

## The Highland Council

Transport, Environmental and Community Services Committee  
6 February 2014

Agenda Item	<b>5</b>
Report No	<b>TEC 3/14</b>

### Green Transport Strategy

#### Report by Head of Transport and Infrastructure

#### Summary

This report invites Members to approve the draft Green Transport Strategy (GTS) for consultation. The GTS has been prepared following discussion with key stakeholders and sets out a number of initiatives the Council is currently undertaking to ensure the Highlands plays its part in reducing carbon and other emissions which have a detrimental impact on our environment. In addition, the document sets out the Council's objectives and policies with respect to Green Transport and will make a significant contribution the Carbon Clever Highlands.

#### 1. Background

- 1.1. The Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009 creates the statutory framework for greenhouse gas emission reductions in Scotland by setting an interim 42% reduction target for 2020, and an 80% reduction target for 2050. To help ensure the delivery of these targets, the Act also requires Scottish Ministers to set batches of annual targets for Scottish emissions in the period 2010 to 2050.
- 1.2. Delivering the interim and final emissions reduction targets set out in the Climate Change Act will be challenging. Tackling emissions from transport will require a forward thinking approach to reduce the impact travel has on the environment, and indeed reduce the requirement to travel in the first instance.
- 1.3. It is clear that Sustainability and Green Travel are playing an ever increasing role in our society as we strive to protect the environment while fulfilling the needs of the population through growth and development. The Highland Council has recognised this, and the Programme for the Highland Council contains a commitment to work with partner agencies to produce a Green Transport Strategy. In doing this it was recognised that the objective was to produce an effective and attractive transport network Highland wide, providing an alternative to the car.
- 1.4. The main principles and aims for achieving an efficient and sustainable transport network are set out in the Council's Local Transport Strategy (LTS) ([www.highland.gov.uk/lts](http://www.highland.gov.uk/lts)). The GTS will aim to compliment the LTS by providing a bespoke document which will set out the objectives and policies of The Highland Council, recognising the contrasting urban and rural nature of the region and the challenges this brings.

- 1.5. Copies of the Draft Green Transport Strategy will be made available in the Members' Lounge, link to the Strategy:-  
[www.highland.gov.uk/GreenTransportStrategy](http://www.highland.gov.uk/GreenTransportStrategy)

## **2. Stakeholder Engagement**

- 2.1. In order to review the sustainable transport needs of the Highland region, a consultation exercise was undertaken with key partners and stakeholders in October 2013. Individuals attended a workshop where draft policies and objectives were presented, with views sought on potential issues and opportunities. Attendees included those from public, private, and third sector organisations, in order to capture the broad range of opinions.
- 2.2. Following the workshop further consultation was undertaken with some of our partners, such as the NHS, on how we could work together to make the most of our resources and provide better value through collaborative working.
- 2.3. There were a number of themes raised in the workshop and stakeholder engagements, with the key messages being:-
- The needs of rural and urban populations in The Highlands are very different. Many of the national green transport policies are applicable to urban situations where congestion and resulting pollution are major issues. Many of the rural communities in The Highlands do not suffer from these problems, but instead have poor connectivity. Being able to provide any transport solution can therefore be a positive step.
  - New Technologies can significantly aid the progress of green transport and reduce carbon emissions, e.g. new fuel efficiencies, hybrid and electric vehicles, communication technology reduces the need to travel.
  - We are a “car precious” society where cost pressures aren't enough to dissuade everyone from driving. Historical perceptions of alternative modes of transport, especially public transport, can deter people from using them even though they have improved significantly over recent years. Changes in perceptions are therefore required and not just new infrastructure.
  - We have low levels of active travel in comparison to our European neighbours, which may be related to the perceived dangers in walking and cycling. Mapping active travel routes to demonstrate the safe options available to private car alternatives will encourage people to walk and cycle, with associated health benefits, and reduction in carbon emissions
  - Motorists, cyclists and pedestrians are not very understanding of each other and conflicts can often arise as a result of this. Attitudes require to change in order to improve behaviour and road safety. This will be progressed through new design approaches to sharing space.

- 2.4. In addition to the above key themes, there were a number of specific points raised in relation to individual modes of transportation. These have been incorporated into the relevant sections within the GTS.

### **3. The Proposed Strategy**

- 3.1. For the past decade, the national focus has seen a shift away from private car travel to more effective public transport, and more sustainable forms of travel such as walking and cycling, where this is appropriate. More recently, the added health benefits of active travel have been emphasised and there is a further national push to encourage people to walk and cycle to improve their own health, particularly for journeys under 5km.
- 3.2. For shorter journeys walking is the most sustainable form of travel and is capable of substituting for private car travel. Approximately 62% of journeys made in the Highland region are 5km or less, and unfortunately the vast majority of these are made by private car travel (over 60%). Some of those car journeys will be out of necessity due to either the physical condition of the person making the journey, disability for example, or the lack of existing infrastructure to safely undertake the journey. The vast majority will however be due to the traveller making a choice to take their car and the reasons for this need to be understood.
- 3.3. While walking and cycling can substitute for private car travel over shorter journeys there will be a challenge in providing effective and integrated passenger transport as well as reducing carbon and greenhouse gas emissions on longer journeys where walking or cycling is impractical. Persuading residents to use sustainable public transport services, as well as private companies to transport materials and goods by rail, is considered critical to achieving a sustainable transport network in the long term.
- 3.4. The public transport network and rail/water freight networks will therefore require to be “fit for purpose” to ensure that residents and private companies have an available choice of mode rather than continuing to travel by private car and road freight respectively. The workshop and stakeholder engagement exercise undertaken established a number of the perceived barriers to public transport as well as other modes of transport, and these will need to be overcome in order to encourage a real change in travel behaviour.
- 3.5. There is an extensive program of works planned for the Highland region across various modes of transportation. The improvements will allow the majority of residents in the Highland region a choice of mode, which may cover part of, or the full, journey.
- 3.6. The GTS sets a number of objectives and associated policies which will be aimed at delivering Sustainable and Green Transport. The targets being set will not be easy, but achieving them will have multiple benefits. There will be less air pollution, we will be healthier, services will be more accessible, growth will be stimulated, we will have an improved infrastructure, and the Highlands will make a significant contribution to mitigate against climate change.

#### **4. Programme**

- 4.1. Should the recommendation for approval be taken forward, the draft Green Transport Strategy will be uploaded to the Council's website to allow for a wider consultation with public bodies, private business, community enterprises, and the residents of The Highlands. It is suggested that a 4 week consultation period be allowed for.
- 4.2. Following the further consultation exercise, the feedback and comments would be sifted to establish whether any further key themes or issues require to be incorporated within the GTS. If necessary, a further workshop could be undertaken to explore any new subject matter.
- 4.3. Timescales for amendments to the GTS are variable depending upon the level of feedback provided in the consultation. It is suggested that 4-8 week period be applicable for revisions to a Final version of the document, which would result in the Final GTS being available towards the start of the Summer.

#### **5. Implications**

- 5.1. There are no resource implications arising from this report, as the GTS will be produced within the current budget allocation.
- 5.2. There are no equality implications arising from this report.
- 5.3. Legal implications arise from the duties and targets on the Council regarding mode share targets set.
- 5.4. The Green Transport Strategy will make a significant contribution to Carbon Clever Highlands.
- 5.5. There are no known risk implications arising from this report.

#### **6. Recommendations**

- 6.1. Members are invited to approve the draft Green Transport Strategy for consultation and agree the proposed programme for a 4 week public consultation period subject to minor post-Committee changes, including formatting, typographic and illustrative amendments agreed in consultation with the Chair of this Committee.

Designation: Head of Transport and Infrastructure

Date: 24 January 2014

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Background Papers: Draft Green Transport Strategy