

The Highland Council

Agenda Item	8
Report No	BSAC-11-25

Committee: Badenoch and Strathspey

Date: 28 April 2025

Report Title: Badenoch and Strathspey Transport Forum

Report By: Assistant Chief Executive - Place

1 Purpose/Executive Summary

- 1.1 Ward Members have expressed a desire to establish a transport forum for Badenoch and Strathspey to develop an integrated Transport Plan for the area; this is supported by the Badenoch & Strathspey Community Partnership. This report outlines draft terms of reference and proposed membership of the Forum.

2 Recommendations

- 2.1 Members are asked to:-

- i. **Agree** to the establishment of a Badenoch & Strathspey Transport Forum, chaired by a Ward Member;
- ii. **Agree** the Terms of Reference for the Forum; and
- iii. **Agree** the proposed Membership for the forum as set out in this report.

3 Implications

- 3.1 **Resource** - There are no financial resource implications. A small amount of staff time will be required to support the forum, which can be accommodated within existing resources.
- 3.2 **Legal** - There are no legal implications.
- 3.3 **Risk** - There are no risk implications.
- 3.4 **Health and Safety (risks arising from changes to plant, equipment, process, or people)** - There are no health and safety implications.
- 3.5 **Gaelic** - There are no Gaelic implications.

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 has been undertaken on 8 April 2025. The conclusions have been subject to the relevant Manager Review and Approval.
- 4.3.2. The Screening process has concluded that there are potential positive impacts arising from transport changes which may emerge from the Forum's work. Members are asked to consider the summary within **Appendix 1** to support the decision-making process.

4.3.3.

Impact Assessment Area	Conclusion of Screening
Equality	Age – positive Disability – positive
Socio-economic	Positive
Human Rights	No impact
Children's Rights and Well-being	Positive
Island and Mainland Rural	Positive
Climate Change	Positive
Data Rights	No impact

5 Background

- 5.1 For several years, a Badenoch and Strathspey Transport and Access Group met to discuss transport provision and promote improvements in the area. It was initially set up to ensure suitable transport provision to the new hospital in Aviemore, which at that time was being planned, but its remit broadened to include wider public and community transport issues.
- 5.2 Local Members have expressed a desire for a Transport Forum to be re-established which is supported by the Badenoch and Strathspey Community Partnership. The Community Partnership has produced a list of potential transport actions from their meetings which is set out within **Appendix 2**.

6 Forum remit, composition and terms of reference

6.1 It is envisaged that the Forum's remit would cover all modes of public transport operating within Badenoch and Strathspey, namely local bus, express coach, community transport and train (ScotRail/LNER). Members may wish to consider whether it should also include taxis and heritage rail (the Strathspey Railway). Issues covered could include (but not be limited to) timetabling, level of service, publicity, performance, infrastructure provision and fares, to the extent that any of these are either within the Council's control or able to be negotiated with operators.

6.2 Although home to school transport is largely a statutory provision, aspects of home to school travel such as development of safer routes to school may also be of relevance to the Forum.

6.3 Proposed Forum membership:-

- Ward Members (one Member to chair the Forum);
- Transport Officers;
- Community Council representatives;
- Bus user representatives;
- Bus operators;
- Community Transport operators including B&S Community ConnXions;
- ScotRail;
- Voluntary Action Badenoch & Strathspey;
- Badenoch & Strathspey Disability Access Panel;
- NHS Highland;
- Cairngorms National Park Authority; and
- In attendance – THC Business Support

To keep the meetings to a manageable size, it is proposed that each organisation should be represented by one or at most two people, and that two individuals should be chosen by the local Association of Community Councils to represent all the Community Councils in the area.

6.4 The Forum would facilitate co-ordination with the Cairngorms National Park Authority's transport activity, a summary of which is attached within **Appendix 3**.

6.5 Other organisations (for example, Bus Users Scotland) could be invited as required.

6.6 The Terms of Reference of the former Transport & Access Group are attached within **Appendix 4** for information. This includes matters of membership and administration as well as actual terms of reference. It also includes items relevant to the development of what was then the proposed new hospital in Aviemore.

6.7 It is proposed that the new Forum should have a remit as follows:-

- to act as a partnership forum for organisations and agencies to jointly develop options and solutions to improve and sustain public and community transport in Badenoch and Strathspey, and to/from main destinations outwith the area;
- to assist with the implementation of national and local policies associated with transport, and to propose strengthening of existing such policies;

- to assist in identifying and addressing transport-related problems experienced by individuals and communities in Badenoch and Strathspey with a particular emphasis on increasing economic and social inclusion opportunities; and
- to engage with wider transport and community groups.

It should also be clarified that the Forum would not be a decision-making body in regard to transport provision but would be able to make proposals to the relevant authorities, be they the Council, Transport Scotland or public and private sector transport operators.

6.8 It is envisaged that meetings would be held twice a year with sub-groups set up to meet less formally and more frequently as required to progress actions agreed by the Forum.

6.9 The Council is developing a Bus Service Improvement Partnership. Although the initial Partnership Scheme areas are those for which Transport Scotland provided Bus Partnership Fund monies (now replaced by the Bus Infrastructure fund), setting up area forums of this, including bus user representatives, fulfils one of the requirements of a Partnership Scheme.

Designation: Assistant Chief Executive - Place

Date: 8 April 2025

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Background Papers: None

Appendices: Appendix 1 – Integrated Impact Assessment summary
Appendix 2 – Badenoch & Strathspey Community Partnership – Potential Transport Actions
Appendix 3 – Cairngorms National Park Authority transport activity
Appendix 4 – Terms of Reference of the former Transport & Access Group

Integrated Impact Assessment Screening – Summary

The Integrated Impact Assessment screening concluded that:-

- Through the establishment of the Forum there could be positive impacts on age and disability, by leading to improved access to transport for people with these characteristics.
- There could be positive socio-economic impacts by identifying scope to improve accessibility for the more isolated, vulnerable or disadvantaged members of the community.
- There is no direct impact on human rights.
- Although there is no direct impact on children's rights, there is a potential positive impact in that the Forum could provide an opportunity for young people with an interest in transport to be represented.
- There is no impact on data protection.
- Being specifically for Badenoch & Strathspey, the Forum would be expected to have a positive impact on this rural area.
- Although the establishment of the Forum would not have a direct impact on climate change, its work would promote access to public transport, leading to a positive impact through stimulation of modal shift and greater use of public transport instead of cars.
- These impacts depend on the effectiveness of the Forum in identifying feasible changes and improvements to the transport provision and infrastructure.
- A full Integrated Impact Assessment is not required.

Badenoch & Strathspey Community Partnership – Potential Transport Actions

Priority: - Community and Public Transport: Improve our Local and Community transport service to work for the public in and around the B&S Area and to and from Inverness

Action: Examine the current public perception of public transport provision across Highlands (both connections in and between communities) and in discussion with transport providers form a plan to improve the situation and communicate changes to public

Action: Support re-establishment of B&S Transport Forum to consider the following:-

- Improved timing and frequency of public transport will obviously increase the opportunities for work of the local community
- Timings of trains and buses should be looked at so that arrival times allow for a short onward journey to places of work so that an 8.30am or 9 am start is feasible and easy for the potential workers. Similarly, departure times should be considered. More frequent services at busier times.
- Make it as easy as possible for people to get to neighbouring communities to help them find work
- Encourage transport operators to take (more/some) cycles on buses and trains, to embed more active travel opportunities
- Support community transport (B&S Community ConnXions) to deliver extended services in more areas and over longer time periods
- Improve the Active travel Infrastructure & Opportunities and advertise existing routes. Identify more investment to expand network, safe routes to schools, cycle security and storage, promotion, and AT links to public transport

Cairngorms National Park Authority Transport Activity

Promoting a modal shift towards sustainable and active travel in the way visitors and commuters get to, and everyone moves around, the National Park, is a key objective of the [Cairngorms National Park Partnership Plan 2022-27](#). Much of the related activity is being delivered via the National Lottery Heritage Funded “Cairngorms 2030” programme in which the Highland Council is a funding and delivery partner.

The Cairngorms 2030 programme incorporates 4 transport strands:-

- **Active Communities** - by improving active travel infrastructure and public spaces, this project aims to make it easy and safe for residents and visitors to get around communities in the National Park without a vehicle.
- **Cycle Friendly Cairngorms** –by providing and improving equipment and facilities this project will enable people to cycle more easily through improving access to bikes and enhanced cycle facilities such as cycle parking and storage, repair stands and tool libraries and e-bike recharging.
- **Changing Travel behaviours** – supporting people to change their travel behaviour to enjoy cycling, walking and wheeling with confidence by delivering activities such as led and organised cycle rides (including rides to schools), cycle maintenance skills and ride leader training for volunteers.
- **Sustainable Transport** - this strand encourages modal shift by making public and community transport more accessible and better promoted, supporting the Park Authority commitment to enable more people to travel sustainably, reduce car dependency and promote equality and accessibility. This is also the strand that is anticipated to provide support and benefit most from a Badenoch & Strathspey Transport Forum so some further details on key themes / work within this strand are provided below.

Evidence of demand

Through their engagement activities, stakeholder relations and based on community action plans produced by several communities in Badenoch and Strathspey, the Park Authority has evidence of the transport related issues and barriers faced by local communities living in the National Park. The Park Authority will also conclude both resident and visitor surveys and analysis of the results in spring 2025. These surveys gather evidence on usage of different transport modes and perceptions of the services within Badenoch and Strathspey which will provide a useful data source for the proposed transport forum and partners subsequent activities.

Integration

There is an identified need to better integrate active travel facilities with public transport provision, making sustainable multi-modal journeys an affordable, easy and attractive option. The team has also established a good working relationship with the Highland Main Line Community Rail Partnership, with the aim of supporting access improvements, information provision and multi-modal journey options at railway stations.

Improved bus stop infrastructure

Inadequate infrastructure and related accessibility have been recognised as a barrier to public transport use. Recently, the Park Authority conducted a quality audit of bus stops in Aviemore, Glenmore, Grantown-on-Spey, Kingussie and Newtonmore which will be complemented by a stakeholder-led investigation of key access routes to and from the main bus stops. An improvement plan based on the information gathered is anticipated to lead to further collaboration to improve local bus stop infrastructure.

Glenmore Corridor

Badenoch and Strathspey has a strong visitor focus with the Glenmore corridor a notable destination that also experiences transport related pressures. The Park Authority believes improving visitor-focused transport facilities could concurrently introduce efficiencies for community transport and has commenced plans to improve transport in the Aviemore-Glenmore-Cairngorm corridor.

Badenoch & Strathspey Transport & Access Group Role, Remit & Membership

1. Group Purpose

- To ensure that a robust and deliverable Transport and Access Plan is developed to support the business case and planning process associated with the redesign of hospital and community health and social care in Badenoch & Strathspey.
- To ensure that transport and access are fully considered and addressed in the planning of a new hospital facility.
- To act as a partnership forum for organisations and agencies to jointly develop options and solutions to improve and sustain transport and access in Badenoch & Strathspey.
- To assist with the implementation of national local policies associated with transport and access and to strengthen existing such policies.
- To scope out existing transport arrangements and costs of the same.
- To assist in identifying and addressing transport-related problems experienced by individuals and communities in Badenoch & Strathspey with a particular emphasis on increasing economic and social inclusion opportunities.
- To feed in with wider transport and community groups.

2. Group Composition

Chair: Ven. Richard Gillings, B&S Access Panel.

The Group will have representation from the following:

B & S Access Panel	B & S Community Transport Company
Cairngorms National Park Authority	Community Representatives
NHS Highland	Highlands & Islands <i>Enterprise (as appropriate)</i>
Scottish Ambulance Service	Voluntary Action Badenoch & Strathspey
Minute Taker	Youth Representatives
Highland Council (Officers and Elected Members)	

(Other transport organisations to be confirmed, as required).

The Group will also consider co-opting additional members. Ad hoc members may also be invited for specific topics.

3. Deputies

- The Deputy Chair of the Group would be
- Deputies may attend in Group member's place.

4. Quorum

Five members of the Transport and Access Group need to be present for the meeting to make decisions or recommendations.

5. Decision-making

Decision-making will be by consensus.

6. Frequency & Venue

Approximately, every 6 weeks, with 2 hours to be the maximum length of meeting. Meeting dates to be advised approximately two months in advance, within a reasonable time frame.

7. Work between Meetings

Work to be allocated at meetings to Transport and Access Group members and any sub-groups.

8. Communication

- Notes from meetings to be distributed to Group members for dissemination.
- Team briefing paper will be issued to include updates on Group issues.
- Periodic reports to relevant Boards, Committees and Management Teams of the organisations represented.
- Public Relations activity to be agreed by Group and action by nominated organisations.
- Group to communicate with local community and local community groups.

9. Potential Confidentiality of Certain Discussions

Whilst there is a need for openness and transparency with discussions at meetings; there may be occasions where members would be asked to maintain a degree of confidentiality in certain subject areas. This may include commercially sensitive matters, issues relating to finance or individuals, plus situations where an approach to press / public awareness is agreed.

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