

# ECONOMY AND INFRASTRUCTURE COMMITTEE

## BULLETIN ITEM

**Subject:** Bus Partnership Fund and Bus Service Improvement Partnership

**Date:** 2 December 2021

**ECO:** Infrastructure, Environment & Economy

### 1. Purpose/Executive Summary

- 1.1. This item updates Members on the Bus Partnership Fund and Bus Service Improvement Partnership and explains the strategic importance of these initiatives for public transport, and transport generally, in Inverness and Fort William.

### 2. Background

- 2.1. Bus Service Improvement Partnerships (BSIPs) are one of the provisions introduced by the Transport (Scotland) Act 2019. As the name suggests, they are intended to support improvements in bus services by partnership working between local authorities and bus operators. The intention is that Councils will invest in facilities (i.e. infrastructure such as bus lanes or traffic light priorities) and measures (i.e. initiatives, other than infrastructure, designed to promote bus use) and operators will develop their services, for example by higher frequencies or new, better buses. The content of BSIPs is not prescriptive, so within these broad outlines each Partnership is able to develop a Partnership Plan (overall policies) and Schemes (implementation) as appropriate to its area.
- 2.2. To enable Councils to invest in facilities, the Scottish Government introduced a Bus Partnership Fund of £500 million over 5 years. Bids to the fund were invited by 16 April 2021. The key purpose of the Fund was to support initiatives which would reduce delays to buses caused by congestion. It should be highlighted that there is potential for the Highland Council to secure up to £50 million of this fund in total, subject to the phase 1 projects being delivered within deadlines or before.
- 2.3. On 5 May the Committee agreed to the Council initiating a Bus Service Improvement Partnership and agreed to homologate the Bus Partnership Fund Phase 1 applications which had been submitted to Transport Scotland (Item 18 Ref EC1/27/2021). The Committee also noted that Phase 2 applications to the Bus Partnership Fund would be required by 15 October 2021 for schemes which were accepted at Phase 1. Transport Scotland later clarified that the deadline of 15 October 2021 was not the date for Phase 2 applications but was an opportunity for further Councils to submit bids which had not been ready in April.

### **3. Highland Council's Bus Partnership Fund bids**

- 3.1. The Highland Council submitted three bids to the Bus Partnership Fund: for Inverness and Inner Moray Firth, Fort William and Skye and Cairngorm. Skye and Cairngorm were combined in one bid as they were linked by a common theme of congestion at tourist hotspots. Bids included "Quick Wins" and appraisals for longer term projects.
- 3.2. The bid for Inverness and Inner Moray Firth was largely successful, although Transport Scotland declined to fund some elements, notably in Invergordon and Dingwall. Appendix 1 & 2 shows Inverness & Fort William Projects and location maps.

Quick wins have to be completed by 31 March 2023. Appraisals and outline business cases must be completed by the same date, although earlier completion for all is preferable. Appraisals and OBCs approved by Transport Scotland will enable further funding to be released for construction of these projects. Some projects also have other funding sources, such as Sustrans grants and the Council's own Capital Programme, with the BPF enabling enhancements to provide better for buses.

- 3.3. The Fort William bid was successful. Appendix 1 & 2 shows Inverness & Fort William Projects & location maps.

Although the Offer of Grant letter only described the third project as Park & Ride, it also includes appraisal of options for enabling faster bus movement between the town centre and Lochybridge or Caol. The same dates apply as in the Inverness projects.

- 3.4. The Skye and Cairngorm bid was not successful, as Transport Scotland felt that it was not addressing current issues of congestion affecting bus services (although car congestion was highlighted in the bid).

### **4. Project Management**

- 4.1. Regular meetings have commenced with bus operators (Stagecoach and Shiel Buses), Transport Scotland and HiTrans to oversee the project direction and to develop BSIP proposals. A Bus Partnership Fund Project Manager, Julie Cromarty, has been appointed, and took up her post on 15 November 2021.

### **5. Strategic importance of the BSIP and BPF**

- 5.1. The Bus Partnership Fund is the first significant funding stream for many years that the Council has had to make meaningful improvements to bus infrastructure. This is extremely welcome, and will contribute to targets of modal shift, carbon reduction and air quality, by reducing delays to bus services and making them more attractive in comparison with the car. Some projects, such as Millburn Road, are also integrated with active travel developments, so that the two initiatives can be complementary to each other.

- 5.2. The projects are not seen as standalone items but as a package of initiatives which together will enable faster bus journeys and therefore attract more patronage. In Inverness they are focussed around two major cross-city routes, and in Fort William are designed to enable the main town bus service to reach new and growing parts of the town effectively, as well as combatting congestion on the A82. The Raigmore bus gate complements the existing bus-only right-turn facility from Millburn Road into Raigmore Estate and fulfils a long-held aspiration to avoid congestion both within the hospital

campus and in Old Perth Road. In 2019, almost 1.1 million passengers travelled on buses passing through Raigmore Hospital and were therefore liable to be affected by delays in this area. The current bus operator has stated that the proposed route for this corridor would save around 7-10 minutes of journey time using the bus gate compared to pre-covid levels.

- 5.3. It is vital that Transport Scotland see that we are able to deliver Quick Wins. It is expected that successful completion of these will give them greater assurance that we will be able to deliver the larger projects following appraisal, and therefore enhance our chances of success in obtaining the much larger second phase of the funding.
- 5.4. Partnership is the key word in both the Bus Partnership Fund and the Bus Service Improvement Partnership. We have demonstrated to Transport Scotland that we are in the process of developing a BSIP. Success in this will be vital to securing the second phase of funding. Bus operators are strongly in favour of the partnership approach and will be encouraged to play their part in the Partnership as they see commitment from the Council in fulfilling our part. The major bus operators (Stagecoach & Shiel Buses in our case, but also others elsewhere in the country) have made it clear that successful BSIPs are likely to lead to investment in new fleets, whereas other areas will be given much lower priority.
- 5.5. The pandemic has been an extremely difficult time for bus operators both locally and nationally, with the direct effects of lockdown as well as shifts in working and shopping patterns away from main offices and city centre locations. The success of Bus Partnership Fund initiatives will be measured in terms of their ability to regenerate bus usage, improve the networks and support a shift away from car dependence.
- 5.6. A more fully developed BSIP Plan will be brought to the Committee in February 2022 for consideration prior to wider consultation.

Designation: Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure, Environment & Economy

Date: 19 November 2021

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Project Manager (Bus Partnership Fund)

Background Papers: EI Committee 5 May 2021 Item 18 - Ref ECI/27/2021

## Appendix 1

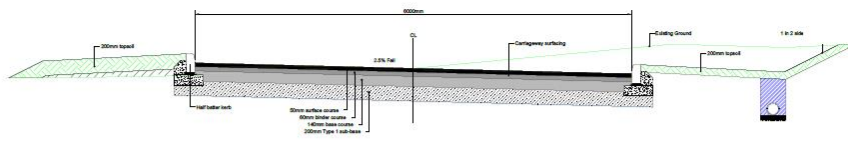
### Bus Partnership Funding Projects Inverness & Fort William

Project	Category
<b>INVERNESS</b>	
1.Raigmore Bus Gate	Quick Win
2.Rose Street Bus Lane (Enforcement camera)	Quick Win
3.Barn Church Road Bus Lane	Quick Win
4.City Centre traffic light prioritisation	Quick Win
5a. Millburn Road Bus Lanes/priorities	STAG Appraisal
5b. Millburn Road	Outline Business & Design
6.B9006 Bus Lanes	STAG Appraisal
7.Appraisal of A82 options between Shore St and Rose St	STAG Appraisal
8a. North Kessock Park & Ride	STAG Appraisal
8b. North Kessock Park & Ride	Outline Business Case & Design
<b>Fort William</b>	
9.Blar Mhor Bus Only Link	Quick Win
10.Upper Achintore Bus Only Link	Quick Win
11. Park & Ride	STAG Appraisal

# Appendix 2

## Inverness

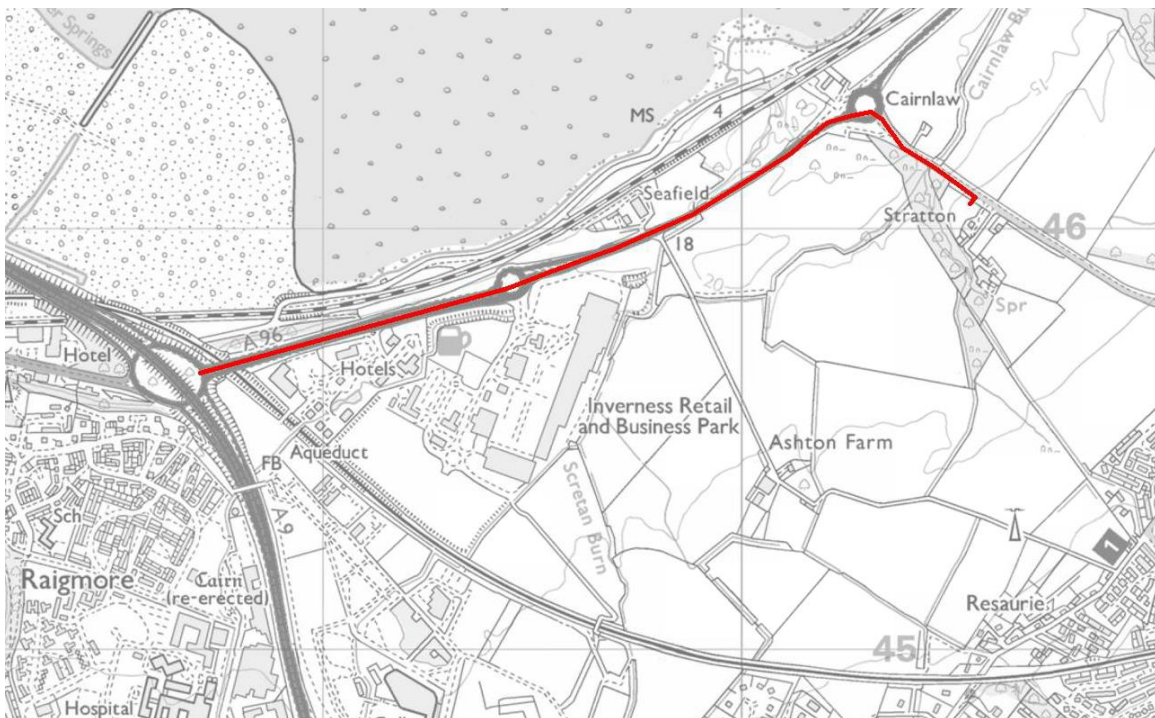
### 1. Raigmore Bus Gate



## 2. Rose Street Bus Lane (Enforcement Camera)

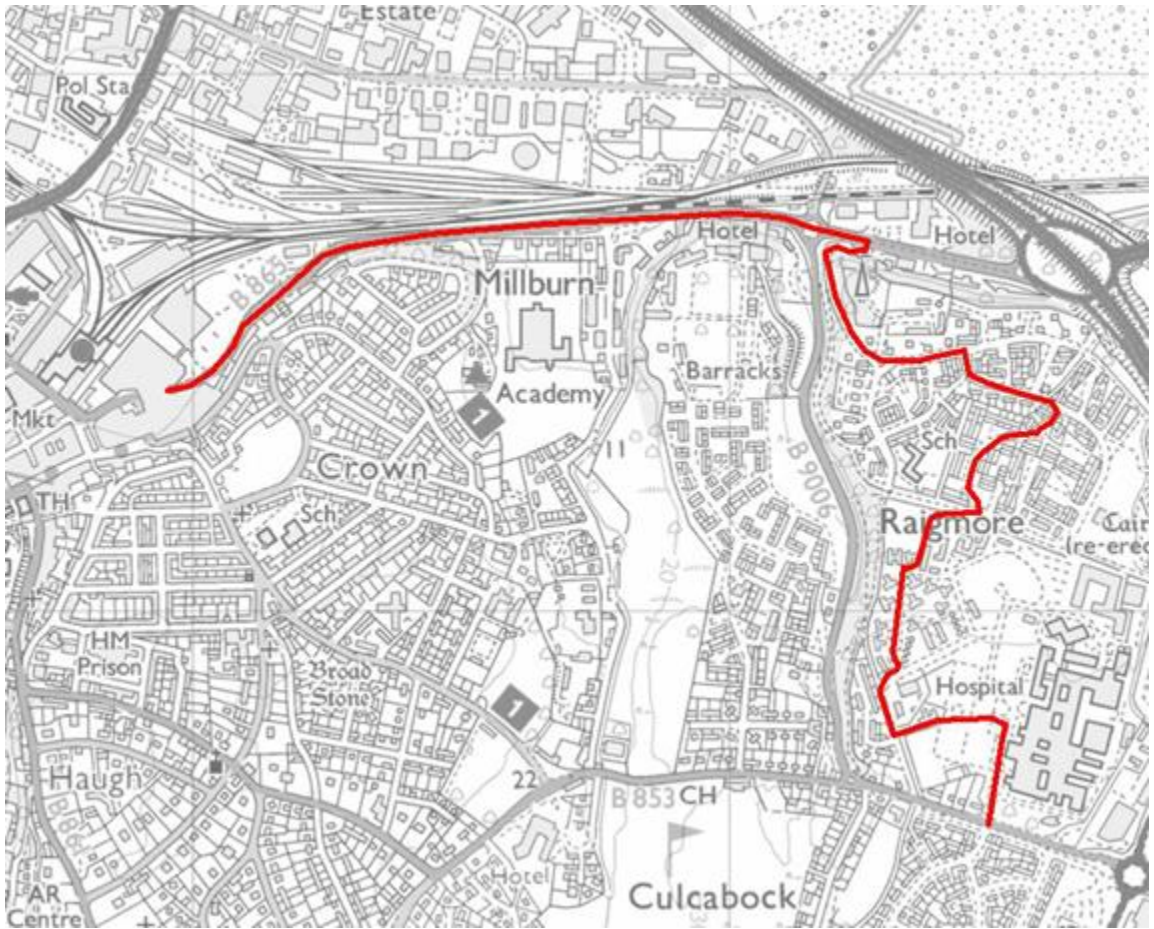


## 3. Barn Church Road Bus Lane

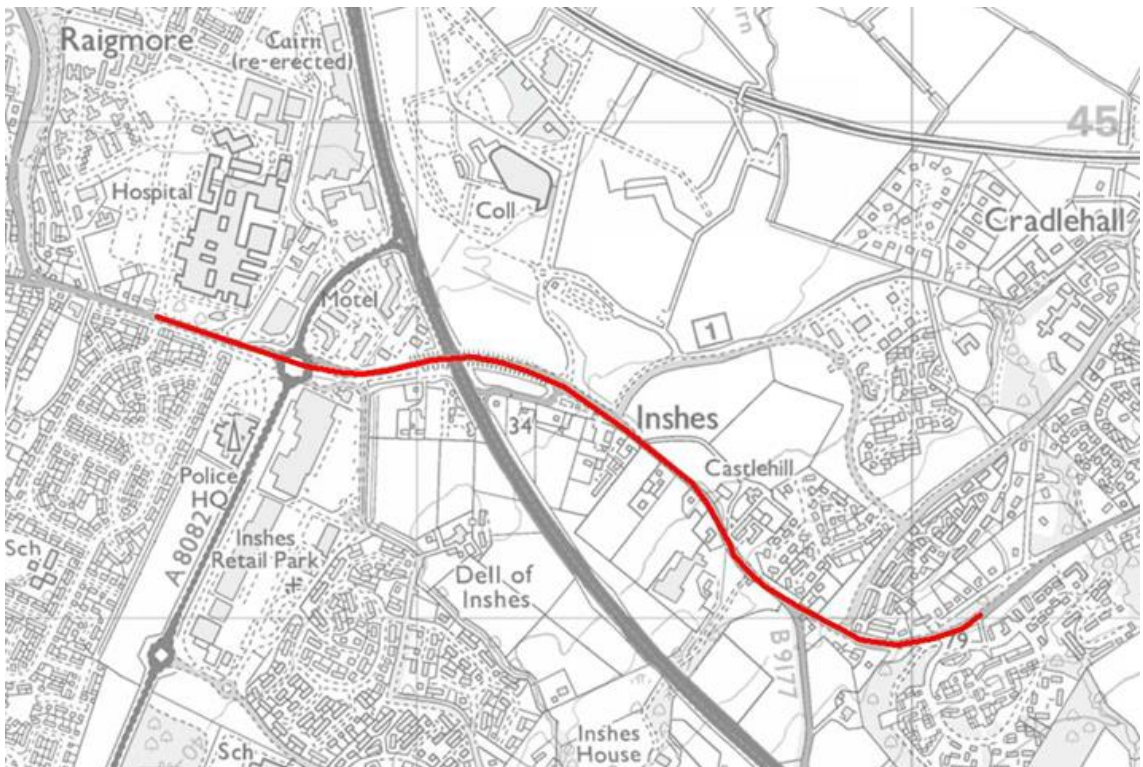


## 4. City Centre Traffic Light Prioritisation

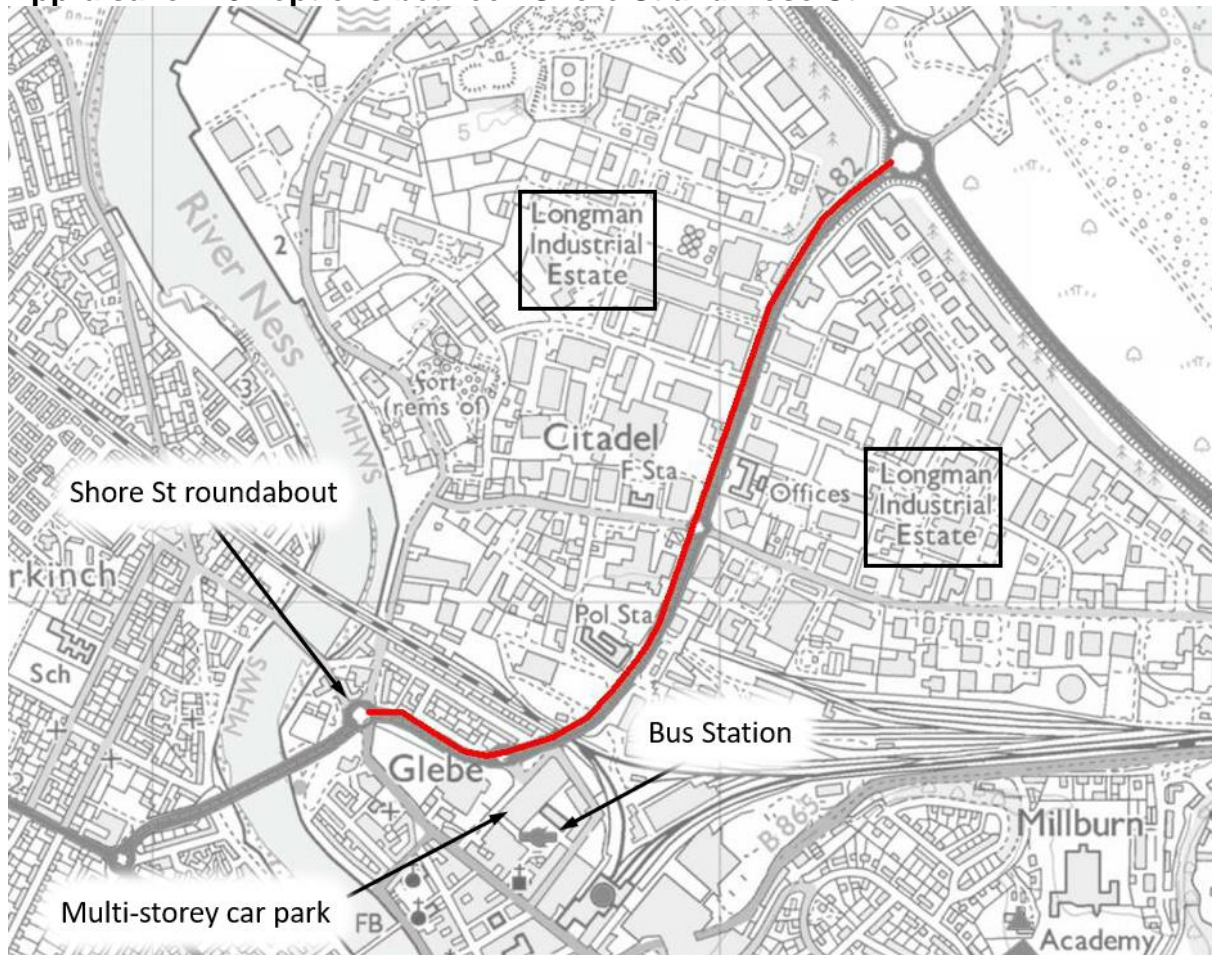
5. (a&b) Millburn Road



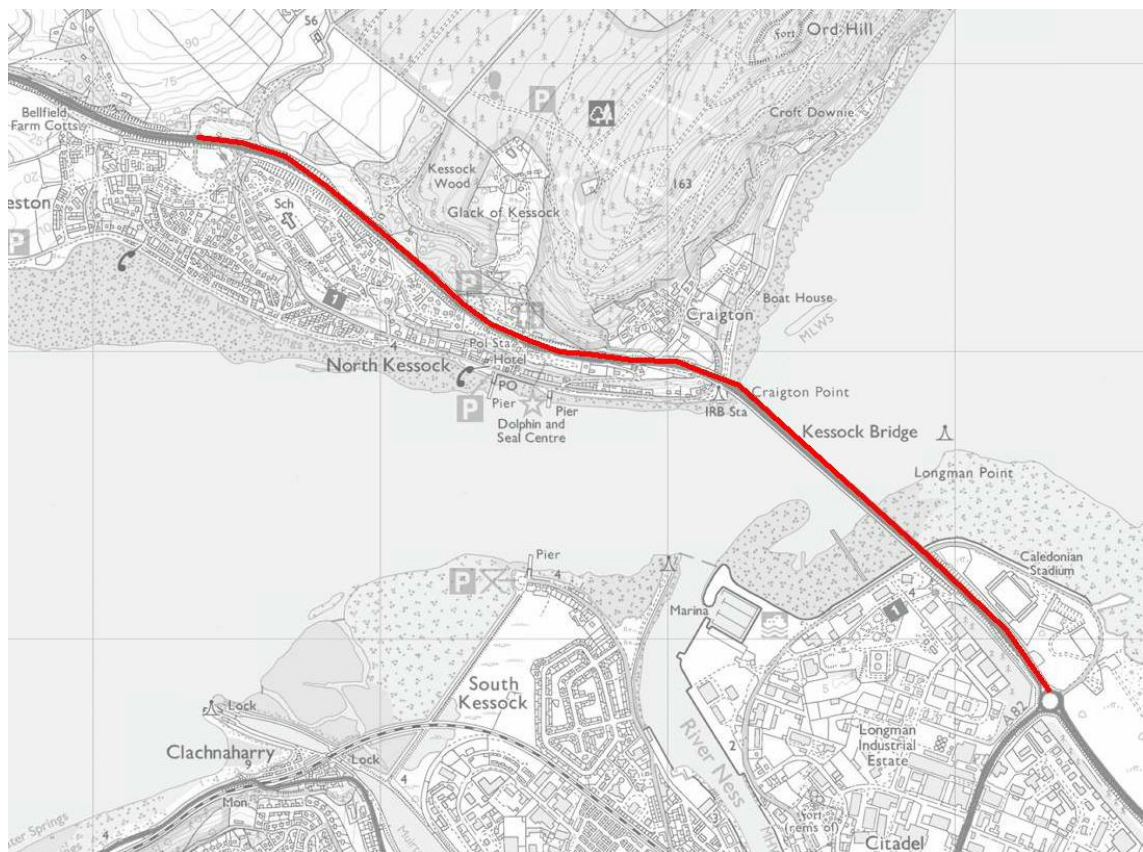
6. B906 Bus Lanes



**7. Appraisal of A82 options between Shore St and Rose St**



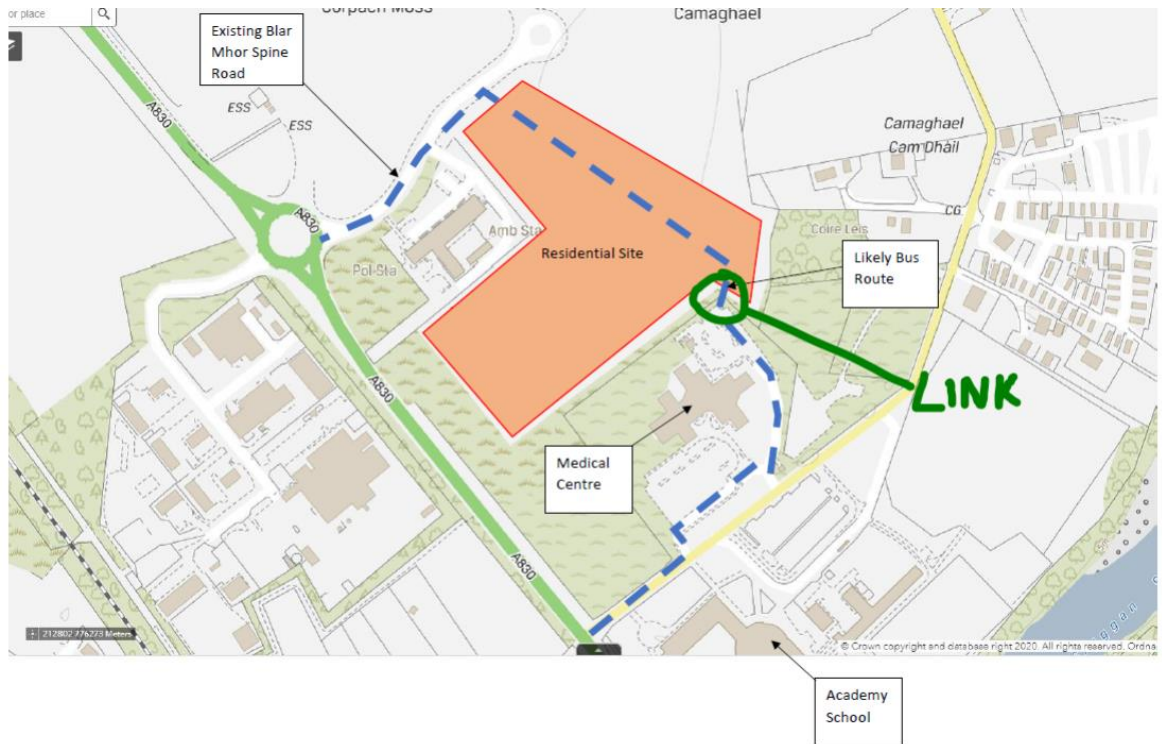
**8. (a&b) North Kessock Park & Ride**





# Fort William

## 9. Blar Mhor Bus Only Link



## 10. Upper Achintore Bus Only Link



## 11. A82/A830 Fort William Transport Improvements and Park & Ride

