

Agenda Item	11
Report No	ECI/07/25

The Highland Council

Committee: Economy and Infrastructure

Date: 13 February 2025

Report Title: Highland Draft Local Transport Strategy

Report By: Assistant Chief Executive - Place

1 Purpose/Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report provides Members with the post consultation draft of the Council's Local Transport Strategy (LTS) 2025 - 2035. The paper summarises the stages undertaken to develop the draft LTS from Case for Change work through to the more recent approach adopted and the significant consultation and engagement carried out and asks that the Economy and Infrastructure Committee approve the Strategy.
- 1.2 The strategy will play a key role in setting out the future direction and policy focus for transport in Highland over the coming years.

2 Recommendations

- 2.1 Members are asked to:
 - i. **Note** the content of the Case for Change Report within Appendix 3;
 - ii. **Note** the content of the Engagement Report within Appendix 4;
 - iii. **Approve** the Draft Local Transport Strategy within Appendix 2; and
 - iv. **Agree** officers progress with the Delivery Plan and development of a Full Monitoring and Evaluation Plan.

3 Implications

- 3.1 **Resource** - The Sustainable Transport Team has led on the development of the Draft LTS with cross-department input and a shared ownership model, which was supported through a working group and governance group structure.

Consultants Pell Frischmann were appointed through a competitive tender process in August 2024 to support the Highland Council with the development of the Draft LTS.

Subject to the approval of this paper the development of the Delivery Plan, which is the next stage of the Local Transport Strategy, will be led by the Sustainable Transport Team following a similar working and governance structure to the strategy development. Further resource through the utilisation of a consultant to support this process has been identified and can be taken forward subject to the approval of this Committee Report. This process will require input from staff across several different departments.

It should also be highlighted that the Local Transport Strategy and in particular the development and implementation of the Delivery Plan cannot solely sit with the Council: other public and private sector organisations have a key role in delivering on the policies and objectives of the LTS, through the development and implementation of the finalised Delivery Plan.

Exploring and identifying funding sources for the specifics of the Delivery Plan is integral to delivering the objectives of the LTS. The Delivery Plan should explore new and innovative ways of funding transport related projects with a focus on a cross-department and a cross-partner approach.

- 3.2 **Legal** - There is no statutory requirement for a local authority to produce a transport strategy only a statutory requirement for the Scottish Government to provide guidance on Local Transport Strategies which is contained within the Transport (Scotland) Act 2001.

There is however a statutory requirement for Regional Transport Partnerships to produce a Regional Transport Strategy (RTS) hence the work nearing completion on this element by HITRANS and the importance of the LTS being aligned with this statutory piece of work.

Members should also note cross-departmental work between the Sustainable Transport Team and the Development Plans Team to ensure alignment and economies of scale between the LTS work and the Transport Evidence Report which forms part of the statutory requirements for the Highland Wide Local Development Plan.

- 3.3 **Risk** - a number of risks have been identified; they are:

Securing funding and cultivating the commitment of other public and private sector organisations to deliver on the objectives of the LTS through the Delivery Plan. The funding environment is challenging and unpredictable, and single-year funding further restricts delivery.

If the strategy is not adopted there is a risk that the Council's current Transport policies are significantly disjointed and out of step with the current policy context. There is a potential risk that external funding providers will look more favourably on those local authorities that have an adopted Local Transport Strategy than those without.

- 3.4 **Health and Safety (risks arising from changes to plant, equipment, process, or people)** – There are no significant health and safety implications arising from the adoption of the Draft Local Transport Strategy.

- 3.5 **Gaelic** – Gaelic is an important part of the Highland culture and identity. The finalised plan and other relevant material will include Gaelic as per the Council's policy.

4 Impacts

4.1 In Highland, all policies, strategies or service changes are subject to an integrated screening for impact for Equalities, Poverty and Human Rights, Children's Rights and Wellbeing, Climate Change, Islands and Mainland Rural Communities, and Data Protection. Where identified as required, a full impact assessment will be undertaken.

4.2 Considering impacts is a core part of the decision-making process and needs to inform the decision-making process. When taking any decision, Members must give due regard to the findings of any assessment.

4.3 Integrated Impact Assessment - Summary

4.3.1 An Integrated Impact Assessment screening was undertaken on 12 December 2024. The conclusions have been subject to the relevant Manager Review and Approval.

4.3.2 The Screening process has concluded that there are only **potential** impacts from the LTS: actual impacts will depend on the delivery of projects and initiatives taken through the Delivery Plan and that will depend on resource including funding which at this stage is unknown. As noted in 3.1, the Delivery Plan will be developed in Spring 2025 in a separate piece of work.

In this strategy there are a number of positive potential impacts for Equalities, Poverty & Human Rights, for Children and Young People and for Mainland Rural and Islands. There are also positive potential impacts and some slight potential negative impacts for Climate Change. There are no impacts for Data Protection. Details within **Appendix 1**. As this is a strategic document, there is no need for a full Integrated Impact Assessment.

Individual projects and initiatives coming through the Delivery Plan will be subject to IAAs as appropriate. Members are asked to consider the summary within **Appendix 1** to support the decision-making process.

4.3.2 Impact Assessment Area

Impact Assessment Area	Conclusion of Screening/Full Assessment
Equality	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Children and Young People – <i>Potential positive impact</i>Children affected by disability – <i>Potential positive impact</i>Older adults - <i>Potential positive impact</i>Other protected characteristics – <i>Potential positive impact</i>
Socio-economic	<i>Potential positive impact</i>
Human Rights	<i>Potential positive impact</i>
Children's Rights and Well-being	<i>Potential positive impact</i>
Island and Mainland Rural	<i>Potential positive impact</i>
Climate Change	<i>Potential positive impact and some potential negative impact</i>
Data Rights	<i>No impact</i>

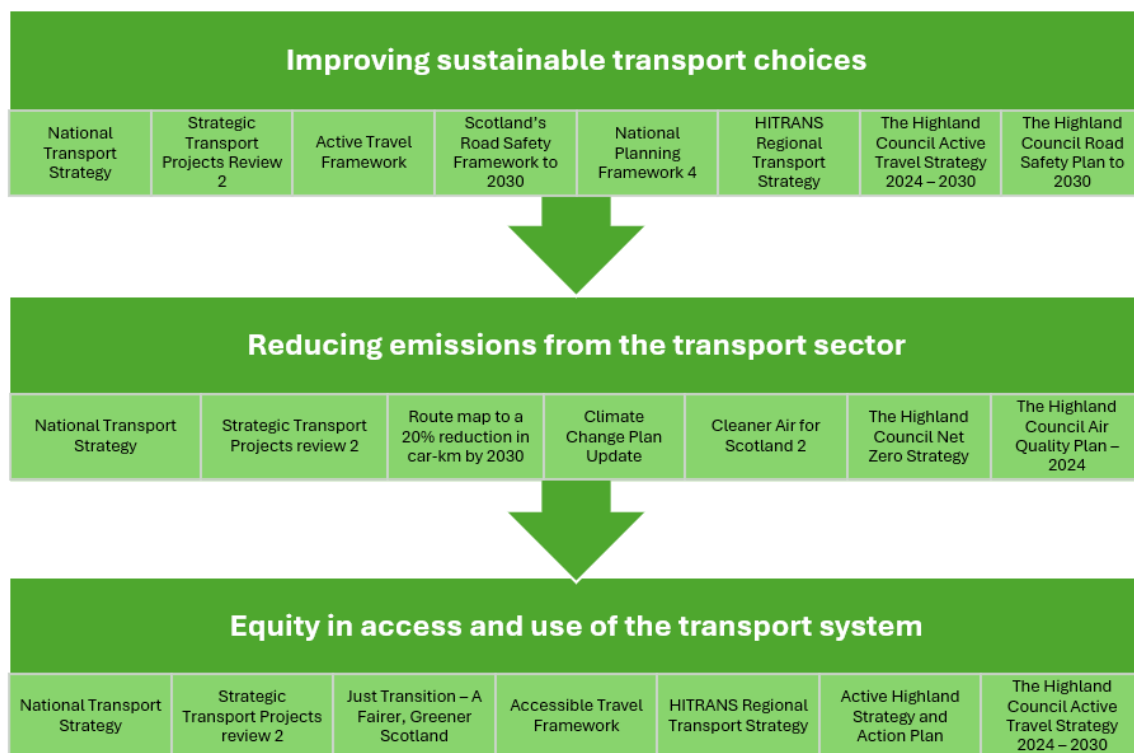
5 Background

- 5.1 The Highland Council has been developing a new Draft Local Transport Strategy (LTS) for 2025-2035. The previous LTS was adopted in 2010 and does not reflect the significant changes in the national and local policy context since then. The strategy will play a key role in setting out the future direction and policy focus for transport in Highland over the coming years.

Transport Scotland published updated [guidance](#) for Local Authorities on LTS development in June 2024 and this has been utilised in the production of the Highland LTS.

5.2 Policy Review & Alignment

The LTS must seamlessly align with broader local policies, including planning, economic development, environmental and health initiatives, as well as with Scottish national and regional strategies. By doing so, the LTS will play a crucial role in enhancing other local policy areas while contributing to the vision and ambitions outlined in the National Transport Strategy and HITRANS Regional Transport Strategy. This alignment ensures a cohesive approach to achieving sustainable and impactful outcomes for communities in Highland. Further detail of the policy context and alignment can be found in the Policy Context section of the LTS. The following diagram categorises the main messages emerging from this wider policy context review, along with some of the key policy and strategy documents.



Supporting local living					
National Transport Strategy	Active Travel Framework	National Planning Framework 4	HITRANS Regional Transport Strategy	The Highland Council Active Travel Strategy 2024 – 2030	The Highland Council Local Development Plans



Supporting the local economy and embracing future opportunities					
National Planning Framework 4	Just Transition – A Fairer, Greener Scotland	Draft Regional Economic Strategy	Highland Investment Plan	The Highland Council Local Development Plans	The Highland Council Strategic Tourism Infrastructure Development Plan



Maintaining the transport system and having resilience					
National Transport Strategy	Climate Change - Scottish National Adaptation Plan	HITRANS Regional Transport Strategy	The Highland Council Corporate Plan	The Highland Council Road Asset Management Plan	The Highland Council Investment Plan

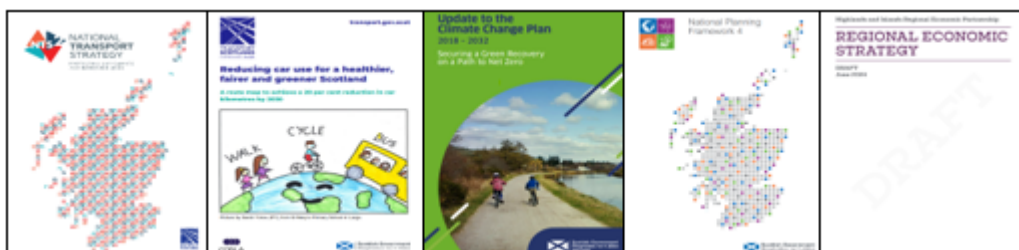
Supporting local living					
National Transport Strategy	Active Travel Framework	National Planning Framework 4	HITRANS Regional Transport Strategy	The Highland Council Active Travel Strategy 2024 – 2030	The Highland Council Local Development Plans



Supporting the local economy and embracing future opportunities					
National Planning Framework 4	Just Transition – A Fairer, Greener Scotland	Draft Regional Economic Strategy	Highland Investment Plan	The Highland Council Local Development Plans	The Highland Council Strategic Tourism Infrastructure Development Plan



Maintaining the transport system and having resilience					
National Transport Strategy	Climate Change - Scottish National Adaptation Plan	HITRANS Regional Transport Strategy	The Highland Council Corporate Plan	The Highland Council Road Asset Management Plan	The Highland Council Investment Plan



- 5.3 A joined approach to the LTS and the Highland Local Development Plan (HLDP) has been adopted to ensure that the inter-relationship between these two documents is addressed. Further information on this element was presented at the last Economy and Infrastructure (E&I) Committee and can be found [here](#).

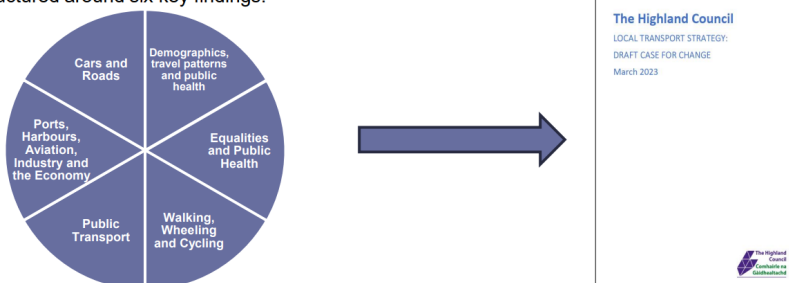
6 LTS Delivery Work Programme

6.1 LTS Case for Change (CfC) 2023 Work Activities

Work on the new LTS commenced in Spring 2023 with the Case for Change and the associated public engagement, the results of which can be found at **Appendix 3**. A summary of the CfC is outlined below, alongside key issues, opportunities and feedback.

Overview

- LTS Case for Change (CfC) completed in 2023 by THC Sustainable Transport Team.
- Presented analysis of the problems and opportunities affecting the transport system in Highland.
- Structured around six key findings:



- Also proposed six LTS objectives – mirror the HITRANS Regional Transport Strategy with minor modification of geographic focus from 'region' to 'Highland'.
- Consultation in Spring 2023 focused on the level of agreement to each of the findings presented in the CfC.
- Over 200 responses received – 21 from organisations; 221 from individuals.

Key Headlines

Problems

- **Travel trends counter to net zero and transport policy.**
- **Access to transport is poor** in most parts of Highland with a lack of alternatives for some leading to 'forced car ownership'.
- **Bus passenger numbers falling** placing pressure on commercial operations, compounded by funding challenges.
- **Conflict between different user demands** at different times of the day e.g. fulfilment of school bus contracts v the commuter going to work in the morning.
- Line and capacity **constraints of the rail network**.
- **Integration** between different modes of travel.
- **Cost of public transport** relative to private car.
- **Availability and quality of active travel infrastructure.**
- **Resilience** of the transport system e.g. impact of events/diversions, seasonal demand.
- **Demand** on the local and strategic road network in Highland from tourism and renewables activity.
- **Maintenance** of the local road network and active travel routes.

Opportunities

- **Thriving sectors** e.g. renewables (including Cromarty Firth Green Freeport).
- **Community led schemes**, underpinned by a strong community spirit. This is reflected in the breadth of the volunteer run community transport services currently on offer.
- **Existing partnership working** across the region. From a transport perspective this includes cross-working with HITRANS, neighbouring authorities, national Government and community groups/local organisations.
- **Local living** opportunity with most people in Highland living in a settlement providing opportunity for people to meet most of their everyday needs locally. For rural areas the concept can be expanded to longer distances and "clusters" of settlements.

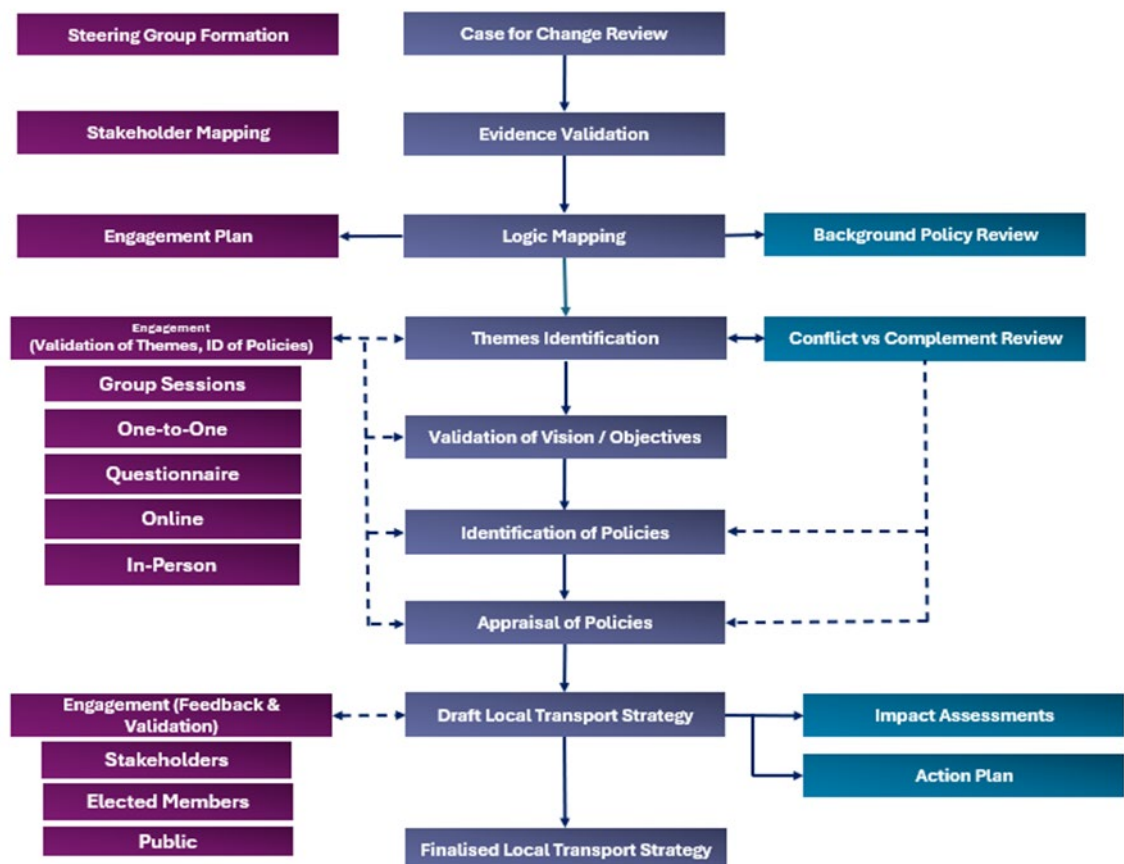
Case for Change Feedback

How much do you agree or disagree that these key findings provide the right baseline to develop the next Local Transport Strategy?	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Demographics, Travel Patterns and Climate Breakdown	41 (17%)	136 (56%)	47 (20%)	17 (7%)
Equalities and Public Health	88 (37%)	105 (44%)	31 (13%)	17 (7%)
Walking, Wheeling and cycling	61 (25%)	102 (42%)	51 (21%)	27 (11%)
Public Transport	75 (31%)	118 (50%)	30 (12%)	18 (7%)
Ports, Harbours, Industry and the Economy	66 (27%)	131 (54%)	31 (13%)	13 (5%)
Cars and Roads	55 (23%)	120 (50%)	45 (19%)	21 (9%)

6.2 LTS Development (2024-2025) Work Activities

6.2.1 After a slight delay, work on the draft LTS re-commenced in Summer 2024 and is due to complete in early 2025. Subject to committee approval the next phase of work will commence in Spring 2025 with the development of a Delivery Plan alongside a full Monitoring & Evaluation Plan. The approach to developing the draft LTS and the associated timeline can be found in Fig 1 below:

Approach to Developing the LTS:-



6.2.2 Timeline

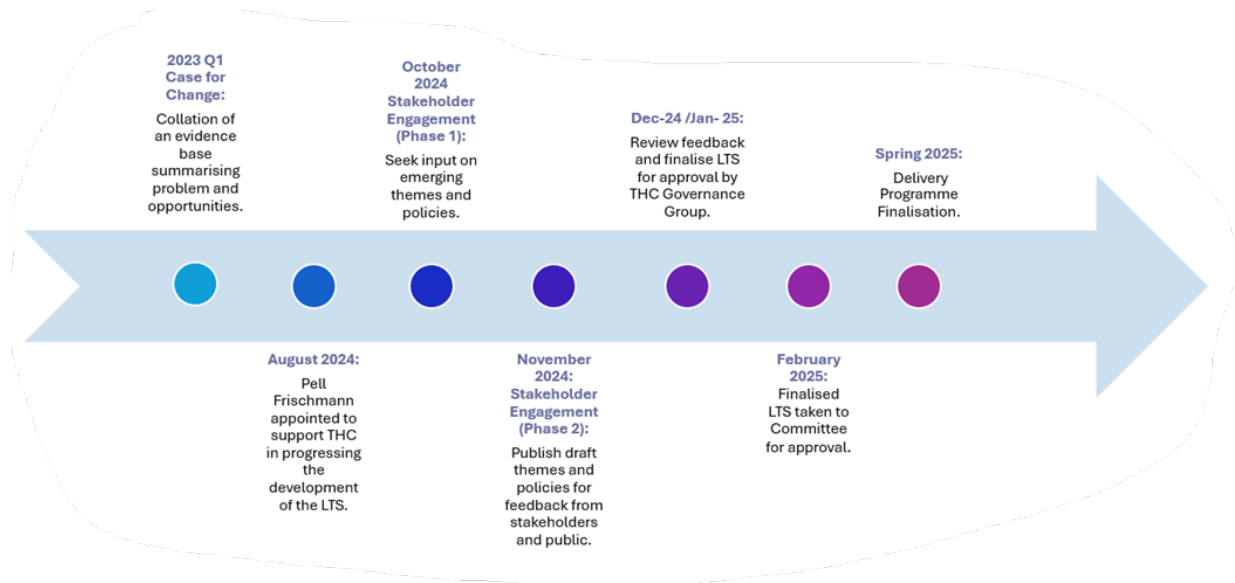


Fig 1

6.2.3 A governance structure for the strategy was established in Summer 2024 facilitating input and shared ownership across teams. The structure consisted of:-

- an internal governance group, meeting monthly to oversee the draft LTS development; and
- an internal working group, meeting monthly bringing together officers from different policy areas within the Council plus HiTrans to provide input as well as offer check and challenge in the development of the strategy.

6.2.4 2024 Activities Headlines

- **July 2024:** Officers re-mobilised work on developing the new LTS.
- **August 2024:** Pell Frischmann consultants appointed to provide support.
- **September 2024:**
 - Peer review of the LTS Case for Change prepared in 2023.
 - Review of local, regional and national policy of relevance to the LTS.
 - Refinement of the LTS objectives.
 - Stakeholder mapping and preparation of an Engagement and Communications Plan.
- **October 2024:**
 - Internal officer and external stakeholder engagement.
 - Development of draft themes and policies for the LTS informed by engagement.
- **November 2024:**
 - Publication of the draft themes and policies for feedback.
- **December 2024 (into January 2025):**
 - Analysis of engagement feedback.
 - Refinement and finalisation of the LTS.

6.3 Engagement Summary

- 6.3.1 A key part of the strategy has been the engagement and collaboration undertaken with a diverse range of stakeholders and communities. This is particularly important within the context of the LTS for Highland to ensure that the different needs of those who live, work and visit the area are met with consensus achieved as far as possible.

Activities have continued in 2024 guided by an Engagement and Communications Plan setting out with whom, when and how we would engage.

- 6.3.2 In October 2024 internal engagement with Council officers working in transport and other policy areas was undertaken to gather views on the LTS themes and policies, followed by external stakeholder workshops. Invitees included transport operators, health organisations, active travel organisations/groups, Government/public bodies, business/economy representatives, equality groups/representatives, environmental groups/organisations as well as education/youth sector. 150 individual invites were issued directly for the external workshops. Attendance summarised below:-

- broad public sector coverage from across the transport sector, including operators as well as representatives of groups for tourism, education sector, health, equalities;
- private sector invitees included transport operators and representatives from the business community (e.g., chambers of commerce, BID etc); and
- included a mix of organisations with national, region wide and local/area focused remits. Invitees included groups / organisations representing specific areas of Highland such as the Chambers of Commerce, Youth Equalities Reps, Access Panels and public transport operators / community transport schemes across the region as well as region wide groups such as the Community Planning Partnership, HITRANS, NHS Highland.

In total 29 stakeholders from 26 organisations/groups attended the sessions. The attendees were from public, private and third sector representing national, regional and local interests.

Following the workshops' draft themes and policies were set out in a document alongside wider background information to provide context. A copy of the document was shared with E&I Committee Elected Members via a written briefing. In November 2024 the LTS draft themes and policies were published online for public engagement and remained open for feedback until December 2024.

Elected Members of the E&I Committee also had the opportunity to attend a briefing by the consultants Pell Frischmann on the 17 December 2024 to provide Members with an overview of the entire LTS development and next steps. Officers and the consultants were also available for a Q&A after the briefing.

6.3.3 A questionnaire was hosted online to receive feedback on the draft themes and policies, a hard copy of the questionnaire was also made available.

Promotional activities included:-

- press release to media outlets;
- awareness raising through multiple social media channels;
- e-mail dissemination to THC Community Development and Ward Managers;
- collaboration with the Highland Community Planning Partnership to promote the engagement;
- posters placed in High Life Highland libraries and Council Service Points; and
- option to phone to request a printed copy of information for submission of feedback.

The questionnaire comprised 12 core questions asking for views on the themes and policies, focusing on:-

- the extent to which there was agreement or disagreement with the themes and policies; and
- any gaps in the themes and policies.

A small number of demographic questions were also asked to gather information to understand who had responded.

All questions were optional for completion.

A summary of responses to the questionnaire can be found within **Appendix 4** of this report, however as a summary 130 responses in total were received, 102 were from individuals and 27 were provided by organisations (there was one response which did not answer the question about the capacity in which they were responding).

The overall broad response was positive feedback on both the themes and policies.

All comments on the themes and policies were reviewed but specifically the following

Community transport reference was added to LTS objectives i.e.; “to improve public, community and shared transport options that meet different user needs across the Highland geography” to reflect the strong feedback received.

6.3.4 Responses to feedback on the themes included:-

- strengthening of community transport to more strongly reflect the important role of bus and car share schemes;
- highlighting the role of behaviour change initiatives to encourage modal shift to public, community and shared transport; and
- general wording refinement to improve clarity of the themes.

Responses to feedback on the policies included:-

- resilience of the transport system added as a policy (relates to disruption from unplanned events, variable journey times in different seasons and ability of the different networks to flex when one experiences an issue);
- safety of the rail network (e.g. at level crossings) that passes through Highland communities added as a policy;
- strengthening of community transport to more strongly reflect the important role of bus and car share schemes;
- strengthening around public, community and shared transport access to services, in particular health appointments;
- strengthening in relation to the role of public transport and active travel in helping to manage tourism demand on the local road network;
- access to bikes to widen cycling opportunities beyond those who own a bike added as a policy; and
- general wording refinement to improve clarity of the policies.

An overview of who responded can be found within **Appendix 4**.

7 LTS Vision, Objectives, Themes and Policies

7.1 Following significant engagement (outlined above) the following **Vision** for the LTS was agreed:-

“Our communities, businesses and visitors in Highland will be served by a low carbon transport system that is sustainable, inclusive, safe, resilient and accessible.”

7.2 This vision is underpinned by four key Objectives:-



TO INVEST IN THE SAFETY, MAINTENANCE AND RESILIENCE OF THE TRANSPORT SYSTEM TO SUPPORT THE FUTURE PROSPERITY OF COMMUNITIES AND BUSINESSES WITHIN HIGHLAND.



TO IMPROVE PUBLIC, COMMUNITY AND SHARED TRANSPORT OPTIONS THAT MEET DIFFERENT USER NEEDS ACROSS THE HIGHLAND GEOGRAPHY.



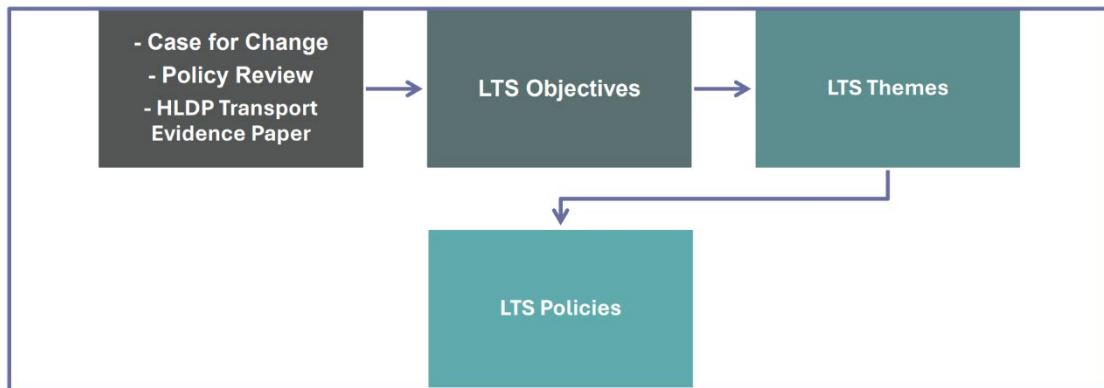
TO IMPROVE WALKING, WHEELING AND CYCLING CHOICES FOR EVERYONE LIVING IN OR VISITING HIGHLAND TO ENCOURAGE ACTIVE AND HEALTHY JOURNEYS.



TO REDUCE EMISSIONS FROM THE TRANSPORT SYSTEM WITHIN HIGHLAND.

7.3 Under each objective are several themes to frame the policies of the strategy. The **themes** also help to ensure the coverage of the strategy is sufficient, recognising the varied geography of the region ranging from an urban city environment to rural and remote rural areas. The **policies** in turn will guide the actions of the Delivery Plan to be developed in early 2025. The below diagram summarises the LTS process to date:-

LTS Objectives – Inputs and Linkages



7.4 The relationship between the LTS Vision, objectives, themes and policies are shown below:-



- 7.5 A list of policies associated with each theme are highlighted within **Appendix 2 - Local Transport Strategy Draft**. There are 63 policies in total which are derived from the 22 themes. The policies are wide ranging and target areas such as improvements to infrastructure, public, shared and community transport and active travel, further development of our in-house bus service, fleet decarbonisation and partnership working models. The subsequent delivery plan will see Schemes be designed with consideration of different road users, including those who walk, cycle and wheel, transport operators and passengers, drivers of cars and other private vehicles as well as access requirements of businesses and other services local to a route.

8 Next Steps

- 8.1 Subject to committee approval, The Draft Local Transport Strategy within **Appendix 2** will be formally adopted, and officers would then commence the next stage: Delivery Plan Development and Implementation alongside a full Monitoring and Evaluation Programme.

Designation:	Assistant Chief Executive - Place
Date:	17 January 2025
Author:	Julie Cromarty, Sustainable Transport Team Leader Lizbeth Collie, Active Travel Officer
Background Papers:	None
Appendices:	Appendix 1 – Integrated Impact Assessment Appendix 2 – Draft Local Transport Strategy (LTS) Appendix 3 – LTS Case for Change Report Appendix 4 – LTS Engagement Report

Integrated Impact Assessment Screening

About proposal

What does this proposal relate to? Strategy

Proposal name: The Highland Council Local Transport Strategy 2025 - 2035

High level summary of the proposal: The Local Transport Strategy (LTS) 2025 – 2035 will play a key role in setting out the future direction and policy focus for transport in the Highlands over the coming years.

The LTS must seamlessly align with broader local policies, including planning, economic development, environmental, and health initiatives, as well as Scottish national and regional strategies. By doing so, the LTS will play a crucial role in enhancing other local policy areas while contributing to the vision and ambitions outlined in the National Transport Strategy.

The Strategy provides a policy framework for transport in Highland. Its vision is that "Our communities, businesses and visitors in Highland will be served by a low carbon transport system that is sustainable, inclusive, safe, resilient and accessible."

This Vision is supported by four objectives that set out the outcomes we want to achieve through the LTS. Under each objective are several themes to help identify and frame the policies of the strategy. The themes also help to ensure the coverage of the strategy is sufficient, recognising the varied geography of the region ranging from an urban city environment to rural and remote rural areas. The policies in turn set out the principles that will guide the actions of the strategy which will be further set out in the Delivery Plan that will be developed by the Council next year to accompany the strategy. For full details see www.highland.gov.uk/lts

The Strategy notes: "The LTS is not about forcing people out of their car. It is about improving choices so people are not being forced into their car / to purchase a car and so that non-drivers have more transport independence."

The LTS provides a pragmatic policy framework, recognising the different options that may be available to people. For example, it is not about suggesting active travel for all journeys, rather about improving choices for this to be an option where other factors such as distance permit.

There is a need to recognise and keep in mind that transport is a derived demand i.e. people travel to access opportunities, services, goods etc rather than for the sake of travelling. Therefore, the LTS alone will not meet user needs nor overcome existing problems and challenges. Rather the LTS also needs to be embedded in wider policy, particularly that which has an intrinsic impact on why, when and to where people travel and goods move between."

The LTS has the potential to achieve multiple positive impacts, along with some relatively minor negative impacts, but the scale and timing of those will depend on the detail of the Delivery Plan and, crucially, resources being available to progress the actions included in it, across multiple workstreams. We further note that there is currently significant uncertainty on nationally led infrastructure projects which again will have major impacts on transport and travel across the area.

Therefore at this stage, pre Delivery Plan with details of projects and initiatives, we can only assess the potential impacts of the LTS and as such full Impact Assessments are not required.

Individual projects and initiatives will be detailed in the Delivery Plan to follow and will be impact assessed as necessary in due course.

There are significant data gaps on transport provision and its multiple impacts in Highland: on different people, on the environment, on communities. We also note that Highland is a very diverse area and with transport provision the local circumstances are always hugely significant. As such even where there is Highland data it is not possible to know if the findings apply equally in a remote rural settlement or in a locally significant small town or in the City of Inverness, hence again the acknowledged need to impact-assess individual projects and initiatives in due course. Some key data sources which have informed the IAs are:

LTS Case for Change

Emerging Transport Evidence Paper for the Highland Local Development Plan

HITRANS RTS Case for Change Equalities Duties Report Post Consultation (EqIA also covering Island Communities) as submitted to Ministers with the RTS main document

Equalities Impact Assessment for STPR2

Inverness Walking and Cycling Index 2023

Scotland's Census 2022 results

Transport Scotland 2023: Women's and girls' views and experiences of personal safety when using public transport

Does transport worsen gender inequality? - Transform Scotland

Transport Scotland: Disability and Transport (pub 2021)

Cycling Framework and Delivery Plan Key issues and evidence summary | Transport Scotland

8 Diet and Obesity - The Scottish Health Survey 2022 – volume 1: main report - gov.scot

Who may be affected by the proposal? All Highland Council residents and visitors.

Start date of proposal: 01/03/2023

End date of proposal:

Does this proposal result in a change or impact to one or more Council service? Yes

Which Council services will be impacted by this proposal? Place

Does this relate to an existing proposal? Yes

Provide details of the existing proposal: Links to the emerging Highland Local Development Plan.

Author details

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Service: Place

Responsible officer details

Name: Julie Cromarty

Job title: Sustainable Transport Team Leader

Email address: Julie.Cromarty@highland.gov.uk

Sign off date: 2025-01-08

Equalities, poverty, and human rights

Protected characteristics

Select what impact the proposal will have on the following protected characteristics:

Sex: Positive

Age: Positive

Disability: Positive

Religion or belief: Positive

Race: Positive

Sexual orientation: Positive

Gender reassignment: Positive

Pregnancy and maternity: Positive

Marriage and civil partnership: No impact

Protected characteristics impact details:

SEX: potential positive impacts

Nationally, women are more likely to walk, use the bus, be carers, need to make multi-purpose “chained” trips, less likely to meet recommended physical activity levels, and more likely to be subject to harassment or assault, or the fear of these, in public spaces and on public transport (although this latter is often less of an issue in rural areas & smaller communities). They are less likely to cycle and to own a car.

Improved transport choices, reduced car dependency / forced car ownership and improved integration between modes will potentially help with women’s journeys. Increased uptake of walking, cycling, wheeling and public transport will increase natural surveillance in public spaces and on public transport, leading to improvements in safety.

In summary, policies supporting the LTS Objectives and Themes have potential positive impacts on women.

AGE: potential positive impacts

Older people: This is a particular issue for the Highland demographic of an ageing population especially in the more rural areas. Older people are more likely to use public transport for journeys in comparison to other age groups. Factors potentially affecting older people's transport choices, including driving, are for example limited mobility, hearing or vision impairments, difficulties in understanding information or accessing digital resources, difficulties in alighting to and from transport services, using station facilities, standing for long periods of time and lower income.

Older people can be disproportionately affected by environmental impacts of traffic, for example by traffic-related noise and poor air quality, compared to the overall population.

Active choices for everyday journeys support physical and mental good health, thereby supporting a longer "healthspan" and independent living in the community. Good transport provision reduces social isolation.

In summary, policies supporting the LTS Objectives and Themes have potential positive impacts on older people.

Younger people: see the Children and Young People IA below.

DISABILITY: potential positive impacts

From Scotland's Census 2022: 2011 – 2022 saw a 15.7% increase in the number of people with a health problem or disability that limited their day to day activities a lot and a 35.7% increase in the number whose day to day activities were limited a little.

From Transport Scotland: Disability and Transport:

- Disabled adults are more likely to use a bus than non-disabled adults;
- On average, disabled people tend to be older, less likely to be working and more likely to be in a household with a low income than people without disabilities. These demographic factors are all likely to affect transport and travel habits in addition to any impact from disability;
- A lower percentage of disabled people possess a driving licence than the non-disabled population (51% vs 75%) and a lower percentage have access to a car (52% vs 77%).

There is a wide range of accessibility issues that may affect a disabled person's ability to safely access and use transport options and therefore to enjoy equal access to full citizenship.

In particular for those using a wheelchair, adapted cycle or other mobility aid, infrastructure provision and design, and public transport accessibility, profoundly affects travel choices. Details of individual projects and initiatives such as the provision of wheelchair accessible vehicles or infrastructure design will be addressed in the Delivery Plan and in the individual project IAs.

Active choices for everyday journeys support physical and mental good health, thereby supporting a longer "healthspan" and independent living in the community. Good transport provision reduces social isolation.

In summary, policies supporting the LTS Objectives and Themes have potential positive impacts on disabled people.

PREGNANCY OR MATERNITY: Potential positive impacts

From the EqIA for STPR2: “Measures to bring about a shift to active and sustainable travel modes are likely to have a beneficial effect on pregnant women by making these modes easier, cheaper and more accessible. A reduction in air pollution from reduced vehicle miles will benefit the health of both mother and baby.”

There are potential positive impacts also as those applying to women and to those using a pushchair (relating to the use of wheeled mobility aids).

RACE: Potential positive impacts

The reality or perception of discrimination, assault or harassment may affect people holding this protected characteristic more than others, and this may affect their choice to use public transport and public transport facilities and to use public spaces freely when walking / cycling / wheeling.

The EqIA for STPR2 documents nationally that ethnic minority groups are less likely to have access to a car and more likely to rely on public transport than other groups, therefore issues of cost and safety may disproportionately impact these groups.

Policies which support the LTS Objectives and Themes have potential positive impacts by offering lower cost alternatives to car ownership, increasing uptake of public transport and increasing the presence of people in public spaces.

RELIGION OR BELIEF: Potential positive impacts

The reality or perception of discrimination, assault or harassment may affect people holding this protected characteristic more than others, and this may affect their choice to use public transport and public transport facilities and to use public spaces freely when walking / cycling / wheeling.

The EqIA for STPR2 documents nationally a clear link between religion and economic inequality. Policies which support the LTS Objectives and Themes have potential positive impacts by offering lower cost alternatives to car ownership, increasing uptake of public transport and increasing the presence of people in public spaces.

SEXUAL ORIENTATION: Potential positive impacts

The reality or perception of discrimination, assault or harassment may affect people holding this protected characteristic more than others, and this may affect their choice to use public transport and public transport facilities and to use public spaces freely when walking / cycling / wheeling.

Policies which support the LTS Objectives and Themes have potential positive impacts by increasing uptake of public transport and increasing the presence of people in public spaces.

GENDER REASSIGNMENT: Potential positive impacts

The reality or perception of discrimination, assault or harassment may affect people holding this protected characteristic more than others, and this may affect their choice to use public transport and public transport facilities and to use public spaces freely when walking / cycling / wheeling.

Policies which support the LTS Objectives and Themes have potential positive impacts by increasing uptake of public transport and increasing the presence of people in public spaces.

Poverty and socio-economic

What impact is the proposal likely to have on the following?

Prospects and opportunities: Positive

Places: Positive

Financial: Positive

Poverty and socio-economic impact details: As noted above, people holding certain protected characteristics are also likely to be less well off, potentially leading to multipliers of disadvantage.

POVERTY / SOCIOECONOMIC ISSUES: Potential positive impacts

Improving travel choices for accessing employment, leisure, goods and services helps household budgets and increases transport independence for all household members. Policies which support the LTS objectives and Themes have potential positive impacts on this.

Taking a broader view, the reduction in carbon emissions and the potential benefits for biodiversity from modal shift bring wider benefits, when climate change and the ecological crisis are amongst the biggest threats we face in Highland as elsewhere. Climate change adaptation is a strong theme in the LTS as is reduction of emissions to reduce impacts. The costs of adapting to climate breakdown are unfathomably high and will have significant impact on other areas of public spending, which in turn will impact on the most vulnerable.

In summary, policies supporting the LTS Objectives and Themes have potential positive impacts on those who are living with financial insecurity and poverty.

Human rights

Which of the below human rights will be affected by this proposal?

What impact do you consider this proposal to have on the human rights of people? Positive

Human rights impact details: A general point: transport is not a human right, but it is necessary to be able to fully access human rights such as education and healthcare. A Scottish Human Rights Commission report in November 2024 on economic, social and cultural rights in the Highlands and Islands found that human rights are under threat in rural areas:

“Across all rights examined, there is not a single human right that meets all the conditions of adequacy under international law. This means that there are significant failures in how policies and services are being designed and/or delivered and services across the Highlands and Islands are not fully accessible, affordable, available, acceptable, or of sufficient quality (among other conditions).”

The LTS deals with the transport system but recognises the interplay of transport with the above.

Equalities, poverty and human rights screening assessment

What impact do you think there will be to equalities, poverty and human rights? Positive impact

Is a Full Impact Assessment required? No

Children's rights and wellbeing

What likely impact will the proposal have on children and young people? Positive

Which of the below children's rights will be affected by the proposal? You are working in the best interests of the child (Article 3), Children have a standard of living that is good enough to meet their physical and social needs and support their development (Article 27)

Explain how the children's rights selected above will be affected: Obviously, children and young people will live with the multiple negative consequences of climate breakdown and ecological degradation for longer. A shift to more sustainable forms of transport as per the Transport Hierarchy will benefit young people in Highland as elsewhere.

The ability for children and their parents / guardians to access safe, convenient and affordable transport has a very significant impact on access to education, public services and economic and leisure opportunities.

Like older people, younger people can be disproportionately affected by environmental impacts of traffic, for example by traffic-related noise and poor air quality, compared to the overall population.

Safety is a key issue for children with regards to transport. In particular children from deprived areas are more at risk of pedestrian incidents. The Highland Council's Road Safety Strategy, in line with the Scottish Government's Road Safety Framework to 2030, commits to Vision Zero where there are zero fatalities and serious injuries on Scotland's roads by 2050. The LTS is fully aligned with this.

According to the 2022 Scottish Health Survey , a third of children aged 2-15 are at risk of being overweight, including 18% at risk of obesity, with this figure on the rise. Being physically active for everyday journeys is an important factor in combatting obesity as well as having wider beneficial impacts on physical and mental health.

Young people in mainland rural areas and island communities who are dependent on public transport, particularly for accessing education and training, can be disadvantaged because of the high cost and low availability of public transport in these areas. They can also be forced into car ownership which has a significant financial impact on those in education or just starting out in the working world.

Being confident in using public transport and being able to get around by bike and on foot are key life skills especially in the context of falling car ownership amongst young people as above. Anecdotally, in Highland, many young people do not routinely use public transport or cycle leading to skills and confidence issues when they move to a larger town for work or study. Evidence from England suggests that young adults (aged 17 to 29) in urban areas are travelling less, domestically, particularly by driving. Some of the reasons for this include increased urbanisation (and higher density developments), high costs of transport and relying more on technology for social interaction . However, as noted above, we do not have this kind of data for Highland.

Children with mobility impairments and, crucially, those who care for them, will potentially benefit

from a wider range of transport options. Details of individual projects and initiatives such as the provision of wheelchair accessible vehicles or infrastructure design will be addressed in the Delivery Plan and in the individual project IAs.

In summary, policies supporting the LTS Objectives and Themes have potential positive impacts on children and young people.

Children's rights and wellbeing screening assessment

What impact do you think there will be to children's rights and wellbeing? Positive impact

Is a Full Impact Assessment required? No

Data protection

Will your proposal involve processing personal data? No

Data protection screening assessment

What change will there be to the way personal data is processed? No personal data will be processed

Is a Full Impact Assessment required? No

Island and mainland rural communities

Does your proposal impact island and mainland rural communities? Yes

Could people in island and mainland rural communities be affected differently? No

Have any negative impacts been identified? No

Island and mainland rural communities screening assessment

What impact do you think there will be to island and mainland rural communities? Significant differences

Is a Full Impact Assessment required? No

Climate change

Does the proposal involve activities that could impact on greenhouse gas emissions (CO₂e)? Yes

Does the proposal have the potential to affect the environment, wildlife or biodiversity? Yes

Does the proposal have the potential to influence resilience to extreme weather or changing climate? Yes

Provide information regarding your selection above: As noted above, the Local Transport Strategy gives the vision, themes and indicative policies for the transport system in Highland for the next decade. It does not include a Delivery Plan with details of individual projects and initiatives, large and small – that Plan will be developed over the coming months. As such, any impacts are potential and completely depend on funding and other resources being available to deliver anything at all.

The vision of the LTS is that of a low-carbon transport system; one of the four objectives focuses on reducing emissions from the transport system and two on improving sustainable travel choices, with a final objective about the safety, maintenance of the system that includes themes on climate change adaptation and resilience.

A draft policy includes “The impact of investment on climate change will form part of the Council's transport decision-making process.”

There will be continuing carbon emissions and other negative environmental impacts from the transport system from the construction, operation, maintenance and usage of significant new infrastructure projects such as road construction.

The LTS recognises the need for focused improvements to address issues experienced across different modes e.g. safety, congestion, integration. Schemes will need to be carefully designed and delivered to mitigate / off-set the carbon implications.

There are further potential benefits for the environment from, for example, reduction in air pollution, reduction in traffic noise and vibration, design of projects to enhance biodiversity and the designing-in of green and blue infrastructure features (another draft policy).

Climate change screening assessment

Have you identified potential impact for any of the areas above or marked any as not known? Yes

Is a Full Impact Assessment required? No

Highland Local Transport Strategy (DRAFT)

2025 – 2035



Pell Frischmann
Excellence through innovation

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Introduction

This Local Transport Strategy (LTS) sets out the future policy direction and focus for how The Highland Council will maintain, manage and improve the transport system in Highland over the 10-year period from 2025 to 2035. It covers the movement of people and goods and considers all modes of transport across Highland.

The transport system, and this LTS, will have a key role in contributing to the delivery of the Our Future Highland Administration programme 2022-2027¹ which has five key priorities:



A Fair and Caring Highland

Working together to improve quality of life and opportunities for Highland people.



Resilient and Sustainable Communities

Helping our communities to be prosperous, sustainable and resilient, making a positive difference to the lives of people.



Accessible and Sustainable Highland Homes

Build houses to support communities and economic growth.



A Sustainable Highland Environment and Global Centre for Renewable Energy

Accelerate our response to the climate and ecological emergency. Making the most of the financial and environmental opportunities arising from the huge renewable energy potential in the Highlands.



A Resilient and Sustainable Council

Work with partners to address service delivery challenges with a positive approach to change.

The LTS also responds to national Net Zero commitments and other drivers that influence where, when and how both people travel, and goods are moved.

¹ The Highland Council Performance Plan 2022 – 2027 (The Highland Council, 2022)

www.highland.gov.uk/info/695/council_information_performance_and_statistics/381/our_priorities [Accessed November 2024]

Updates

Since the previous LTS was published in 2010, there have been a variety of improvements to the transport system in Highland across various modes and some examples of these are listed below.

It should be acknowledged within this period there has been a considerable shift within the national transport policy context primarily driven by climate change and public health concerns.

Highland Council In-House Bus Fleet

The Highland Council has established a growing fleet of buses to deliver services in-house. As well as providing transport for scheduled routes, the buses have provided hires to schools for trips to attend a wide range of activities and to community organisations. The project provides improved and more inclusive services for communities and financial savings.

Community Transport Across Highland

The Highland Council now supports 28 Community Transport projects with grant funding; each project uniquely serves the needs of their communities. These diverse projects cover the whole of the Highland area, ranging from schemes focusing on supporting those with a disability to minibuss hire and community car schemes. For example, from Autumn 2024 the Applecross Community Company has been delivering school transport services for the Council, with the vehicle fully available for community use out with those hours.

Pavement, Double and Dropped Kerb Parking Ban Across Highland

In January 2023, following the Transport (Scotland) Act 2019, The Highland Council introduced a ban on pavement parking, parking at some dropped kerbs and double-parking to keep pavements and crossing points clear for those walking, wheeling or cycling. This also supports people with disabilities and those pushing prams or buggies and reduces damage to pavements. Public compliance has been significantly higher than expected, with the measures securing broad support across the area.

New Rail Stations

The expansion of the rail network has opened up Scotland's railway to new communities. For example, the opening of Inverness Airport Station in February 2023 was delivered by the Scottish Government as part of a wider rail network infrastructure investment.

Torvean Mobility Hub

This mobility hub, located west of Inverness beside the Caledonian Canal, is the first of its kind in Highland providing a seamless interchange between different modes of transport and making it easier for people to use public transport to travel in and around the city of Inverness. The hub includes a bus stop/shelter, public transport information display with real-time capability, cycle parking, Hi-Bike dock, car parking (to support park and ride) as well as motorcycle, motorhome and coach parking.

Active Travel Delivery in Highland

This includes the delivery plans for The Highland-wide Active Travel Network and the Inner Moray Firth Active Travel Network which includes active travel masterplans for different communities, under the umbrella of The Highland Council's Active Travel Strategy 2024 – 2030. This aims to encourage modal shift and guide where new development proposals can be supported by active travel.

Examples of some of the active travel schemes that have been delivered include Riverside Way, Inverness, Spey Street, Kingussie, Sun Dancer Path, Nairn, Peffery Way Path between Strathpeffer and Dingwall alongside junction improvements at Dalfaber in Aviemore and an additional infrastructure such as dropped kerbs and pedestrian crossings improvement in communities throughout Highland.

Opportunities have also been taken through flood prevention schemes, such as Caol and Lochyside, Ullapool and River Ness, to improve active travel connections. This cross-departmental working within The Highland Council maximises resource efficiency, the delivery of objectives across different workstreams and is a key aspect of improving infrastructure.

Hi-Bike: Partnership Working in Fort William and Inverness

The HITRANS Hi-Bike schemes in Fort William and Inverness offer electric bike rental through a number of charging stations at key locations across the communities. The bikes offer a low cost sustainable transport option for locals and visitors. Uptake of both schemes has been higher than expected especially at the charging stations which are located close to bus and train provision. The Highland Council is a key partner and actively involved in supporting the scheme's planned expansion to offer e-cargo bikes.

Inverness Campus

The Campus is a state-of-the-art location for businesses, research organisations, students and residents with Phase 1 of the building design spanning 47,000sqm. The site is designed to enable easy access by foot and also includes accessible cycle paths as well as a dedicated bus lane plus

car-share only parking spaces. These measures are underpinned by a Campus Travel and Transport Plan to improve sustainable travel choices and encourage journeys by active travel and public transport. This is a good example of integrating a sustainable transport provision from the outset of a development.

Raigmore Bus Gate and Wider Bus Priority Measures

Work on a new bus only link that connects Raigmore Hospital to Raigmore Estate was completed in April 2024. The project was funded by Transport Scotland's Bus Partnership Fund (BPF), prior to it being paused in 2024/2025, and delivered by the Bus Service Improvement Partnership (BSIP) Group, comprised of The Highland Council, NHS Highland, HITRANS and Stagecoach. The new route has improved bus services to Raigmore Estate, Raigmore Hospital and the National Treatment Centre Highland as well as helped to reduce congestion on Old Perth Road and outside Raigmore Hospital by removing bus traffic from the already congested entrance of Raigmore Hospital onto the B9006 and Inshes corridor.

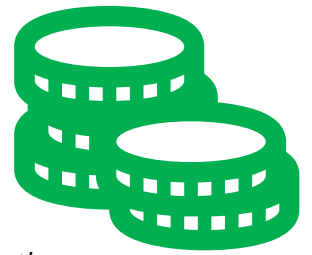
The bus gate is part of a suite of projects designed to encourage more bus use. This includes the prioritisation of buses at traffic lights in Inverness city centre on cross-city routes to help improve the reliability of services.

West Link

The West Link project has greatly improved infrastructure to support the future development, growth and prosperity of Inverness and wider Highland area. It has included the completion of the link from the Southern Distributor Road at Dores Road to the A82, including crossing the River Ness on the new Holm Mills Bridge, alongside new sports facilities at Canal Park which include a synthetic pitch, clubhouse as well as a relocated golf course.

Funding

The transport achievements set out in the previous section have been delivered against the backdrop of a tightening budgetary position and the availability of funding continues to influence the extent to which transport can be improved across Highland. For example, the pause by the Scottish Government to the Bus Partnership Fund during 2024/2025 impacted on the progression of much needed investment in bus priority measures in Highland. Forthcoming changes to the active travel funding landscape, through the Scottish Government's Active Travel Transformation project which is expected to be fully in place by the end of 2025, have also created uncertainty in the short-term but the wider intention of the change is to adopt a decentralised approach and through this allocate more funding direct to Local Authorities to help accelerate delivery.



Rising costs also mean that any increase in budget is struggling to keep pace rather than enabling delivery at pace of an expanded transport offer in Highland.

In response, The Highland Council has sought to proactively address the funding challenges and work constructively with partners. This has resulted in the increased investment of £40m between 2024 and 2027 to address ongoing challenges in maintaining the local road network. In addition, in 2024 The Highland Council successfully worked with partners to agree the reallocation of £28m from the Highland City Region Deal to replace the Corran Ferry. The Highland Council is also exploring innovative funding models, such as green bonds, renewable energy integration for transport funding underpinned by a Social Value Charter and the Tourism Levy.

Achieving the Vision and objectives set out later in this LTS will not be achieved by The Highland Council in isolation. The involvement of other public and private organisations will be required, such as the delivery model approach to be adopted going forward in the expansion of the EV charging network in Highland. Operational and financial partnership working is something The Highland Council will continue to explore and seek opportunities to engage with partners to support investment to improve the transport system for all in Highland.

The Highland Council would also welcome greater certainty from funders and partners about the availability of future transport funding alongside a return to multi-year funding to support the delivery of schemes in a manner that directly improves the transport system in Highland and provides sustainable travel choices that are safe, reliable, resilient and efficient for more people.



The Transport System in Highland

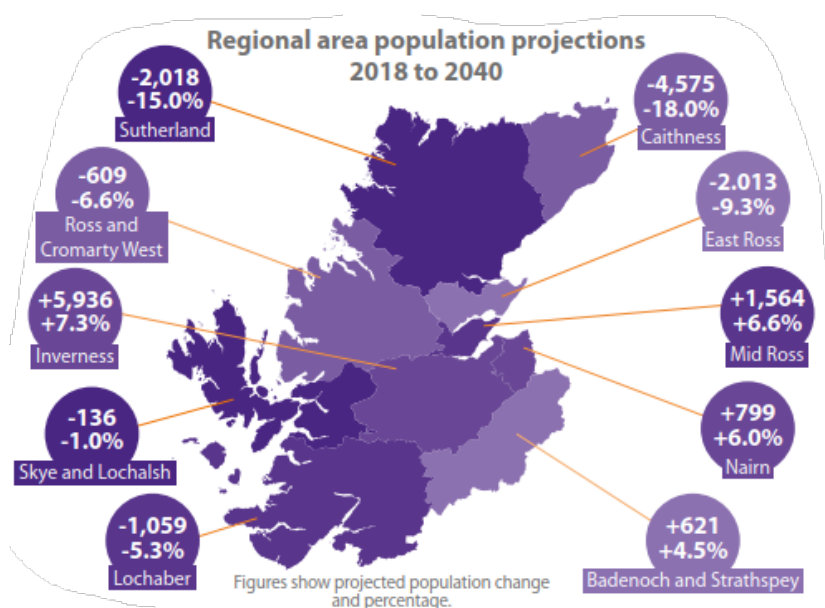
Demographic Context

Highland is the largest council area by geography in Scotland, spanning an area of 26,484 square kilometres and the seventh largest in Scotland by population, with 236,330 residents (National Records of Scotland mid-2023 population estimates)². Beyond the concentrated city region of Inverness and Inner Moray Firth, Highland is a predominantly rural area with dispersed communities and an average population density of approximately 9 people per square kilometre.

Between the 2011 Census and 2022 Census, Highland's population increased by 1.4 %, compared to the Scotland average of 2.7%³. This compares to a 12.8% increase between 2001 and 2022 (Scotland average of 7.6%)⁴.

This overall population growth is, however, not experienced across the region with an ongoing pattern of increases in urban areas around the Inner Moray Firth alongside a falling population in the western

Highlands, Sutherland and Caithness. Population projections to 2040, as illustrated in the figure above, show the greatest decline anticipated in Caithness and Sutherland while growth is forecast in the more urban areas of the region⁵.



² Mid-2023 Population Estimates (National Records of Scotland, 2024)

<https://www.nrscotland.gov.uk/publications/mid-2023-population-estimates/#> [Accessed December 2024]

³ Highland Local Development Plan – Emerging Evidence (The Highland Council, October 2024)

www.highland.gov.uk/info/178/development_plans/1101/highland_local_development_plan_hldp [Accessed November 2024]

⁴ Highland Council Area Profile (National Records of Scotland)

www.nrscotland.gov.uk/files/statistics/council-area-data-sheets/highland-council-profile.html [Accessed November 2024]

⁵ Our Future Highland – Performance Plan 2022 to 2027 (The Highland Council, March 2024)

www.highland.gov.uk/downloads/file/4620/performance_plan_2022-27 [Accessed November 2024]

The 2022 Census also shows an ageing population with a 5.2% increase in over 65-year-olds in Highland over the last 10 years compared to a 3.3% increase across Scotland. Between 2001 and 2021, the 0 to 15 age group in Highland saw a decrease of -8.9%, while the 75+ age group saw an increase of +65.4%.⁶

Transport System Overview

The varied demographics and geography of Highland requires a diverse transport system that includes walking, wheeling⁷ and cycling routes, rail, bus as well as ferry and air services and road network comprising local routes, plus an extensive trunk road network operated and maintained by Transport Scotland.

This demographic context is of importance as it raises specific considerations for the transport system, with an ageing population potentially more dependent on public transport and access to health and care services can be expected to form a greater need. It is also of importance in terms of the accessibility of services and infrastructure. Furthermore, the transport system has an important role in providing access to employment and education and therefore in encouraging younger people to stay in the region. Being active for everyday journeys supports physical and mental health for all, helping to reduce the load on health and care systems. Travel independence also helps reduce the risk of isolation and supports community cohesion.

Together the different modes of transport strive to meet the varying travel needs of the region to provide access to employment, education, health and other services as well as offering connectivity to family and friends. They are also vital to businesses that operate in Highland, both in terms of the movement of goods and the accessibility of the labour market. The transport system in Highland is important for tourists who come to visit the natural beauty of the area and different attractions throughout the region.

The wider transport system also has a role in encouraging sustainable travel choices when in and travelling to and from Highland for example enabling visitors to be able to travel to/from the region by public transport with their bikes.

⁶ Highland Council Area Profile (National Records of Scotland)

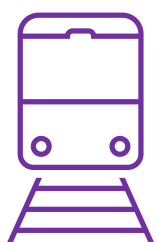
www.nrscotland.gov.uk/files/statistics/council-area-data-sheets/highland-council-profile.html [Accessed November 2024]

⁷ Wheeling refers to an equivalent alternative to foot/pedestrian-based mobility. This includes wheeled mobilities such as manual self- or assistant-propelled wheelchairs, including wheelchairs with power attachments or all-terrain attachments (such as the “Freewheel”), powered wheelchairs, mobility scooters (three and four-wheeled) and rollators. Source: Wheels for Wellbeing <https://wheelsforwellbeing.org.uk/walking-wheeling-and-cycling-definitions/> [Accessed January 2025]

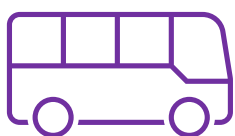
As a snapshot, the Highland transport system can be characterised by the following travel mode specific elements:



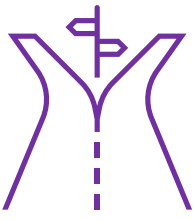
There is a mix of existing on and off-road **active travel infrastructure** for walking, wheeling and cycling in Highland. The National Cycle Network (NCN) passes through to the south of the region, including NCN 1, 7 and 78, alongside local routes to support walking, wheeling and cycling within and between communities where distances and other factors permit this to be a feasible option. The active travel network also has a role in supporting the tourism sector and enabling visitors to fully experience the region. Within Highland there are three designated long-distance routes – The Great Glen Way, Speyside Way and West Highland Way – as well as other routes that give the opportunity to explore the region.



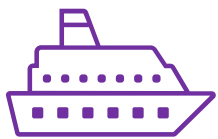
Highland is served by five **rail** lines, including the Far North Line (Wick/Thurso – Inverness), Kyle Line (Kyle of Lochalsh to Inverness), Inverness to Aberdeen line, West Highland Line (Glasgow to Fort William/Mallaig) and Highland Main Line (Inverness to Perth). The rail network enables the movement of goods and people within and to/from Highland with services provided by different operators. ScotRail operate passenger services for shorter-distance journeys within Highland for commuting and to access education, health and other services as well as to visit other areas of the region and operate longer distance services to wider Scotland. LNER and Caledonian Sleeper services provide UK-wide connectivity from Highland as far south as London. There are a total of 60 passenger stations in Highland and several rail freight facilities including Needlefield Yard in Inverness, Georgemas Junction strategic rail freight and transport hub in Caithness, the Fort William Alumina Freight and Wester Fraser rail link to a timber processing facility in Dalcross.



Bus services, both local and long-distance, operate within the region. The bus network covers almost all strategic routes and a significant number of settlements in Highland; however, many have a limited timetable which can impact on accessibility. In some areas the scheduled bus network is complemented by community transport schemes that operate minibuses and car share services, providing a lifeline for some who are unable to drive or don't have access to a car and live more rurally. The services help provide people with access to essential services as well as to other transport modes including scheduled bus services. Longer distance services to other parts of Scotland, including Aberdeen, Edinburgh, Glasgow and Perth with connections available for onward travel to other destinations including the wider UK.



The Highland area has an extensive **road network** with a core trunk road network linking the main settlements and providing connections to major towns and cities out with Highland. Over a quarter of the total trunk road network in Scotland is within Highland and managed by Transport Scotland. The Highland Council manages all other adopted roads which equates to almost 7,000km and 1,400 bridges. This extensive road network also hosts traffic management systems, various signage, footways and cycleways alongside adopted roads, drainage, road markings, road restraint systems and a range of street furniture.



Ferry services are a key part of the transport network in Highland. The principal services include those operated by Caledonian MacBrayne (CalMac) from the Highland mainland and Skye to the Western Isles, Mull, the Small Isles and Raasay, and from Mallaig to Skye. The Highland Council operates the Corran Ferry and has contracts for ferries on the Cromarty – Nigg, Camusnagaul – Fort William and Mallaig – Inverie – Tarbet routes. Pentland Ferries and John O’Groats Ferries operate other ferries to Orkney. The Highland Council is responsible for over 90 **harbour/marine infrastructure facilities**, which are mostly of a smaller scale, whilst a range of private and trust organisations operate larger-scale facilities such as Glensanda (marine-access only super-quarry freight). Inverness and Cromarty Firth Green Freeport supports the movement of goods and people in and out of the region. The Cromarty Firth Port accounted for 483,000 tonnes of the 55,832,000 tonnes of traffic at major ports in Scotland in 2022⁸ and also enables significant cruise ship passenger numbers to visit the Highlands with 221,793 seaborne tourists arriving between April 2023 and mid-October 2023. This represents a 23% increase compared to 2022 and the highest passenger figures in Scotland, bringing a boost of around £20m to the local economy⁹.

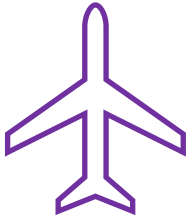
There is one navigable **Canal** in Highland – the 60-mile Caledonian Canal, which connects the Fort William area (Banavie) with Inverness (Clachnaharry and Muirtown Basin). The canal is predominantly used for leisure purposes, however there could be a future role for it to handle freight associated with the development of pumped storage hydro schemes.

⁸ Scottish Transport Statistics 2023 (Transport Scotland, 2024)

<https://www.transport.gov.scot/publication/scottish-transport-statistics-2023/chapter-9-water-transport/> [Accessed January 2025]

⁹ Port of Cromarty Firth – Annual Review 2023

<https://pocf.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/POCF-Annual-Report.pdf> [Accessed January 2025]



Aviation in Highland provides both international connectivity to/from the region and regional connectivity to more remote and rural parts of Highland and the rest of Scotland as well as to other UK airports. There are two airports from which commercial flights operate in Highland - Inverness and Wick John O’Groats. Other airfields operate within Highland, including at Ashaig, Dornoch and Plockton that are owned and operated by The Highland Council. These operate as unlicensed, unstaffed aerodromes and have no Air Traffic Control/Flight Information Service or Rescue/Fire Fighting services available.

The Policy Context

The LTS must seamlessly align with broader local policies, including planning, economic development, environmental, and health initiatives, as well as Scottish national and regional strategies.

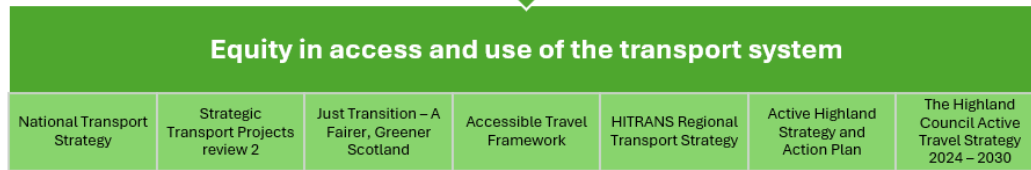
By doing so, the LTS will play a crucial role in enhancing other local policy areas while contributing to the vision and ambitions outlined in the National Transport Strategy (NTS). The NTS shows transport as an enabler, supporting priorities to reduce inequalities, take climate action, deliver inclusive economic growth and improve health and wellbeing. The LTS also has an important role in positively contributing to the HITRANS Regional Transport Strategy. This alignment ensures a cohesive approach to achieving sustainable and impactful outcomes for communities in Highland.

The policy setting has changed since the previous LTS was published in 2010. Most notably, The Highland Council declared a climate emergency in May 2019 and as a public body the Council is legally bound to contribute to Scotland's 2045 Net Zero target. Furthermore, The Highland Council's Net Zero Strategy has interim target dates that have been agreed to by Elected Members.

The Highland Council is very aware of the need to balance the climate emergency, Sustainable Travel and Investment Hierarchies (see overleaf) as well as the national target to reduce car vehicle-kilometres by 2030 (compared to 2019 levels) in the context of Highland. Specifically, this relates to Highland being a predominantly rural area and what this means for the transport system and the travel options that are available to users.

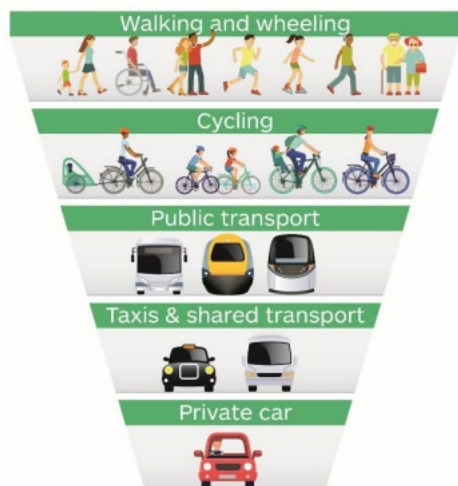
It should be highlighted that there is a co-ordinated approach between the LTS and the emerging Highland Local Development Plan (HLDP) to ensure that the inter-relationship between these two documents is addressed.

The following diagram shows some of the key local, regional and national policy and strategy documents, and categorises the main messages of the wider policy context.



Linked to the policy context are the **Sustainable Travel Hierarchy** and **Sustainable Investment Hierarchy** as set out in the Scottish Government's National Transport Strategy¹⁰ and summarised below.

Sustainable Travel Hierarchy



Promotes walking, wheeling, cycling, public transport and public transport and shared transport (i.e. sustainable modes) over single occupancy private cars. Also promotes efficient and sustainable freight transport for the movement of goods, particularly the shift from road to rail.

Sustainable Investment Hierarchy



Transport options focus on reducing inequalities and the need to travel unsustainably are prioritised. Also need to focus on maintaining and safely operating existing assets, taking consideration of the need to adapt to the impacts of climate change. Investment to make better use of existing capacity is then considered followed by consideration of targeted infrastructure improvements.

With transport a derived demand i.e. people typically travel to access employment, education, services, visit friends and family and for other leisure purposes rather than for the journey itself, it is important that the LTS is set in a wider access context to meet requirements.

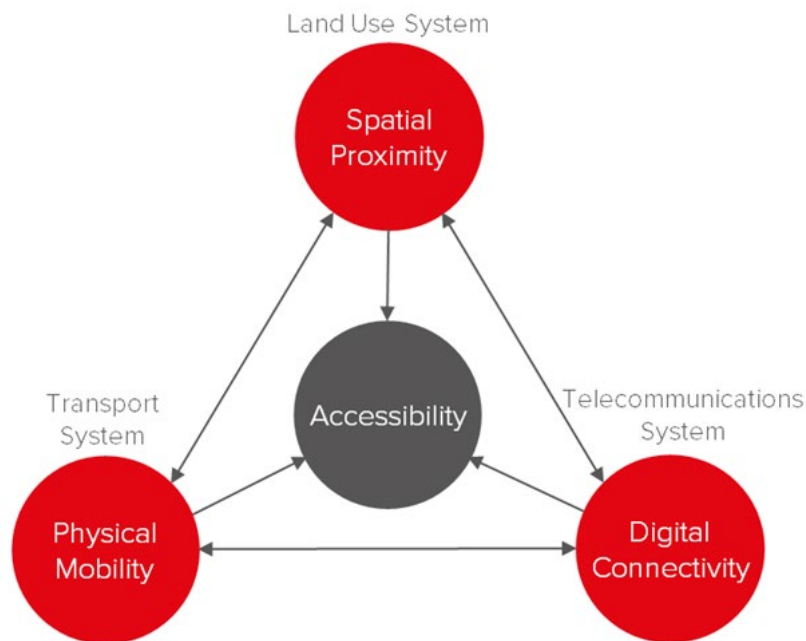
Triple Access Planning¹¹ recognises the contribution of spatial proximity and digital connectivity as well as physical mobility to meet different access needs more sustainably as illustrated in the figure below.

¹⁰ National Transport Strategy (Transport Scotland, 2020)

www.transport.gov.scot/media/47052/national-transport-strategy.pdf [Accessed October 2024]

¹¹ Lyons, G., Marchau, V., Paddeu, D., Rye, T., Adolphson, M., Attia, M., Bozovic, T., Bylund, J., Calvert, T., Chatterjee, K., Comi, A., Cragg, S., Fancello, G., Lenferink, S., Mladenovič, L., Piras, F., Svensson, T. and Witzell, J. (2024). Triple Access Planning for Uncertain Futures – A Handbook for Practitioners (Summary version), March.

www.uwe-repository.worktribe.com/output/11751967/ [Accessed November 2024]



Key principles of Triple Access Planning include¹² the following which the LTS will work within:

- Consideration of non-transport measures is required to tackle transport problems. In the Triple Access System there are credible and attractive alternatives to car use for some journeys for some people some of the time. Digital accessibility measures are increasingly being introduced and evolved beyond the typical remit of transport planning or mobility planning. Spatial proximity and digital connectivity measures accompany physical (motorised) mobility measures in making a strategy suitable, acceptable and feasible to deliver successfully.
- It opens greater co-benefits whereby reduced car use arises from greater availability and usage of alternatives. This introduces both more flexibility into people's lives and changes the experience of access for everyone.
- It offers opportunity to support urban and rural living in ways which assist economic activity and social justice and are compatible with a need to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. By planning for this system, we provide society with the support it needs to fulfil access requirements while encouraging redistribution of access demand. Digital accessibility (having access to activities through digital infrastructure) can help to ease demands placed upon the transport system by viewing mobility through the triple-access lens.

¹² Lyons, G., Marchau, V., Paddeu, D., Rye, T., Adolphson, M., Attia, M., Bozovic, T., Bylund, J., Calvert, T., Chatterjee, K., Comi, A., Cragg, S., Fancello, G., Lenferink, S., Mladenovič, L., Piras, F., Svensson, T. and Witzell, J. (2024). Triple Access Planning for Uncertain Futures – A Handbook for Practitioners (Summary version), March.
www.uwe-repository.worktribe.com/output/11751967/ [Accessed November 2024]

- Key to the success of Triple Access Planning is being able to bring different perspectives and administrative functions together into participatory dialogue, shared learning and united action. A triple-access strategy requires joined-up planning and decision making across transport, land-use and telecommunications.

National Targets and Statutory Duties

Within the policy context there are **national targets of relevance** to the transport system, and which the LTS for Highland should contribute towards. A number are linked to climate change and the target of Net Zero by 2045. While not intended to be exhaustive, some national targets of note include¹³:

20% reduction in car veh-km by 2030 against a 2019 baseline.

Phase out the need for new petrol and diesel cars and vans in Scotland by 2030.

Phase out the need for public bodies to have any new petrol and diesel light commercial vehicles by 2025 and phasing out the need for petrol and diesel vehicles in Scotland's public sector fleet by 2030.

Decarbonisation of scheduled flights within Scotland by 2040. Plus aim for Highland to be the world's first zero emission aviation region.

Phase out new petrol and diesel heavy duty vehicles by 2035.

Majority of new buses are zero-emission by 2024.

Zero fatalities and serious injuries on Scotland's roads by 2050.

Air quality objectives not to be exceeded on local pollutants including NO2 and particulates.

Local Transport Strategies to have proper appreciation of needs of climate change, and the impact of road users, including public transport operators, disabled motorists, cyclists and pedestrians.

There are also **statutory duties** of relevance in relation to the transport system which The Highland Council must fulfil. Statutory duties of relevance with little discretion include:

¹³ A Route Map to Achieve a 20% Reduction in car-km by 2030 (Transport Scotland, 2022) <https://www.transport.gov.scot/media/50872/a-route-map-to-achieve-a-20-per-cent-reduction-in-car-kms-by-2030.pdf> [Accessed January 2025]
Climate Change Plan 2018 – 2032 – Update (Scottish Government, 2020) <https://www.gov.scot/publications/securing-green-recovery-path-net-zero-update-climate-change-plan-20182032/pages/9/> [Accessed January 2025]
Greenhouse Gas Emissions Projections: Phase 1 and Phase 2 Modelling Results (The Scottish Government, 2024) <https://www.gov.scot/publications/greenhouse-gas-emissions-projections-scotland-results-phase-1-phase-2-modelling/pages/8/> [Accessed January 2025]
Road Safety Framework to 2030 (Transport Scotland, 2021) <https://www.transport.gov.scot/publication/scotland-s-road-safety-framework-to-2030/> [Accessed January 2025]
Local Air Quality Management: Policy Guidance (The Scottish Government, 2024) <https://www.gov.scot/publications/local-air-quality-management-policy-guidance-2/> [Accessed January 2025]
Securing a Green Recovery on a Path to Net Zero: Climate Change Plan 2018–2032 – update ((The Scottish Government, 2020) <https://www.gov.scot/publications/securing-green-recovery-path-net-zero-update-climate-change-plan-20182032/pages/9/> [Accessed January 2025]

- To provide free school transport or travel support in line with the Council's school transport policy.
- To reduce carbon emissions and report on these.
- Produce local development plans.
- Respond to and manage planning applications.
- To undertake annual air quality reviews.

Further details on other statutory duties with discretion and discretionary functions of The Highland Council can be found [here](#).

In 2024, The Highland Council introduced the Integrated Impact Assessment as a new approach to understand the impact service changes, policies and strategies could have on individuals, groups of people or geographical communities. In addition to enhancing the way The Highland Council reviews and designs services, there are a range of legislative requirements that necessitate the Council to take forward this approach as summarised below.¹⁴

Impact Assessment	Legislative Background
Equalities	Equality Act 2010 – Public Sector Equality Duty to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that the proposal does not discriminate. • Consider how the proposal might better advance equality of opportunity. • Consider whether the proposal will affect relations between different groups.
Poverty/socio-economic	Fairer Scotland Duty 2018 to actively consider how public bodies can reduce inequalities of outcome caused by socio-economic disadvantage.
Islands	Islands (Scotland) Act 2018 – to undertake impact assessment to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider these challenges properly. • Ensure islands received fair and equitable treatment. • Policy, strategy and service outcomes are tailored to islands' unique circumstances.
Mainland rural communities	There is no legislative requirement to undertake an impact assessment for mainland rural areas but in recognition of the Highland geographical area, the Council chose to adopt this approach a number of years ago.
Human rights	Human Rights Act 1998 – incorporates the rights of the European Convention on Human Rights into British Law. Public bodies must respect your rights.
Children's rights and wellbeing	United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child (1991) – to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementing the UNCRC and incorporate it into Scots Law to make it unlawful for public authorities to act incompatibly with the UNCRC.

¹⁴ Integrated Impact Assessment (The Highland Council, June 2024)

[www.highland.gov.uk/meetings/meeting/5003/highland_council\(Item 14\)](http://www.highland.gov.uk/meetings/meeting/5003/highland_council(Item%2014)) [Accessed November 2024]

Impact Assessment	Legislative Background
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use the Child Rights and Wellbeing Impact Assessment (CRWIA) to ensure that our policies and legislation protect and promote the rights and wellbeing of children and young people.
Climate change	There is no legislative requirement to undertake a Climate Impact Assessment but to support the Council's Net Zero Strategy it has been agreed through the Climate Change Committee to undertake climate impact assessments to embed climate change into decision-making processes.
Data protection	UK General Data Protection Requirement requires the Council to implement data protection by design and default. Data Protection Impact Assessment is the mechanism for ensuring this is met and is included as a requirement in the Council's Data Protection Policy.

Transport Problems, Opportunities and Challenges in Highland

A LTS Case for Change was completed by The Highland Council in 2023. This presented an analysis of the problems and opportunities affecting the transport system within Highland and feedback was sought from stakeholders and the public at the time.

The varied geography of Highland brings diverse and unique considerations for the transport system which form a focus to this new LTS to make further positive change to meet the needs of those who live in, work in and visit Highland and address transport inequalities across the Region. In taking this forward:

The LTS is not about forcing people out of their car. It is about improving choices for sustainable transport including active travel, public, community and shared transport to be an option for more people, so they are not being forced into their car / to purchase a car and so non-drivers have more transport independence.

The LTS provides a pragmatic policy framework, recognising the different options that may be available to people. For example, it is not about suggesting sustainable and active travel for all journeys, rather about improving choices for this to be an option where other factors such as distance permit.

There is a need to recognise and keep in mind that transport is a derived demand i.e. people travel to access opportunities, services, goods etc rather than for the sake of travelling. Therefore, the LTS alone will not meet user needs nor overcome existing problems and challenges. Rather the LTS also needs to be embedded in wider policy, particularly that which has an intrinsic impact on why, when and to where people travel, and goods move between.

An overview of the problems and opportunities as well as challenges follows, and further information can be found in the LTS Case for Change available on The Highland Council's website [here](#).

While there have been several achievements with the transport system since the previous LTS was published, it is recognised **problems** remain and need to be addressed. These include:

- **Net Zero** – The Highland Council is committed to achieving Net Zero by 2045 and potentially sooner. Car travel, however, dominates the transport network within Highland and the transport sector is a key contributor to emissions accounting for over 25% nationally. Adequate provision of EV charging infrastructure, supported by grid infrastructure, is required to enable a smooth transition to EVs and support Net Zero targets together with investment in schemes to improve travel choices. The Highland Council's fleet and staff travel emissions represent 21% of corporate carbon emissions, whilst the Council operated public ferry route, Corran Ferry, accounts for a further 3% of emissions¹⁵.
- **Car Dependence** – The predominance of car travel is reflective of a lack of available alternative options leading to dependence on and forced car ownership for some. Congestion in more urban areas affects the reliability of bus services and can also lead to real and perceived safety concerns for those who walk, wheel and cycle.
- **Public Transport** – Public transport and lifeline connections have a key role for equality of access to employment, education and services as well as rural re-population and attracting younger people to stay in or return to the area. The ability of bus operators to meet different needs is challenging, for example fulfilling school bus contracts can impact service availability at commuting times and other times of the day. The physical constraints of the rail network impact the service offer that can be provided and ability to flex to integrate with other travel modes at times. The community transport sector plays an important role in operating minibus and car share services, this often serves as a lifeline for some to access services and provides a key function against the backdrop of an ageing population. Demand does though in some locations exceed available capacity. Lifeline ferry and air services are vital to the region with the reliability of ferries a factor. The physical accessibility of services for those with disabilities and lack of integrated onward connections can also present barriers to use.
- **Expenditure** – In terms of transport expenditure, the rural nature of the region and longer travel distances mean that transport costs can account for a larger proportion of expenditure for residents. Analysis undertaken as part of STPR2¹⁶ identified that most

¹⁵ Net Zero Strategy (The Highland Council, 2023)

https://www.highland.gov.uk/downloads/download/2297/net_zero_strategy [Accessed November 2024]

¹⁶ STPR2: Case for Change Highlands and Islands Region (Transport Scotland, 2021)

www.transport.gov.scot/media/49100/initial-appraisal-case-for-change-highlands-and-islands-report.pdf [Accessed December 2024]

people in Highland spend between 17% to 18% of their budget on transport, compared to the national average of 14%. The Fair Fares Review, published in 2024, is part of a broader package of work referred to as the Future of Public Transport being undertaken by Transport Scotland. Aspects of the review consider affordability and make several related recommendations¹⁷.

- **Active Travel** – The active travel network comprises National Cycle Network routes as well as local routes. The variable quality, missing links and accessibility of infrastructure significantly impacts use alongside physical factors relating to for example distance.
- **Network Demand** – The transport system is experiencing pressure from demand associated with new development, including residential, renewables sector as well as tourism which plays a major role in Highland, with the region attracting 7 million visitors, generating around £1.6 billion of economic impact each year and supporting around 25,000 jobs¹⁸. The road network in the region is particularly susceptible to seasonal congestion and delay associated with increased visitor numbers, particularly during the summer months, holiday weekends and at times of major events. Analysis undertaken as part of STPR2¹⁹ noted the A82 in Fort William and A830 as being areas where this is experienced with other problems known to be experienced on the NCN 500 and at key tourist destinations throughout the region.
- **Resilience** – The transport system in Highland is compromised by the lack of alternative options which result in long diversions in the event of a road closure. Diversions or delay have an impact on the reliability of all journeys, including trips by bus and freight as well as private car.

This impacts the A82, A87 and A9 north of Inverness on the strategic road network, as also highlighted in STPR2, as well as routes on the local road network. Analysis undertaken as part of STPR2²⁰ highlighted four of the longest diversion routes are on the A82 and the fifth longest diversion route on the A87.

¹⁷ Fair Fares Review (Transport Scotland, 2024)

<https://www.transport.gov.scot/our-approach/strategy/fair-fares-review/> [Accessed December 2024]

¹⁸ Highland Local Development Plan Evidence Gathering Committee Report (The Highland Council, October 2024)

[www.highland.gov.uk/meetings/meeting/5070/economy_and_infrastructure_committee_\(item_12\)](http://www.highland.gov.uk/meetings/meeting/5070/economy_and_infrastructure_committee_(item_12)) [Accessed November 2024]

¹⁹ STPR2: Case for Change Highlands and Islands Region (Transport Scotland, 2021)

www.transport.gov.scot/media/49100/initial-appraisal-case-for-change-highlands-and-islands-report.pdf [Accessed December 2024]

²⁰ STPR2: Case for Change Highlands and Islands Region (Transport Scotland, 2021)

www.transport.gov.scot/media/49100/initial-appraisal-case-for-change-highlands-and-islands-report.pdf [Accessed December 2024]

STPR2 also noted the impact of ferry and air service cancellations for islanders, limiting access to employment, healthcare and other services as well as adversely impacting the supply of goods and limiting economic development opportunities, including tourism. Improved integration between passenger services could assist together with a general broadening of improving transport choices in turn providing more resilience in the event issues arise with a particular part of the transport system. Providing an alternative mode of travel for freight reduces reliance on the road network to transport goods and materials from the region, improving the resilience of the sector.

The resilience of the transport system is also heightened by the impacts of climate change from emissions already locked-in and the predicted increase in intensity and frequency of extreme weather events that will adversely affect the transport system and ability to make journeys. For example, in Winter 2024 flooding closed parts of the rail network in Highland and landslips also resulted in road closures.

- **Network Condition** – The condition of the existing transport system, including the road network, public transport infrastructure and the active travel network is also a factor. This reflects the challenge of maintaining existing assets within a constrained budgetary position combined with increasing demand from different uses. This impacts all users of the network, including those who walk, wheel, cycle, use public transport and drive. Maintenance of existing assets is also of importance to supporting the resilience of the transport system to the impacts of climate change and more extreme weather events experienced.

While there are problems for the transport system to overcome, **opportunities** are available to build on. These include:

- The **existing fabric of the transport system in Highland** provides the opportunity to make further improvements, supporting modal shift to more sustainable alternatives. This includes expansion of existing port infrastructure and rail freight facilities to transition more freight from road as well as improvements to the active travel network including potential use of disused railway lines.
- The region is at the **centre of both onshore and offshore renewables expansion**. The attractiveness of the region supports a thriving **tourist sector**. This vibrancy supports the potential for a prosperous future supported by a transport system that is safe and reliable with needs served by the availability of sustainable travel choices.

- The Highland area is characterised by a **strong community spirit**. This is reflected in the breadth of the volunteer run community transport services currently on offer, as well as the activities of groups to take forward developing Local Place Plans to help shape and improve their communities across the region.
- Linked to this, a further opportunity to build on is the **existing partnership working** across the region. This includes national, regional and local Government as well as locally through, for example, community planning partnerships.
- While Highland serves a third of the land area of Scotland, including the most remote and sparsely populated parts of the UK, this masks the fact that most people live in some form of settlement. Linked to this national, regional and local planning policy reflects a **local living focus** whereby people can access many of their daily needs within a reasonable distance, thereby providing a spatial context supportive of active travel and public transport. These factors provide a basis from which to encourage more sustainable travel choices for people to access services and facilities, supported by the necessary infrastructure and service provision.
- The expansion of the **EV charging network** in Highland will help facilitate the switch to electric vehicles and support progress towards national Net Zero commitments as well as interim targets of The Highland Council. The Highland Council has collaborated with Aberdeen City and Shire Councils and Moray Council to identify a preferred delivery model through the Pathfinder Project, that can attract private sector investment. A project delivery partner will be appointed with responsibility for the adoption of existing assets, repair and maintenance service and investment in extending the network.

The unique character and scale of Highland presents significant challenges for the delivery, operation and maintenance of the transport system. **Challenges** of relevance in Highland include:

- A **constrained public sector funding landscape** means a reduction in budgets and slower decision making to release funds. This has a direct bearing on the delivery of new transport schemes, maintenance of existing infrastructure as well as the provision of transport services with less budget to go further.
- **Decisions taken by other sectors which impact on transport**. An example of this is the centralisation of health services leading to longer distances people need to travel to access specialist services and other types of treatment.

- **Constraints on the public transport network** influence service operations and integration between modes. For example, the rail line north of Perth and throughout Highland is predominantly single track which directly influences service operations.
- **Existing travel trends** being **counter to** local, regional and national **policy**, including in relation to mode shift to sustainable travel choices and Net Zero commitments. This has a direct bearing on **inequalities** as well as **travel independence** within Highland.
- An **older and ageing population** in Highland compared to the Scottish average raises considerations for the transport system such as mobility requirements of new infrastructure as well as access to services and increasing reliance on non-car transport to do so.
- The transport system in Highland is at risk from the predicted increase in intensity and frequency of extreme weather events due to the **impact of climate change**, including flooding and erosion, temperature extremes, slope and embankment failures and subsidence. These impacts can damage as well as speed up the deterioration of the road, rail and active travel networks making maintenance more costly and challenging. The need for ongoing adaptation and resilience efforts is therefore important to ensure the transport system in Highland can continue to withstand the impacts of climate change already locked-in from emissions. The Highland Council is working with partners, including through Highland Adapts and with the North of Scotland Regional Resilience Partnership, on climate adaptation planning, and related risk assessments and the identification of mitigation.
- **Uncertainty about national infrastructure projects** with The Highland Council awaiting confirmation of several strategic road improvements that have a direct bearing on future development proposals. This includes the A9 Perth to Inverness Dualling, A96 Corridor, A9/A96 Inshes to Smithton (also known as East Link), A9/A82 Longman Junction Improvement Scheme and A9 North Kessock to Tore. Several strategic rail improvement projects within Highland were also identified in the second Strategic Transport Projects Review, such as electrification²¹, a programme of new and longer passing loops with more flexibility and permissible speed increases on the Highland Main Line²² and Inverness Rail Station Masterplan²³. The uncertainty could have a significant impact on the future growth

²¹ STPR2 Recommendation 25: Decarbonisation of the Rail Network (Transport Scotland, 2022)

www.transport.gov.scot/media/52529/recommendation-25-rail-decarbonisation.pdf [Accessed January 2025]

²² STPR2 Recommendation 15: Highland Main Line Rail Corridor Enhancements (Transport Scotland, 2022)

www.transport.gov.scot/media/52519/recommendation-15-highland-main-line-rail-corridor-enhancements.pdf

[Accessed January 2025]

²³ STPR2 Recommendation 43: Major Station Masterplans (Transport Scotland, 2022)

www.transport.gov.scot/media/52547/recommendation-43-major-station-masterplans.pdf [Accessed January 2025]

of the area and raises considerations for the transport system in terms of impact on the local network and potential improvements required underpinned by an infrastructure first approach.

Local Transport Vision, Objectives, Themes and Policies

The understanding of the problems and opportunities and wider policy context detailed earlier in the LTS have informed the LTS Vision and objectives set out below, as well as the themes and policies that follow.

The **Vision** of the LTS is that:

“Our communities, businesses and visitors in Highland will be served by a low carbon transport system that is sustainable, inclusive, safe, resilient and accessible.”

The Vision is supported by **four objectives** that set out the outcomes we want to achieve through the LTS. These include:

To invest in the safety, maintenance and resilience of the transport system to support the future prosperity of communities and businesses within Highland.

To improve public, community and shared transport options that meet different user needs across the Highland geography.

To improve walking, wheeling and cycling choices for everyone living in or visiting Highland to encourage active and healthy journeys.

To reduce emissions from the transport system.

Under each objective are several **themes** to frame the policies of the strategy. The themes also help to ensure the coverage of the strategy is sufficient, recognising the varied geography of the region ranging from an urban city environment to rural and remote rural areas. The **policies** in turn set out the principles that will guide the actions of the strategy within the accompanying Delivery Plan to be developed in early 2025. The relationship between the LTS vision, objectives, themes and policies is shown overleaf.

OBJECTIVES

To invest in the safety, maintenance and resilience of the transport system to support the future prosperity of communities and businesses within Highland.

To improve public, community and shared transport options that meet different user needs across the Highland geography.

To improve walking, wheeling and cycling choices for everyone living in or visiting Highland to encourage active and healthy journeys.

To reduce emissions from the transport system within Highland.

THEMES

- Maintenance of the existing transport system.
- Strengthening consideration of maintenance needs and costs in design.
- Targeted road infrastructure improvements.
- Safety of the transport system.
- Resilience of the transport system.
- Climate change adaptation.
- Supporting access needs for economic growth.

- Competitiveness of journey times, operating schedules, attractiveness and cost.
- Reliability of services.
- Behaviour change.
- Role of community transport.
- Integration within the transport system.
- Supporting local living.

- Invest in active travel infrastructure which is inclusive for all.
- Behaviour change.
- Integration within the transport system.
- Supporting local living.

- Provide opportunities for people to have the choice to travel less where practical.
- Provide opportunities for people to have the choice to travel shorter distances to access employment, education and services.
- Provide opportunities for people to have less reliance on the car, both for the entire or as part of a journey.
- Reduce emissions from motorised journeys.
- Reduce emissions from construction and maintenance.

POLICIES

Local Transport Strategy Policy Framework

Objective: To invest in the safety, maintenance and resilience of the transport system to support the future prosperity of communities and businesses within Highland.

Draft Themes	Draft Policies
Maintenance of the existing transport system.	Undertake investment decisions with consideration of the Sustainable Investment Hierarchy which focuses on reducing the need to travel unsustainably, then maintaining and safely operating existing assets, then making better use of existing capacity, and finally targeted infrastructure improvements.
Strengthening consideration of maintenance needs and costs in design.	Deliver a safer road network in Highland, adopting the Safe System approach and related five pillars - Safe Road Use, Safe Vehicles, Safe Speeds, Safe Roads and Roadsides and Post-crash Response. This approach aligns with that adopted by the Scottish Government to achieve Vision Zero where no one is seriously injured or killed on our roads by 2050.
Targeted road infrastructure improvements.	Strive to reduce the impact of traffic on communities and reduce casualties through various means, such as speed and traffic reduction measures as well as education in line with The Highland Council's Road Safety Plan to 2030.
Safety of the transport system.	Maintain, improve and manage adopted roads, bridges and associated infrastructure in line with The Highland Council's Road Asset Management Plan and projects forming part of the Highland Investment Plan – Roads Infrastructure and Improvement Programme. Investment and maintenance decisions will be taken with cognisance of The Highland Council's Road Network Hierarchy.
Resilience of the transport system.	Public transport projects will be subject to an asset management approach, ensuring maintenance and replacement strategies are in place for any ageing infrastructure such as bus shelters as well as bus priority infrastructure such as signage and road markings.
Climate change adaptation.	Active travel projects will be subject to an asset management approach, ensuring maintenance and replacement strategies are in place for any ageing infrastructure such as signage and lining. Active travel infrastructure will also be designed with consideration of access for maintenance purposes and associated costs to maintain.
Supporting access needs for economic growth.	Maintenance of active travel infrastructure will be underpinned by an understanding of what parts of the existing network are adopted by The Highland Council and which aren't. This will help inform the planning of maintenance needs and delivery going forward.
	The Highland Council will consider ways to lever in funding for the maintenance of adopted assets across all modes, taking into consideration funding already obtained through external means such as developer contributions. This could also include potential efficiencies in pooling resources between partners.
	The Highland Council will continue to engage with partners nationally and regionally on strategic road improvements including the A9 dualling, A96 corridor, A82 and upgrades to other regionally significant routes to improve the quality and safety of the road network for all users and unlock regional economic potential.
	The Highland Council will work with partners to enhance the trunk road network that passes through communities to ensure safe, inclusive and sustainable travel options for all. This includes continuing to work with partners to progress the Fort William Integrated Transport Plan as part of the wider FW2040 project.
	The Highland Council will continue to work with partners to improve the resilience of the transport system. This includes response to closures requiring the use of diversionary routes that impact on the movement of passengers and goods and the ability of different parts of the transport system to flex to meet needs when one experiences issues (e.g. rail network blocked by a landslide and alternative options available to passengers). Seasonality of demand

Draft Themes	Draft Policies
	and operational impact on the system is also a factor, such as the varying journey times experienced at different times of the year in locations such as Fort William which is linked to the Council continuing to support activities such as progress of the Fort William Integrated Transport Plan.
	The transport system will be designed with climate resilience in mind to help mitigate against weather related impacts of climate change, including increased incidences of flooding, erosion, temperature extremes, slope and embankment failures and subsidence.
	Integrate blue-green infrastructure into the design of transport schemes. This includes the 'green' and 'blue' features that can provide environmental benefits and contribute to quality of life. Examples include woodlands, street trees, play spaces, allotments, community growing spaces, playing fields, road verges, swales, green walls and living roofs, rivers, canals, streams, wetlands, sustainable drainage. Active travel routes are another example, but in the context of this policy the focus is on non-transport blue-green infrastructure to complement the transport system.
	Safe and personally secure environments for all will be considered in the design of transport schemes, recognising that some groups suffer particular personal security issues in our built environment and on public transport services.
	Maintain the safety and integrity of the local road network while supporting existing and future access needs from different demands/sectors, including renewables, the timber industry, the Inverness and Cromarty Firth Green Freeport and tourism. This includes The Highland Council working with developers to support the future growth of the region. The Highland Council also expects developers to support the transport requirements of their developments and contribute appropriately to the transport system, supported by robust guidance.
	Investigate options to manage tourist traffic at popular destinations in Highland and work with partners to implement schemes.

Objective: To improve public, community and shared transport options that meet different user needs across the Highland geography.

Draft Themes	Draft Policies
<p>Competitiveness of journey times, operating schedules, attractiveness and cost.</p> <p>Reliability of services.</p> <p>Invest in behaviour change to encourage mode shift to public, community and shared transport options for all or part of a journey.</p> <p>Role of community transport alongside scheduled public transport services to connect communities and provide access.</p> <p>Integration of the public transport network within the transport system, including between different public transport modes as well as with active travel and private car/vehicles.</p> <p>Public, community and shared transport will support local living where people can meet the majority of their daily needs within a reasonable distance of their home if walking, wheeling or cycling not a feasible option.</p>	<p>Bus service operations will be underpinned by a clear understanding of existing needs and service provision.</p>
	<p>Maintain and develop an efficient home-to-school transport system for those pupils entitled to it. From the point of view of bus services, this requires The Highland Council to work with operators to balance, as far as possible, the scheduling of services around the start and end of the school day with the needs of other users such as those dependent on public transport for commuting and to access health appointments.</p>
	<p>Continue to develop and participate in the Highland Bus Service Improvement Partnership (BSIP) to support improvements in bus services by partnership working with operators and HITRANS. Through this The Highland Council will continue to explore opportunities to invest in initiatives such as bus lanes and traffic signal priority, and other measures designed to support bus use. A further aspect will be to work with partners to progress bringing forward a minimum acceptable standard for bus services in Highland that is part of the BSIP Plan to support getting the basics right to complement investment in service expansion and measures to improve the reliability of operations.</p>
	<p>Fully utilise the powers given to local authorities through the Transport (Scotland) Act 2019, where Section 2A was added to the Transport (Scotland Act) 2001, where the creation of an Arm's Length External Organisation (ALEO), would support in the delivery of the objectives of the Local Transport Strategy and its associated delivery plan, further facilitating contribution towards the achievement of objectives of the emerging Bus Service Improvement Partnership alongside wider national and regional transport policy objectives to ultimately achieve overall efficiencies for the Highland Transport Network.</p>
	<p>Work with local providers of community bus and car share schemes to help support the activities of groups as well as plan and integrate services with other public transport operations, recognising the valuable role of community transport to the transport system in Highland.</p>
	<p>Public transport schemes will be designed with consideration of different road users, including those who walk, cycle and wheel, bus operators and passengers, drivers of cars and other private vehicles as well as access requirements of businesses and other services local to a route.</p>
	<p>Work with partners to improve options for using public, community and shared transport options to attend health appointments, particularly between more rural areas of Highland and Inverness. This includes looking at the scheduling of appointments from a timing and geography point of view, therefore requiring wide participation from partners to improve travel choices and support their more efficient delivery.</p>
	<p>Work with partners to continue to progress line speed and capacity improvements to the rail network in Highland, supporting both the movement of passengers and freight. This will also involve working with partners to ensure the rail network which directly passes through communities, such as at level crossings, is safe for all users of the community, including those who walk, wheel, cycle as well as drive.</p>
	<p>Work with partners to support the case for investment in ferries infrastructure and service improvements that meet the needs of communities and businesses in Highland. This includes completing the next stages of the Corran Ferry replacement project.</p>
	<p>Continue to work with partners to encourage sustainable land access to and from ferry services in Highland.</p>
	<p>Continue to work with partners to encourage sustainable surface access to and from airports in Highland.</p>

Draft Themes	Draft Policies
	Work with partners to support the case for improvements to air travel, including enhancements to existing services and the establishment of new services recognising the role of aviation within Highland in getting people to hubs and across the region as well as supporting economic development. This should include consideration of using the Public Service Obligation (PSO) contracting system.
	Public, community and shared transport services will be complemented by fit for purpose infrastructure. Examples could include the provision of safe, accessible and comfortable waiting facilities and information underpinned by a sound understanding of passenger requirements.
	Work with partners to ensure that the public, community and shared transport network in Highland is inclusive in line with policy, guidance and standards set out in the Equality Act 2010. This includes access to vehicles (including taxis) and stops/stations as well as information and communications about services, fares etc. This includes ensuring all groups with protected characteristics are considered and have the opportunity to input to proposals. A factor to this is also the ageing population as well as users of the transport system who experience hidden disabilities in Highland and what this means in terms of provision.
	The public transport system will be developed with account taken of the needs of both younger and older people to give them access to sustainable, safe and affordable options.
	Encourage integration between different public, community and shared transport options as well as with walking and cycling routes to help connect communities with these services. This includes integration of services/routes as well as ticketing and how services can be booked, harnessing the opportunities presented by technology and different types of service delivery. From a service point of view, it will be important to consider the impact of any service changes on access for existing users. In the adoption of technology, it will be important to ensure there is not digital exclusion, such as how people can access information and take advantage of a more integrated offer.
	Continue to explore opportunities and funding options for mobility hubs in Highland to support connectivity between different public, community and shared transport options as well as with active travel modes, building on the experience of existing hubs such as at Torvean.
	The Highland Council's approach to development planning and development management will be in line with the Sustainable Travel Hierarchy. The Highland Council therefore expects that public transport is incorporated into development layouts from the start and not designed in retrospectively.
	Work with partners and operators to promote awareness of lower public transport fares options, such as the Highland Railcard and bus offers. This also links to The Highland Council supporting continued work in the area of integrated ticketing across different modes and operators within Highland and to/from the area.
	Invest in behaviour change initiatives to promote the use of public, community and shared transport. This covers awareness raising of available services, ticketing information, journey information and opportunities to connect with different types of services/modes as well as opportunities to access by foot and bike. This will also require The Highland Council to continue to work with partners to support people being able to travel to/from Highland by public transport.
	Work with partners to promote public transport options for business travellers and visitors to get around Highland. From a tourism point of view this includes scenic routes being accessible by bus and/or rail, and in the delivery of options to help manage demand on the road network at tourist hotspots. This will also require The Highland Council to continue to work with partners to support people being able to travel to/from Highland by public transport.
	Work with HITRANS and other partners to ensure fairness in the funding of rural transport. This links to the concessionary travel system operated by the Scottish Government, both in relation to the level of reimbursement received by more rural areas such as Highland and to the uncapped fare mechanism for reimbursement in relation to affordability for fare paying passengers.



Objective: To improve walking, wheeling and cycling choices for everyone living in or visiting Highland to encourage active and healthy journeys.

Draft Themes	Draft Policies
<p>Invest in active travel infrastructure which is inclusive for all.</p> <p>Invest in behaviour change to encourage mode shift to active travel for all or part of a journey.</p> <p>Integration of the active travel network within the transport system, including between different active travel modes as well as to public, community and shared transport services and with private car/vehicles.</p> <p>Active travel will support local living where people can meet the majority of their daily needs within a reasonable distance of their home, preferably by walking, wheeling or cycling.</p>	<p>Deliver safe, direct, coherent, comfortable, attractive and adaptable active travel infrastructure that takes account of different user needs, including those with visible and hidden disabilities. This includes within communities to support local living as well as between settlements, particularly where distances allow active travel to be feasible in more populated and less remote areas of Highland. Network planning will take account of desire lines and "missing links" to meet needs and encourage use as well as opportunities to enhance access in relation to areas of deprivation. This will also include consideration of the integration of active travel infrastructure with other modes and maximising opportunities such as the redevelopment of Inverness Rail Station.</p>
	<p>The Highland Council will strive to progress active travel scheme delivery on a network basis to support the rollout of a coherent network rather than individual schemes, subject to the current funding approach of being scheme based and single year.</p>
	<p>Design new active travel infrastructure in line with policy, guidance and standards, such as the Equality Act 2010 and Cycling by Design. This involves ensuring all groups with protected characteristics are considered and have the opportunity to input into designs with the ageing population profile in Highland as well as users of the transport system with hidden disabilities captured as part of this inclusive approach.</p>
	<p>Active travel infrastructure will be designed with consideration of different road users, including those who walk, wheel and cycle, bus operators and passengers, drivers of cars and other private vehicles as well as access requirements of businesses and other services local to a new route.</p>
	<p>New cycle infrastructure (cycleways, parking and storage) will be developed, where possible, to accommodate non-standard cycles including adapted bikes and cargo bikes. This will also require the consideration of associated maintenance costs at the outset.</p>
	<p>The Highland Council's processes across different workstreams will align with supporting active travel infrastructure, such as the position on the process for the consideration of new pedestrian crossings and their implementation.</p>
	<p>The Highland Council's approach to development planning and development management will be in line with the Sustainable Travel Hierarchy. The Highland Council therefore expects that active travel is incorporated into development layouts from the start and not designed in retrospectively.</p>
	<p>Continue to support walking, wheeling, cycling and scooting to school where this is a feasible choice for pupils to travel to school. Staff should also seek to travel actively where possible, aligning with The Highland Council's wider Sustainable Business Travel Action Plan.</p>
	<p>Work with partners to promote access to cycling opportunities for those who do not own a bike and/or who wish to take their bike on public transport.</p>
	<p>Work with partners to support the use of active travel by business travellers and visitors. From a tourism point of view this includes options to help manage demand on the road network at tourist hotspots as well as raise awareness of longer distance walking/cycling routes in the region. This will also require The Highland Council to continue to work with partners to support people being able to travel to/from Highland by sustainable modes of travel.</p>
	<p>Continue to enforce the ban on pavement parking, double parking and parking at some dropped kerbs within Highland to support safe negotiation of footways by those walking, wheeling and cycling.</p>
	<p>Invest in behaviour change initiatives to promote the use of active travel infrastructure and with consideration of different users. This covers awareness raising of both the physical and mental health benefits as well as education of active travel users and drivers around safety and using the network together (including consideration by cyclists of pedestrians and vice versa). Working with partners will be an important aspect, both to improve knowledge of need and access to active</p>

Draft Themes	Draft Policies
	travel as well as potential funding options. This will also require The Highland Council to continue to work with partners to support people being able to travel to/from Highland by sustainable modes of travel.

Objective: To reduce emissions from the transport system within Highland.

Draft Themes	Draft Policies
<p>Provide opportunities for people to have the choice to travel less where practical. This will seek to provide opportunities for people to work and study remotely and access services online where feasible. It is not about mandating how and when people travel as it is recognised there are different reasons people travel including wider social well-being factors, rather the focus is on giving opportunities that remove or reduce the need to travel.</p> <p>Provide opportunities for people to have the choice to travel shorter distances to access employment, education and services.</p> <p>Provide opportunities for people to have less reliance on the car for journeys, both for the entire journey or as part of a journey.</p> <p>Reduce emissions from motorised journeys.</p> <p>Reduce emissions from transport related construction and maintenance.</p>	The Highland Council will continue to support the roll-out of broadband and mobile networks to improve digital connectivity.
	Continue to decarbonise The Highland Council's in-house fleet and replace vehicles with low emission alternatives. This includes buses operated by The Highland Council, fleet cars/vans and Heavy Goods Vehicles for gritting and refuse collections so far as is possible in terms of logistical considerations and associated cost. This links to the Council's Sustainable Business Travel Action Plan which includes a focus on rationalising the fleet and replacing vehicles with low emission alternatives. The Highland Council will also work with bus operators and other partners in the region to support decarbonisation of their fleet.
	Continue to explore ways to reduce the carbon impact of Council-related travel, including both the journey to work as well as business travel. This links to The Highland Council's Sustainable Business Travel Action Plan which includes a focus on behaviour change and promoting sustainable travel as well as reducing the use of grey fleet (use of private vehicles for work purposes).
	Invest in infrastructure to support travel by alternatively fuelled vehicles for those who live in, work in and visit Highland. This includes collaborating with the private sector and utility companies in the development of the public EV charging network as well as consideration of the requirements of homeowners who do not have private driveways but wish to charge at home.
	The impact of transport investment on The Highland Council's Net Zero ambitions will form part of the Council's transport decision-making process.
	The Highland Council's approach to development planning and development management will be in line with the Sustainable Travel Hierarchy and set out to ensure that developments contribute appropriately to the transport system to support the delivery of the Local Transport Strategy, supported by robust guidance.
	The Highland Council shall strive to work with organisations, so they consider the impact of their decisions on how services are provided and where facilities are located. This includes consideration of accessibility in line with the Sustainable Travel Hierarchy and carbon implications of changes to where people need to access goods and services to support delivery of the Local Transport Strategy.
	The transport system will support local living and the roll-out of The Highland Council's community Points of Service Delivery approach. Within more urban areas and larger towns in Highland this will focus on encouraging walking, wheeling and cycling for shorter everyday journeys. For more rural areas, it will be about connecting communities to public, community and shared transport hubs/points to access services and facilities in larger settlements utilising walking, wheeling and cycling routes at the start and end of their journey.
	The Highland Council will continue to keep under review the approach to parking to support the efficient operation of the road network within Highland, including in both urban and more rural areas, as well as contribute to wider policies to support sustainable travel by all users of the transport network in Highland including visitors and to reduce emissions from the transport sector.
	The Highland Council will continue to keep under review options for demand management to help optimise the operation of the existing transport system for all, including those who travel by public transport and non-motorised modes of transport.
	Freight movements should be as sustainable as possible and alternatives to road-based transport used where feasible, such as cargo bikes for last mile deliveries and railways and waterways for longer haul freight journeys.
	The Highland Council will continue to support proposals of the Scottish Government to decarbonise the rail network within Highland.

Draft Themes	Draft Policies
	The Highland Council will continue to support partners in their work to build on the success of the Sustainable Aviation Test Environment (SATE) project and Scottish Government aspiration for the Highlands & Islands to be the world's first zero emission aviation region.

Monitoring and Evaluation

Monitoring the impact of the policies of the strategy is important. The table below shows key indicators to inform the monitoring of the strategy. There is a focus to employ indicators that cut across multiple objectives and to draw on existing data sources as far as possible. This is to provide a monitoring approach that is both proportionate to the strategy and feasible in terms of resource and cost requirements to deliver. The monitoring and evaluation of the strategy will be complemented by activities specific to individual actions and projects forming part of the Delivery Plan to take forward the policies set out in the LTS.

Indicator	Source	Baseline	LTS OBJECTIVES			
			<i>To invest in the safety, maintenance and resilience of the transport system to support the future prosperity of communities and businesses within Highland.</i>	<i>To improve public, community and shared transport options that meet different user needs across the Highland geography.</i>	<i>To improve walking, wheeling and cycling choices for everyone living in or visiting Highland to encourage active and healthy journeys.</i>	<i>To reduce emissions from the transport system within Highland.</i>
Vehicle kms on the trunk and local road networks	Scottish Transport Statistics	2024; 5-year average 2019 to 2024		✓	✓	✓
Personal Injury Accidents (PIAs) on local road network	Department for Transport STATS19 data	5-year average 2019 to 2024	✓			
Mode of travel to work	2022 Census Scottish Household Survey	2022 Census	✓	✓	✓	✓
Mode of travel to education	2022 Census Scottish Household Survey	2022 Census	✓	✓	✓	✓
Mode of travel to school	Hands Up Scotland Survey	2024 2014 to 2024	✓	✓	✓	✓
Car ownership levels	Scottish Household Survey	2024; 2014 to 2024		✓	✓	✓
No. Vehicles Licensed (total and no. cars)	Scottish Transport Statistics	2024; 2014 to 2024		✓	✓	✓
No. ULEV registered	Department for Transport	2024; 2014 – 2024				✓
The Highland Council carbon emissions tonnes CO2e	The Highland Council Corporate Plan Indicator	2022/23 Financial Year				✓
Bus patronage (scheduled and community transport services)	Operator data (subject to availability)	2024 passenger number		✓		✓
Use of bus services	Scottish Household Survey	2024		✓		✓
Rail station entry/exit numbers	ScotRail	2024; 2014 to 2024 station entry/exit data		✓		✓
No. cyclists/pedestrians	Existing counters	2024; 2014 – 2024	✓		✓	✓
NOx and PMx emissions	Annual monitoring (statutory requirement)	2024 Air Quality levels		✓	✓	✓
Access to employment, education, services	SIMD ranking	2020 SIMD		✓	✓	





Highland Local Transport Strategy 2025 – 2035

Engagement Report
December 2024

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1. Introduction



Introduction

An essential part of the process in developing the new Highland Local Transport Strategy (LTS) is the need to engage and collaborate with a diverse array of stakeholders and communities to gather views on the emerging LTS and to ensure that the different needs of those who live in, work in and visit Highland are met with consensus achieved as far as possible.

The approach to the LTS engagement has been guided by an Engagement and Communications Plan prepared at the outset to structure and articulate the activities to be undertaken to provide value in the preparation of the Strategy. A copy of the plan is enclosed in Appendix A.

The purpose of this report is to document the engagement undertaken to inform the development of the LTS and summarise the outcomes of the various activities which have shaped the Strategy. This report focuses on the activities led by Pell Frischmann between September 2024 and December 2024 which are summarised in Figure 1.

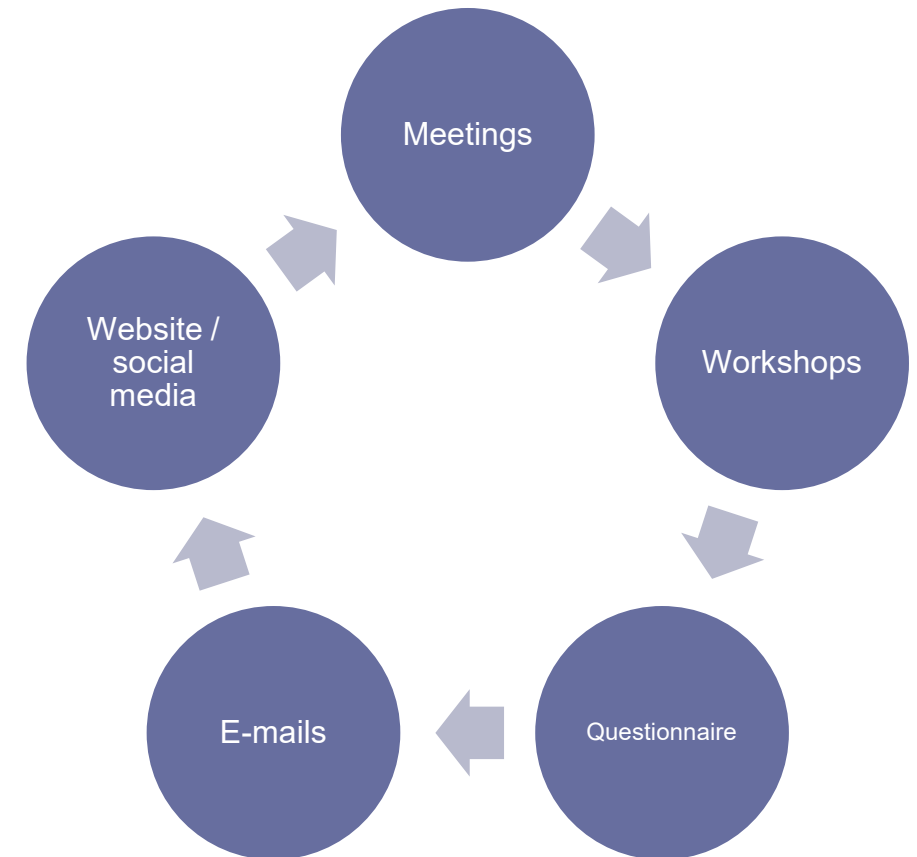


Figure 1: Engagement Activities Overview

Engagement Governance

The engagement was overseen by the following Governance arrangements:

A **Working Group** was established consisting of representation from key The Highland Council (THC) departments offering breadth of view and opinion. HITRANS is also a member of the Working Group. The Terms of Reference for the Working Group sought members to offer technical challenge, input and support to inform the development of the LTS as well as agree on key fundamental policies which may have a remit within their respective departments.

The Working Group was convened on four occasions as summarised below:

- **3 October 2024:** To provide an update on the status of preparing the new LTS and forward activities and programme following the appointment of Pell Frischmann Consultants in August 2024 to support the Council in the next stage.
- **22 October 2024:** To share the key headlines from the stakeholder engagement activities undertaken in October (this meeting was followed by the opportunity for feedback on the draft themes and policies prior to publication).
- **12 November 2024:** To provide an update on progress, gather input on key projects/achievements to highlight in the LTS and gather views to inform the Action Plan template for the LTS Delivery Plan.
- **17 December 2024:** To share feedback on the engagement and provide the opportunity for comment on the finalised themes and policies (this meeting happened during the period for final feedback from 16 December 2024 to 7 January 2025).



A **Governance Group** was established consisting of senior representatives from within THC. The Terms of Reference of the Governance Group centred in the Group acting as decision makers in respect of the emerging themes, policies and material for publication.

The Governance Group was convened on four occasions as summarised below:

- **26 September 2024:** To provide an update on the status of preparing the new LTS and forward activities and programme following the appointment of Pell Frischmann Consultants in August 2024 to support the Council in the next stage.
- **29 October 2024:** To provide an update on progress, gather initial views on the draft themes and policies prior to publication and feedback form (this meeting was followed by issue of the final draft themes and policies for approval to publish).
- **14 November 2024:** To provide an update on progress.
- **14 January 2025:** To provide the opportunity for final comment on the LTS prior to it being taken to Committee in February (this meeting will be convened during the feedback period between 13 January 2025 to 17 January 2025).

2. Emerging Themes and Policies Engagement



External Stakeholder Workshops

An initial stakeholder mapping exercise was undertaken to identify parties interested in the LTS. This was informed by professional experience of the client and consultant team as well as existing stakeholder lists from the LTS Case for Change stage and updated community council contacts collated by the Council's Highland Local Development Plan team.

Online workshops were arranged with external stakeholders in October. The main purpose of each session was to hear the views of stakeholders on the draft LTS themes and policies. 150 stakeholders received an invite in September 2024 to attend a workshop. The invite was sent to groups/organisations from different sectors including:

Transport operators – bus, rail, ferries, aviation	Active Travel organisations/groups	Transport Scotland Local Authorities HITRANS National Park Authority
Business/Economy – Chambers of Commerce, tourism groups, Green Freeport, FSB, Prosper	Equalities – Access Panels, health and well- being groups/charities, protected characteristics	Environment organisations/groups
Education/Youth – University of Highlands and Islands, Youth Parliament, Youth Partnership	Community Councils	Development Trusts

External Stakeholder Workshops cont.

The workshops were each of 1.5hr duration and followed the same format that involved:

- Overview of the key highlights from the Case for Change prepared by THC in March 2023.
- Explaining the approach to the LTS centred around a vision supported by four objectives and identification of themes and policies to help deliver the Strategy.
- Gather feedback on the draft themes and policies for the LTS, shaped around the following questions:
 - *Do you agree with the current local themes for each objective?*
 - *What other local themes should be considered for each objective?*
 - *What policies should be reflected to progress the themes?*

A total of 29 stakeholders from 26 organisations/groups attended the sessions.

Key points raised across the three sessions are summarised overleaf and notes of each workshop enclosed in Appendix B.

Throughout the engagement process the opportunity has been taken to refine stakeholder contact details to ensure they are as current as possible, for example capturing new contact information received where there had been a change in personnel.

External Stakeholder Workshop Headlines

Key points raised by stakeholders covered the following:

Important for the LTS to recognise the **varied character of Highland** and what this means in terms of transport needs.

Still a role for the car - about reducing reliance and how much it forms part of a journey.

The LTS needs to **cover all modes** – including rail, ferries, aviation and freight as well as bus, walking, wheeling and cycling.

Reduce the need to travel – messaging important; the Strategy is not about restricting people from doing things.

The LTS needs to reflect **integration** is about **all passenger modes**.

The transport system needs to be **inclusive for everyone**.

Active travel routes need to be **cohesive** and **on desire lines** as well as **inclusive**.

Maintenance requirements need to be incorporated into **scheme design** and **ongoing cost** considered.

Need to be mindful that **demand** on the transport system today **may not be the same in the future**.

Areas of policy tension were also raised, including:

Policy tensions/challenges:

- Decline in rural transport **funding**, including a fall in funding for supported bus services meaning there is more required/greater demand from less resource.
- **Centralisation of services** which can lead to an increase in the distances people need to travel to access, for example, health treatment.
- **Concessionary travel scheme** – the fairness of reimbursement model in a rural context and for the fare paying passenger.
- **Developments** – making the Sustainable Travel Hierarchy “stick” as well as the **demand on the network** from growth sectors, including renewables and tourism.
- **Aviation** – emissions drive a negative perception, but the role and importance of aviation in moving people and supporting the region is important to recognise.

Internal Stakeholder Workshops/Meetings

An online workshop was arranged in October with THC officers from different areas of the Council, including transport, planning, environment and economy. The main purpose of the session was to hear the views of officers on the draft themes and policies of the LTS.

The workshop was of 1.5hr duration and followed the same format as the external sessions:

- Overview of the key highlights from the Case for Change prepared by THC in March 2023.
- Outline of the approach to the LTS centred around a vision supported by four objectives and themes and policies to help deliver the Strategy.
- Gather feedback on the draft themes and policies for the LTS, shaped around the following questions:
 - *Do you agree with the current local themes for each objective?*
 - *What other local themes should be considered for each objective?*
 - *What policies should be reflected to progress the themes?*

This workshop was supplemented by a specific session with the Road Operation Managers and Fleet Services teams as well as 1-2-1 meetings to provide the opportunity to drill down in further detail on specific aspects.

Notes from the officer engagement are enclosed in Appendix C.

3. Final Draft Themes and Policies Engagement



Draft Themes and Policies Publication

Engagement with stakeholders and public on the finalised draft themes and policies was launched on the 5 November 2024 for a four-week period until 3 December 2024. This proceeded the stakeholder engagement period in October 2024.

The draft themes and policies were set out in a document with wider background included to provide context to the focus of the engagement. A copy of the engagement document and questionnaire to gather feedback is enclosed in Appendix D.

An advance engagement notification was issued to over 200 Community Councils and Community Development Trusts the week prior to the launch. This was done to assist in raising awareness of the forthcoming engagement, recognising some groups may meet monthly and members may need to liaise before submitting a response.

Over 400 stakeholders received an e-mail notification advising of the publication launch and where more information could be found on the Council's website, including how to provide feedback. Other promotional activities included:

- Issue of a press release to media outlets.
- Awareness raising through multiple social media channels.
- E-mail dissemination to members of the THC Environment and Infrastructure Committee as well as THC Community Development and Ward Managers.
- Collaboration with the Highland Community Planning Partnership to promote the engagement.
- Posters placed in High Life Highland libraries and Council Service Points.



Highland Local Transport Strategy 2025 – 2035

Draft Themes and Policies – Engagement



www.highland.gov.uk

Engagement Questionnaire

The engagement questionnaire comprised 12 core questions asking for views on the themes and policies. This included the extent to which there was agreement or disagreement with the themes and policies presented. The questionnaire also asked about whether there were any gaps in the themes and policies presented, and further information asked about where there was considered to be a gap.

A small number of questions, within the boundaries of GDPR, were also asked to gather information to understand who had responded.

All questions were optional for completion.

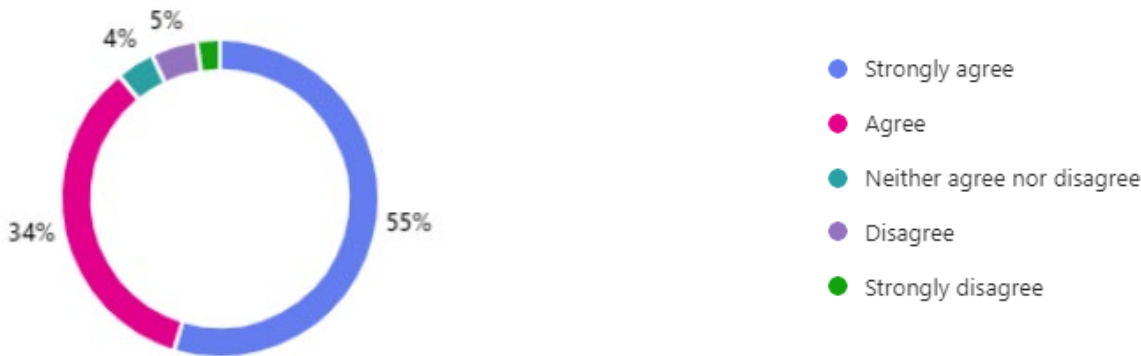
Paper copies of the online questionnaire could be requested from the Council by phone to accommodate those who do not access / have the means to access information online. Contact details were provided on the promotional poster. No requests for a paper copy were received.

The online engagement was supplemented by THC officers attending an in-person public event on the 26 November 2024 in connection with the Inverness Strategy. The opportunity was taken at this event to promote the engagement on the LTS and tablet made available for people to complete the questionnaire as well as paper copies for anyone who preferred this format. Two completed questionnaires in hard copy were received via this event.

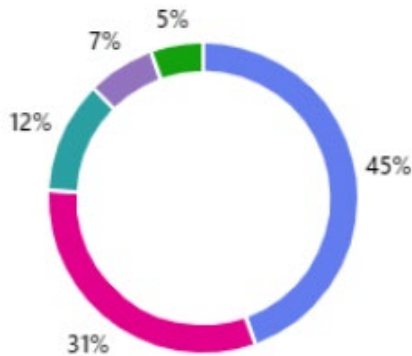
A total of 130 responses were received, with 102 from individuals and 27 provided by organisations (there was one further response which did not answer the question about the capacity in which they were responding). An overview of who responded to the questionnaire is enclosed in Appendix E.

Engagement Headlines (Themes)

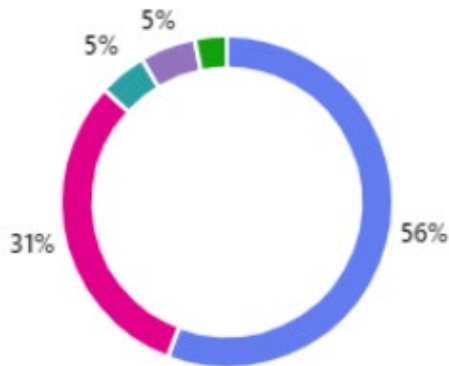
How strongly do you agree with the **themes** for the objective *"To invest in the safety, maintenance and resilience of the transport system to support the future prosperity of communities and businesses within Highland?"*



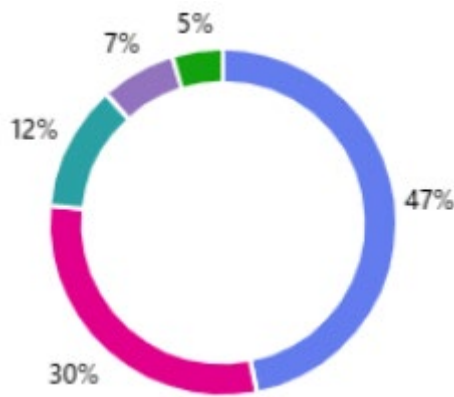
How strongly do you agree with the **themes** for the objective *"To improve walking, wheeling and cycling choices for everyone living or visiting Highland to encourage active and healthy journeys?"*



How strongly do you agree with the **themes** for the objective *"To improve public or shared transport options that meet different user needs across the Highland geography?"*

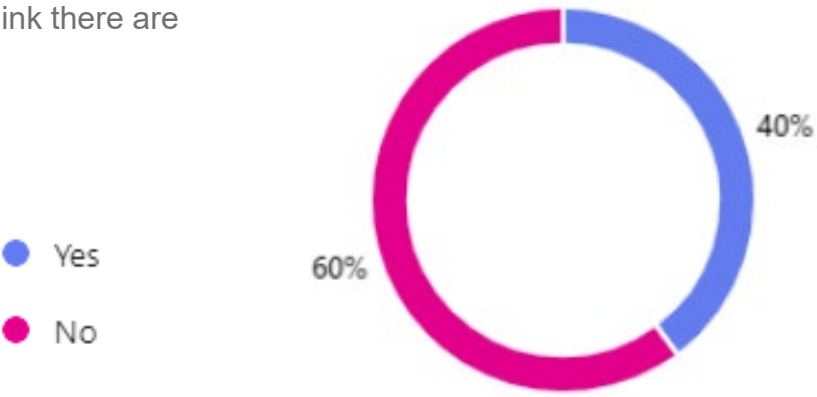


How strongly do you agree with the themes for the objective *"To Reduce emissions from the transport system within Highland?"*



Engagement Headlines (Themes)

Considering the **different themes** across the four objectives, do you think there are any further themes that should be included in the strategy?



Please provide additional details on any other themes that you feel should be considered.

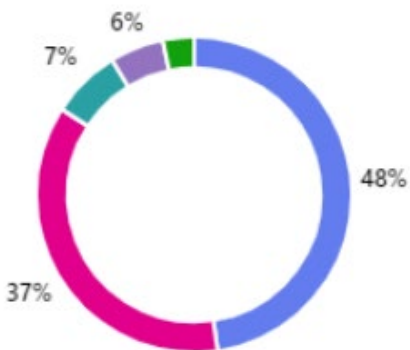


Engagement Headlines (Policies)

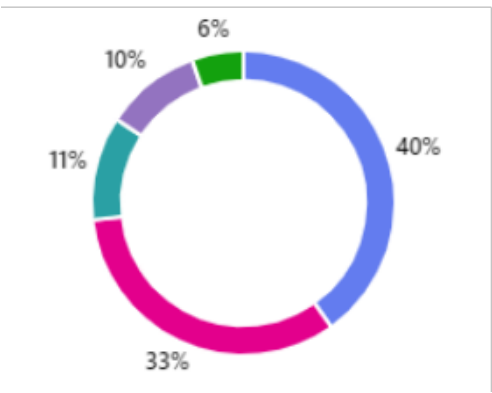
How strongly do you agree with the **policies** for the objective *"To invest in the safety, maintenance and resilience of the transport system to support the future prosperity of communities and businesses within Highland?"*



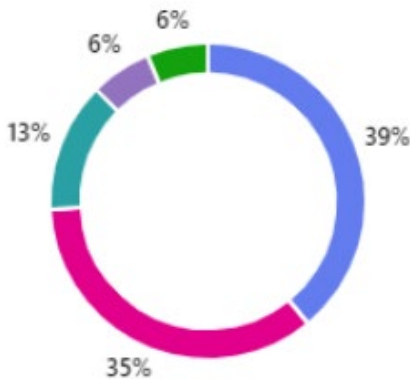
How strongly do you agree with the **policies** for the objective *"To improve public or shared transport options that meet different user needs across the Highland geography?"*



How strongly do you agree with the **policies** for the objective *"To improve walking, wheeling and cycling choices for everyone living or visiting Highland to encourage active and healthy journeys?"*

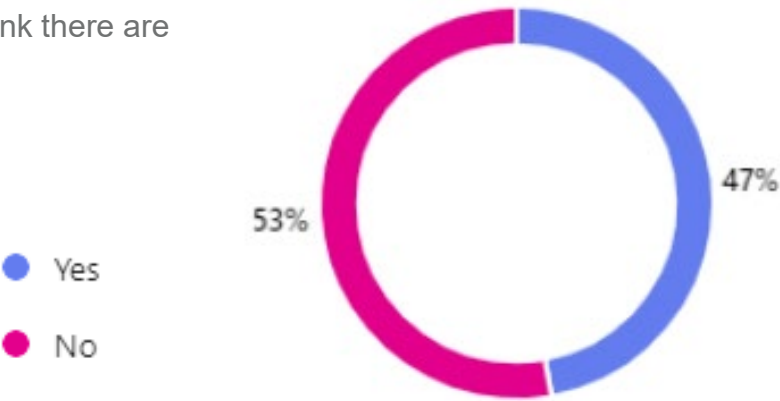


How strongly do you agree with the **policies** for the objective *"To reduce emissions from the transport system within Highland?"*



Engagement Headlines (Policies)

Considering the **different policies** across the four objectives, do you think there are any further policies that should be included in the strategy?



Please provide additional details on any other policies that you feel should be considered.



4. Elected Members Engagement



Elected Members

The following activities involving Elected Members have been undertaken:

- **October 2024:** Elected Members received a written briefing on 30 October 2024 that provided an update on progress with the development of the new Highland LTS covering work to date, approach to future activities and current status of the work as well as next steps. The briefing was timed to reach Elected Members in advance of contact with Community Councils and Community Development Trusts about the LTS.
- **17 December 2024:** An online meeting was convened to brief members of the Environment and Infrastructure Committee. This provided a recap on the LTS process and updated on activities with a focus on the findings of the engagement and steps in progress to finalise the LTS. The scheduling of this briefing in advance of the Strategy being taken to Committee for approval in February 2025 is intended to support the Committee process and related decision making.

It is the intention that the Final LTS is taken to the Environment and Infrastructure Committee on 13 February 2025 for approval.

Appendix A: Engagement and Communications Plan

Appendix B: External Stakeholder Workshop Notes

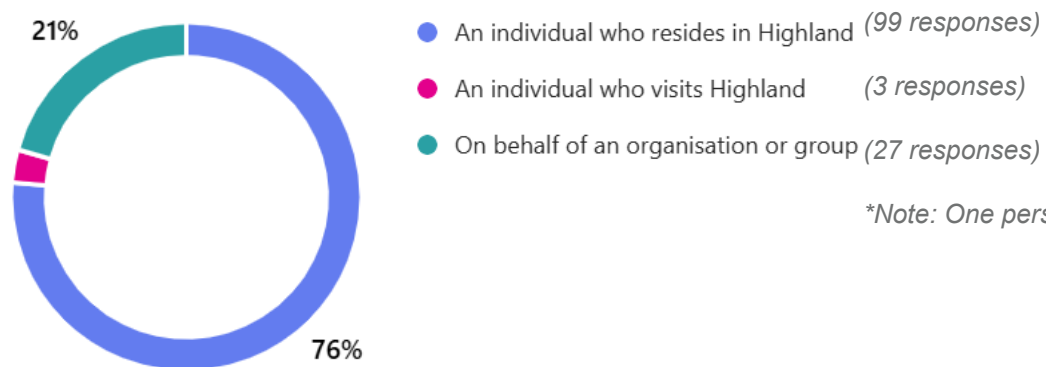
Appendix C: Internal Officer Workshop/Meeting Notes

Appendix D: Draft Themes and Policies and Feedback Form

Appendix E: Overview of Who Responded

Type of Response – Individual or Organisation

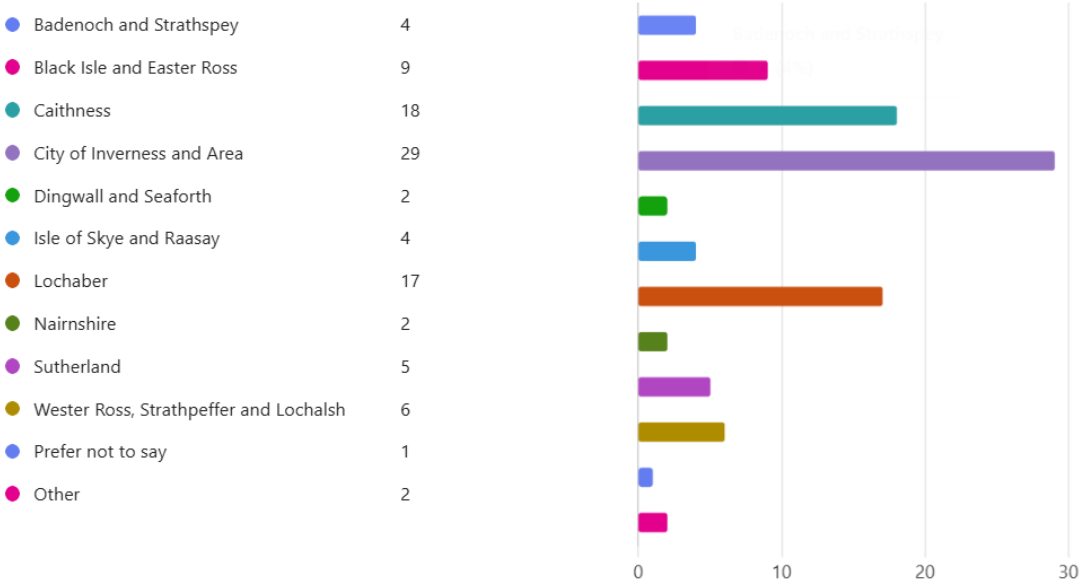
In what capacity are you responding?



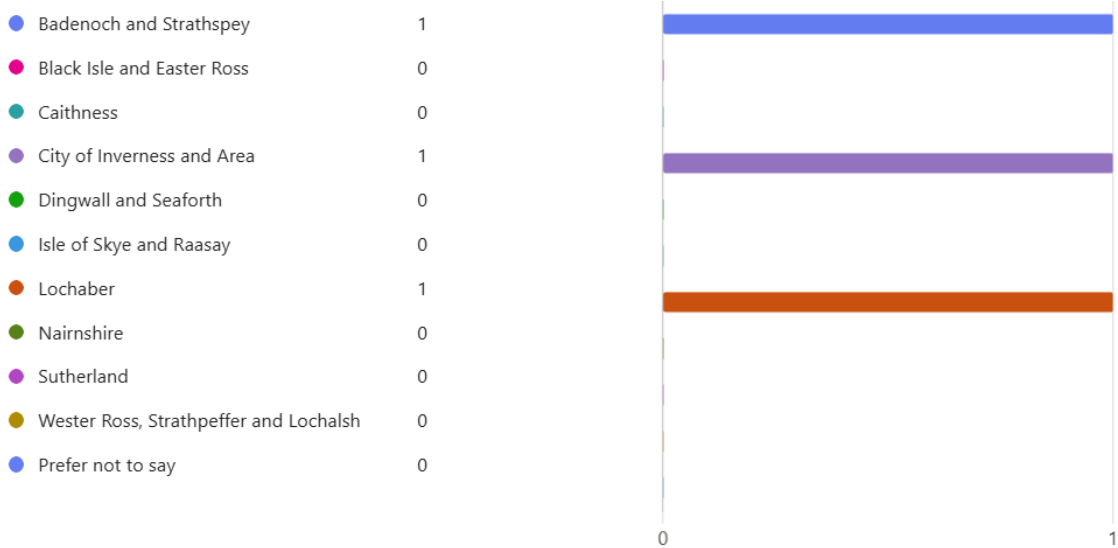
**Note: One person did not answer this question, hence total 129.*

Individual Response – Area of Residence or Visited

In which area of Highland do you reside? If you split your time between different areas, please select where you reside for the majority of the time.
*Note: The numbers below reflect values rather than percentages.

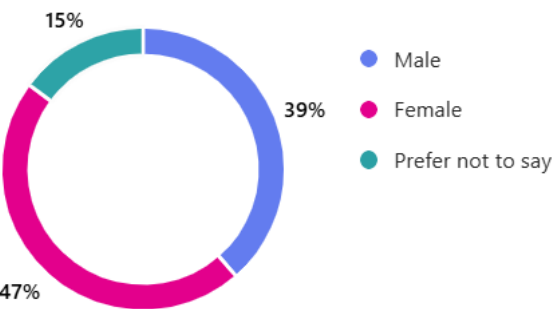


Which area of Highland do you visit? If you split your time between different areas, please select where you visit for the majority of the time.
*Note: The numbers below reflect values rather than percentages.

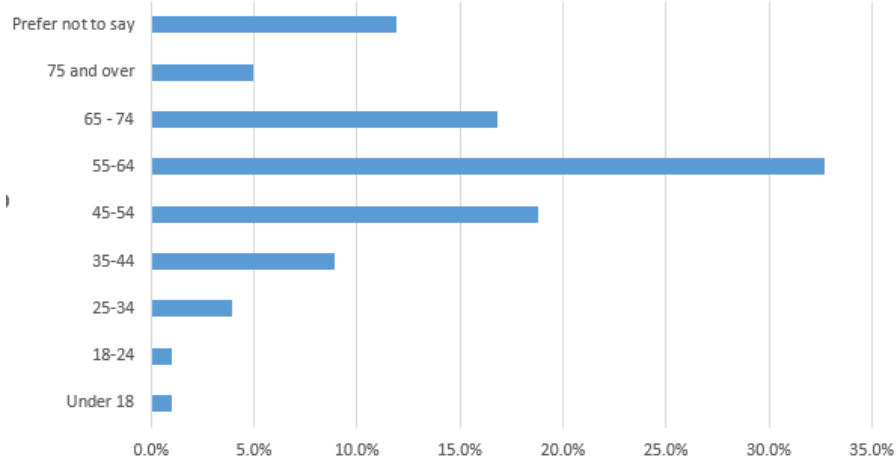


Individual Response – Demographics

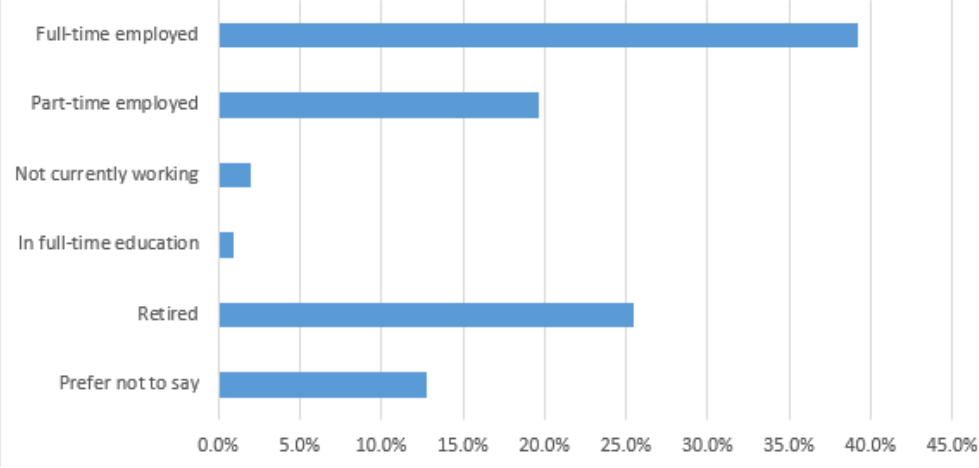
What is your sex?



What age grouping do you fall into?

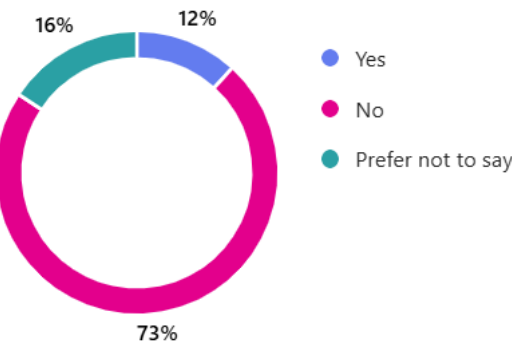


What is your current employment status?

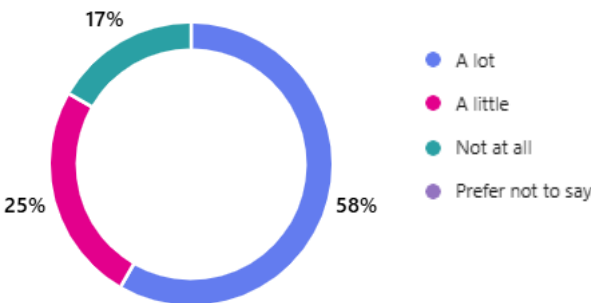


Individual Response – Disability

Do you have a disability?



Does your disability impact your transport choices?



If you are comfortable to do so, please tell us which disability you have that impacts your transport choices?
Please tick all that apply.

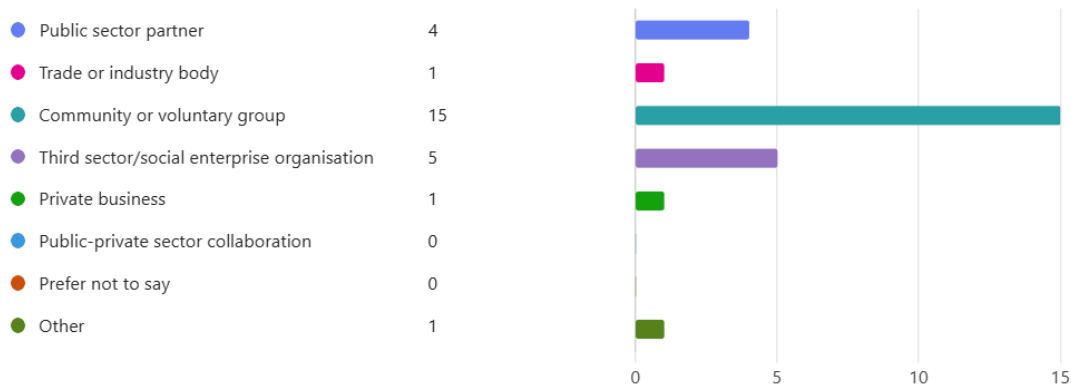
*Note: The numbers below reflect values rather than percentages.



Organisation Response – Type of Organisation and Role/Work

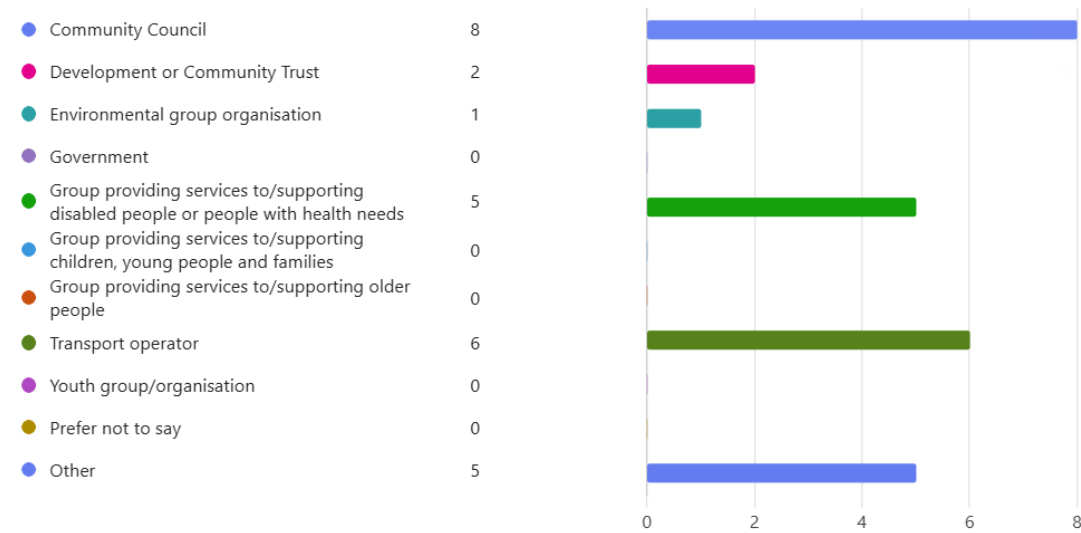
Which of the following best describes the organisation or group you are responding on behalf of?

*Note: The numbers below reflect values rather than percentages.



What is the main type of role/work your organisation or group undertakes?

*Note: The numbers below reflect values rather than percentages.

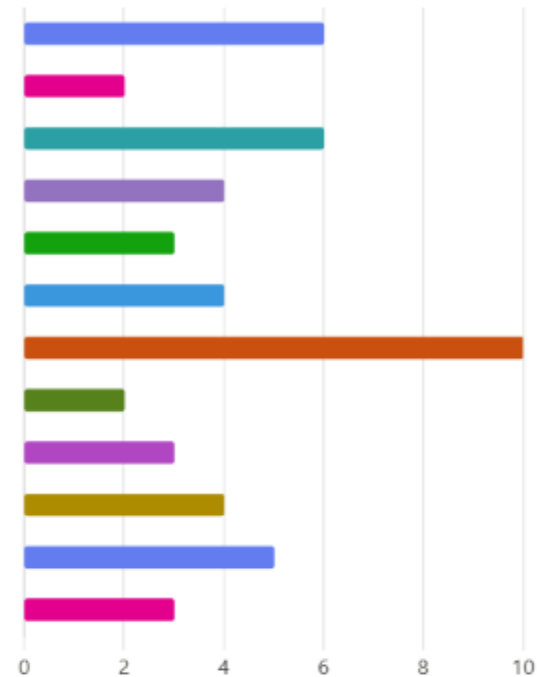


Organisation Response – Area of operation

In which area of Highland does your group or organisation operate? Please tick all that apply .

*Note: The numbers below reflect values rather than percentages.

Badenoch and Strathspey	6
Black Isle and Easter Ross	2
Caithness	6
City of Inverness and Area	4
Dingwall and Seaforth	3
Isle of Skye and Raasay	4
Lochaber	10
Nairnshire	2
Sutherland	3
Wester Ross, Strathpeffer and Lochalsh	4
Highland wide	5
Other	3



Pell Frischmann