funding where possible.