

The Highland Council

City of Inverness Area Committee – 12 August 2013

Agenda Item	9
Report No	CIA/42/13

European Union - QUEST Sustainable Transport Project

Report by Director of Transport, Environmental and Community Services

Summary

This report provides Members with an update on the QUEST Project which is a European Commission funded project to help assess and improve sustainable transport in participating cities.

Members are invited to approve the Sustainable Transport Action Plan for the City of Inverness as contained in **Appendix A**.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 QUEST is a European Commission funded project with the objective of engaging cities throughout Europe in order to assess and improve the sustainability of transport in these cities.
- 1.2 Participation was open to settlements with a population of between 50k and 250k and Inverness is among four cities in the UK taking part. The other settlements are Milton Keynes, Bath and Blackburn. Up to 50 other cities across Europe are also involved including settlements such as Eindhoven, Valence, Pisa, San Sebastian and Halle.
- 1.3 Further information about the project can be found at the following link.
<http://www.quest-project.eu/>

2. Project Methodology

- 2.1 The QUEST project is part of a wider EU policy initiative to develop Sustainable Urban Transport (Mobility) Plans (SUMP's) in cities across Europe.
- 2.2 The project applied a methodology previously tested in a number of pilot cities and involved two stakeholder workshops to consider Questionnaire responses covering sustainable transport issues in the city. The Questionnaire was circulated to over thirty key transport stakeholders in the area.
- 2.3 The purpose of the workshops was to arrive at a consensus among local stakeholders as to the city's current level of performance in relation to the development and implementation of sustainable transport policy. The emphasis was on identifying areas where there was most scope for improvements in sustainable transport. This led to the development of an Action Plan drafted by the external consultant who chaired the workshops.

- A summary of the key actions and proposed delivery mechanism is contained in **Appendix A**. This includes a series of actions which were previously identified by the HITRANS Active Travel Audit for Inverness.
- Examples of some innovative measures which have been implemented by other cities participating in the QUEST project are included in **Appendix B**.
- A copy of the full report which describes the project process is included in **Appendix C**.

2.4 It is a requirement for participating cities to approve the Sustainable Transport Action Plan and make steps towards the implementation of the Actions in order to receive the QUEST Certificate which recognises the City's efforts in sustainable urban transport planning. As well as providing a simple and cost effective means of developing a targeted series of measures to improve sustainable transport in Inverness it is hoped that participation will provide benefits from shared learning of best practice in other cities and also increase prospects for future investment.

3. Recommendation

3.1 Members are invited to approve the Sustainable Transport Action Plan for the City of Inverness as contained in **Appendix A**.

Designation: Director of Transport, Environmental and Community Services

Date: 26 July 2013

Report Author: Sam MacNaughton / Neil MacRae

Summary of Draft Inverness QUEST Sustainable Transport Action Plan

	Proposed Action	Implementation
1	Structures and Communication	
1.1	Investigate current engagement activities that are taking place with local stakeholder groups, and the extent to which these activities involve a transport element. This might involve the Inverness Access Panel, THC's Equalities Officer and local groups with an interest in climate change issues, and should lead to consideration of the feasibility of the setting up of a Bus Users' Group, or similar body.	THC will work towards the establishment of a Bus Users Group depending on available resources
1.2	More regular copy for press releases should be made for transport related development. This will entail procedures be put into place to trigger the production of publicity material at certain project milestones and 'good news stories'	THC will work with partners and operators to ensure that project managers utilise the Council's public relations team on a more regular basis than at present
1.3	Develop a strategy for making greater use of social media beginning with a detailed survey of which social media are already used by people in Inverness for mobility-related purposes. This will build upon data that is already collected by THC. There is an immediate opportunity to monitor the use of Twitter and other social media during the Kessock Bridge works.	THC is currently developing a new webpage www.travelhighland.info which will complement existing transport related websites such as Traveline and Traffic Scotland by providing real-time information on local bus services, car parking, roadworks and live eye webcams in Inverness city centre. THC will work with Transport Scotland to review effectiveness of social media during recent Kessock Bridge Works.
1.4	Introduce structured city-specific transport stakeholder meetings to improve collaboration between internal transport stakeholders and outside partners / transport operators	THC services will ensure that key transport stakeholder meetings are set up an early stage of any major project in the city which has implications on the transport network.
1.5	Ensure that key stakeholders are consulted at an early stage of the planning process or project development before key drafts of docs such as the City Centre Development Brief are circulated.	As above
1.6	Where resources permit, greater efforts should be made to follow up stakeholders' contributions to consultation exercises, and on providing feedback on the outcomes of the consultation.	THC will seek to implement this action as resources permit.

2	Public Transport	
2.1	Improve “visibility” of the bus network with a focus on better information on the bus network. i.e. basic route, timetable and fare information should be provided at all bus stops, and conspicuous road markings and more prominent signage at bus stops should be provided, to help to inform the public as to where bus routes and bus stops are. Implementation should begin with the major stops in the network, and then subsequently rolled out to the remainder of the network.	THC will seek to implement this action as resources permit. Funding from other sources will also be sought. For example THC have recently submitted an application to the Scottish Governments Bus Improvement Fund which if successful will see improved information at over 100 stops in the city.
2.2	Existing information services that are available to the public should be more widely promoted; these include traveline’s telephone-based information service, traveline Scotland’s smartphone app and the facility to receive information to a mobile ‘phone by SMS.	THC will seek to promote the traveline Scotland app at every opportunity; including on the travelhighland.info website, at all bus stops and public transport publicity
2.3	A study should be carried out to identify the locations and junctions at which bus priority can be implemented, and a costing exercise undertaken.	The THC Local Transport Strategy identifies locations where bus priority would provide most benefit. It is hoped implementation at key junctions can be funded through grants such as the Bus Improvement Fund or developer contributions. For example the new Campus access includes a dedicated bus lane.
2.4	Bus priority measures to be adopted as part of a long-term, strategic vision and the benefits should be promoted within Local Plan and with developers and general public with bus priority measures included in major new developments wherever appropriate. Preference is for Intelligent Bus Priority, using GPS to track the location of buses.	Bus Priority measures have been adopted within the Local Transport Strategy and will also be embedded within the Inner Moray Firth Local Plan
2.5	Ensure impact of Kessock Bridge roadworks on travel behaviour resulting from public transport improvements such as the bus priority on the bridge should be monitored.	THC will work with Transport Scotland to review data collected during first phase to help develop plans for next year and long term permanent solutions
3	Parking and Traffic Management	
3.1	Seek to identify suitable P&R sites and locations where visitors to the city centre can be “intercepted”, and encouraged to transfer to public transport, walk or cycle. THC to promote Park & Ride as a long-term strategy, and development plans should therefore be updated to reflect this strategic aspiration.	Ongoing. THC has identified locations on the A9 and A96 where it would like to see P&R facilities developed. A site will also identified in the Development brief for Torvean and Ness-side The Inner Moray Firth Local Plan will help ensure that other

		opportunities for P&R are realised.
3.3	Car sharing should be more widely publicised as an alternative to single occupancy car travel to work.	THC will work with HITRANS to promote ifyoucareshare.com and the Million Miles project to promote highlandliftshare.com
3.4	THC should show leadership by focusing on promoting sustainable travel among its own employees, in time for the forthcoming increase in the number of people based at its Glenurquhart Road site.	THC will continue to implement sustainable actions identified in its Corporate Green Travel Plan for Glenurquhart Road HQ and other key offices.
4	Walking and Cycling (including actions identified in the HITRANS Active Travel Audit)	
4.1	Encourage employers to apply for grants that are available for providing facilities such as covered, secure bike parking and changing and showering facilities, in order to encourage “active travel” among their employees.	THC to work with HITRANS to encourage employers to apply
4.2	Monitor usage and assess the public’s reaction to the planned project to pilot the carriage of bicycles on buses	THC to work with Stagecoach and Million Miles to assess Black Isle pilot and if successful seek funding to expand in partnership with local bus operators.
4.3	Develop an East Inverness Active Travel Corridor linking City centre with UHI Campus and other new development east of the A9.	A new shared use link between Inverness city centre and the new A9 Campus Overbridge has recently been designed as part of the ‘Green and Active Travel’ ERDF project. It is hoped that construction will begin in Autumn 2013.
4.4	Improve promotion of Active Travel in Inverness	A Walking and Cycling map for Inverness will be developed as part of the above ERDF project
4.5	Improve cycle parking in the city centre	There are already over 150 cycle parking spaces in the city centre. New and additional cycle stands will be installed at Inverness Rail Station and Culloden Shops as part of the ERDF project.
4.6	Improve walking and Cycling Facilities in the City Centre	Streetscape proposals currently being delivered as part of the Inverness Flood Alleviation scheme will help improve walking and cycling facilities on the riverside. The City Centre Development Brief also identifies the need to improve sustainable modes on Academy St and to/from key access points to the city inc the bus and rail stations and Rose St Car Park
4.7	Improve facilities on other key arterial corridors into the city centre	The HITRANS Active Travel Audit for Inverness has been adopted as part of the Councils Local Transport Strategy and the Inner Moray Firth Local Plan. This will help ensure new development and other investment improves the core walking and cycling network.
4.8	Development of National Cycle Network Route No. 78 between Inverness	Transport Scotland and Sustrans have funding to implement a

	and Fort William	route on the south side of Loch Ness by the end of 2015. The majority of this will be on the carriageway but a segregated path is proposed for the section between Inverness and Dores.
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Shared Learning – Examples of Best Practice from Other Cities Participating in QUEST

Case Study - Gavle (Sweden)

The city of Gavle has a population of c80,000 and cycling levels almost 3 times higher than in Inverness despite its northerly location 100 miles north of Stockholm. It achieved this through the adoption of pro-cycling policies over decades including the '5 commandments of cycling'. This involved measures such as a commitment to clear snow from cycle paths before roads; invest funding in maintaining existing routes, a commitment to address complaints and the promotion of cycling through initiatives such as the 'Health Cyclist' and free public transport for new residents and contests between local employers.

Health Cyclist – This simple and cost effective promotion involved an advert in the local press inviting applications for people who would like to start cycling. Out of 200 applications, 10 entrants were selected who could borrow a bike/helmet/vest. The participants then received a free health check before/during/after. One participant was the deputy Mayor and the process was followed throughout its duration in the local media.

Free Public Transport for New Residents – To capitalise on the fact that that people are most likely to change mode when faced with new circumstances, the city worked in partnership with the local bus operator to provide new residents on the electoral roll with free public transport for a limited period.

Public Transport Treasure Hunt for Schools – A competition for school pupils using local bus network aimed at encouraging use of public transport

Extensive marketing – including walking and cycling maps, promotion of cycling on milk bottles and even saddle wipes

Examples of other initiatives which were adopted in participating cities included

- Employer parking buy outs – This enabled any employee who did not take up their parking space to receive a financial benefit with the employer who was then able to use the space of sell it on.
- Two Way cycling on one way streets with restricted speed limits – In Valence (France) cyclists are permitted to cycle against the flow on all streets which are one way for vehicular traffic.

Appendix C

European Commission Executive Agency for Competitiveness and Innovation

INTELLIGENT ENERGY EUROPE

Contract Number S12.589406



QUEST ACTION PLAN for INVERNESS

**Quality management tool for Urban Energy
efficient Sustainable Transport**

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1 Introduction

QUEST is a project funded under the STEER Programme of Intelligent Energy Europe (IEE), whose goal is to contribute to decreasing energy consumption in urban transport, and stimulate green investments. The project will contribute by setting up a quality management tool to evaluate and improve cities' urban mobility policies, and, ultimately, by supporting the implementation or improvement of sustainable urban mobility plans. But QUEST is not just a methodology to assess policy making, as it aims to support cities in actually making progress toward a more sustainable urban transport system by providing a tailor made Action Plan.

The approach of QUEST is founded upon the concept of Total Quality Management (TQM), in the context of mobility policy. TQM is based on the assumption that excellence in performance can only be achieved by continuous effort taking into account customer needs, leadership, strategy, implementation & evaluation. The concept defines four levels of policy development:

- Level 1: Ad hoc approach – or Fire Brigade principle, where actions are taken as and when an obvious need arises.
- Level 2: Isolated approach – or Robinson Crusoe principle, where individual departments implement projects, but without reference to what goes on elsewhere within the city authority.
- Level 3: System-oriented approach – where efforts are made to optimise the transport system through cooperation with other departments, in order to improve the system's sustainability.
- Level 4: Integrated approach – where policies are permanently integrated, thus ensuring continuous strategic cooperation and a commitment to on-going improvement.

The project adopts a self-assessment approach which focuses on both the policymaking process, and real action on the ground. This self-assessment approach is guided by an external expert, or auditor, (in the case of Inverness, Dr Philip Barham, of TTR), assigned to guide the city through the QUEST process. This process has consisted of an audit of current sustainable mobility policy, a self-assessment exercise involving selected local stakeholders and the development of an Action Plan. At the end of the QUEST process, participating cities receive a QUEST certificate which recognises their efforts in sustainable urban transport planning. It is intended that this certificate will form the basis for investment programmes from higher authorities to support local authorities in implementing sustainable urban mobility plans.

The QUEST method entails the holding of two meetings involving city staff and selected local stakeholders. The first of these considers the city's current performance in terms of achieving sustainable transport, with a view to arriving at a consensus on the main issues that are to be addressed, and priorities for improvement. The second session, involving the same group of people, features a discussion of the possible solutions and options that are available for improving sustainability of the transport system. These two stakeholder meetings are then followed by a third meeting, involving the QUEST Auditor and city staff, to focus on internal working processes and organisation, in the context of implementing actions identified. The end product is a list of agreed, feasible actions that are taken forward to form the QUEST Action Plan.

2 The QUEST Process in Inverness

2.1 QUEST Audit

The QUEST Audit could not have been carried out without there being an appreciation of the mobility context of the city. Inverness had a population of 58,963 in 2010, according to National Records of Scotland (NRS) mid-year estimates, and including the nearby settlement of Culloden and is regarded as the regional capital for the Highlands of Scotland. It is the administrative centre for the Highland Council area, and by far the dominant centre for employment and retail services in the region, and so is a net attractor of trips. Commuters and visitors are attracted to Inverness for a variety of purposes. Major trip generators include Raigmore Hospital, high-tech manufacturing industries (including medical supplies), Eastgate Shopping Centre, Inverness Retail and Business Park, the newly developing campus of the University of the Highlands and Islands and a seasonal tourist trade which is focused on nearby Loch Ness and the Culloden Battlefield. Geographically, the city is located at the mouth of the River Ness, which flows into Beaulieu Firth. As a result, the city centre's transport network is both defined and constrained by three road bridges, a railway bridge and two footbridges over the Ness. The Kessock Bridge, which carries the main A9 trunk road across the Beaulieu Firth, links Inverness with the Black Isle and Easter Ross, on the other side.

The first step in the process was for the QUEST Audit Questionnaire to be dispatched to the TEC Services Department of The Highland Council (THC), to be completed by Neil MacRae, who led QUEST-related activities on behalf of the Council. A completed questionnaire was duly returned on the 29th of June 2012. The information provided in the questionnaire was then validated by the QUEST Auditor by comparing the questionnaire responses with data files and policy documents already provided by THC, particularly formal strategies and planning documents.

Three documents identified as being key to encouraging sustainable mobility were The Highland Council's Local Transport Strategy (LTS) for 2010/2011 to 2013/2014 for the Highland Area as a whole, the Inverness Active Travel Audit, which audits existing walking and cycling infrastructure in the city and identifies priorities for future investment, and the draft Inverness City Centre Development Brief (CCDB). Both the LTS and the Active Travel Audit specify formally agreed and published objectives in relation to sustainable mobility.

Modal split data were provided for Inverness on the basis of 2001 Census data, the Scottish Household Survey (SHS) and the UK National Travel Survey (NTS). Whilst the Census data are the most recent that are publicly available, they are nevertheless eleven years old, and this was accepted as being an unavoidable constraint common to all of the QUEST audits carried out in UK cities, (namely Bath, Blackburn with Darwen, Derry, Inverness and Milton Keynes). SHS data are made available more often, in Scotland, (every two years), but, with a total sample of 3,900 households for the whole of the country, the sample for Inverness is inevitably limited in size. The same might be said in relation to the NTS, which comprises 8,000 households and 20,000 individuals for the whole of the UK.

Modal split data for commuters travelling into the urban area show that, in 2001, 59.8% of trips were by car, 23% were on foot, 11.0% were by public transport, 4.9% were by bicycle and 1.3% were by "other" means, (i.e. motorcycle, taxi, etc.).

Public consultation exercises were identified as having been carried out in relation to the Local Transport Strategy, Active Travel Audit and the CCDB, and the process of agreeing indicators and targets in relation to sustainable mobility was being carried out in connection with the Inner Moray Firth Local Development Plan. Similarly, a monitoring strategy for the LTS was under development. A general conclusion from the Audit, however, was that these processes were rather piecemeal, in as much as they were being carried out on a project by

project basis, with only limited consideration given to ensuring that all policies were fully integrated with one another.

One positive aspect that emerged from the Quest Audit in Inverness was evidence of a clear political commitment for improvements to be made in the sustainability of transport in the city and the surrounding region. This is at the beginning of the current Council's five-year term of office. Furthermore, in common with other UK cities, there are formal, documented plans for how these policies should be taken forward. Funding is in place, from a variety of sources. For example, considerable funds will be invested in Inverness to improve flood protection, and this work will lead to streetscape improvements that will enhance facilities for walking and cycling. There is also specific funding for cycle network improvements from the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF). Additional facilities for more sustainable travel will be provided as part of urban regeneration activities described in the Inverness CCDB. Major road works associated with forthcoming trunk road bridge maintenance will have a considerable impact on traffic flows in and out of the city, over the next two to three years, and this will provide the opportunity to monitor the impact of, and the travelling public's reactions to, a range of travel demand management measures that will be promoted to try to alleviate such impacts. The proposed West Link road might also enable improved provision for sustainable modes in the city centre.

One of the major challenges identified during the audit was the need to provide better coordination of sustainable mobility policy and practices. It was noted that stakeholder engagement and monitoring, for example, are carried out on a project by project basis, and responsibility for promoting the various aspects of sustainable mobility is shared between a full-time Travel Plans Officer, who has a corporate role, and personnel in the Transport Planning, Public Transport and Road Safety Teams. It was also noted that THC has the particular challenge of the hinterland of Inverness being sparsely populated, which presents difficulties in providing cost effective and attractive alternatives to the private car in outlying areas.

Analysis of the Audit Questionnaire returns was followed up with a formal discussion, by telephone, between the QUEST Auditor and Neil MacRae (TEC Services), on the 18th of July 2012. The purpose of this conversation was to address any points that needed clarification, highlight any data that were missing or pending, discuss the possibility of obtaining improved data on modal split and finalise the choice of topics on which to focus during the subsequent stakeholder meetings. There was an in-depth discussion on alternative sources of modal split data, but later, after further investigation, it was concluded that it was not feasible to obtain traffic count data from the city's Strategic Traffic Model, as it only covered peak periods, and there were no specific data on multi-occupancy of vehicles, or on walking and cycling. Consideration was also given to whether the results of the first stage of the Inner Moray Firth Local Development Plan consultation, which closed on the 6th of July 2012, might become available to the QUEST Project, but it was concluded that this would not be feasible.

An important function of this discussion was to come to a conclusion on the focus of the stakeholder meetings, and it was agreed that the meetings would concentrate on the inter-related topics of Public Transport, Parking and Traffic Management, and on the process-related issues of engaging with stakeholders in order to gain a better understanding of user needs, and monitoring procedures. A general conclusion from the audit was that, overall, Inverness shows the characteristics of a city that is at Level of Development 2, (i.e. generally following an "isolated approach"), but which is showing signs of progressing to Level of Development 3 ("system-oriented approach"). This conclusion was based on the observation that much of the Council's good practice in, for example, having mechanisms in place for engaging with stakeholders, takes place on a project by project basis, in the absence of formal, generic processes. The city shows that it is ready to take a more strategic approach to sustainable mobility policy, in, for example, its analysis of the Local Plan using the city's strategic traffic model, and the development and implementation of a monitoring scheme.

2.2 Assessment by stakeholders

An important aspect of the QUEST process in all of the UK cities involved in the project was the thorough engagement of stakeholders. This was achieved using a two-tier approach of defining both a “core” stakeholder group that would be invited to attend the stakeholder meetings, and a larger group representing a diverse range of interests. The composition of each group was determined on the basis of discussions between the QUEST Auditor and THC’s TEC Services. The sample was constructed with a view to having a roughly even number of representatives from the five broad stakeholder groups defined in the QUEST method: City Staff, Politicians, (Transport) Service Providers, Business & Commerce and End Users.

The following is a summary of stakeholders who were invited to take part in the QUEST process in Inverness: -

Core Stakeholder Group

The Highland Council Staff Members

Head of Transport and Infrastructure

Inverness City Manager

Development Plans Manager

Transport Development Officer

Principal Engineer, Traffic and Transport Planning

Sustainable Development Coordinator

The Highland Council Councillors (two)

HITRANS

Inverness Chamber of Commerce

BID

Stagecoach

Highland Cycle Campaign

Wider Stakeholder Group

The Highland Council Staff Members

Equalities and Diversity Officer

Area Planning Manager (South)

Transport Scotland

Black Isle Transition Group

Passenger Focus

Passenger View Scotland

Living Streets Schools Coordinator

Friends of the Far North Line

Scotbus

D&E Coaches

CPT Coach Operators

Inverness Access Panel
 Community Transport Association
 Inverness Taxi and Private Hire Association
 Highlands & Islands Airport Ltd
 Highlands & Islands Enterprise
 NHS Highland
 SNH
 University of the Highlands & Islands
 Northern Constabulary Road Safety Officer
 Freight Transport Association
 Lifescan

Main Outcomes from the Self-Assessment Questionnaire Returns

There was a good response rate to the Self-Assessment Questionnaire from Inverness stakeholders. A total of 18 completed questionnaires were returned – eight from the core stakeholder group, and ten from the wider group. Of the five broad stakeholder groups that were defined, all were fairly evenly represented, except for “Politicians”, none of whom returned a questionnaire. (There was, however, a good representation of councillors during the actual stakeholder meetings). The breakdown of questionnaires returned, by stakeholder group was as follows: -

City Staff	5
Service Providers	5
Business & Commerce	4
End Users	4

A mixed response was received from stakeholders on the issue of the Council’s understanding of user needs and the processes that are in place to enable engagement with stakeholders to better meet these needs. For the first of the two questions on the topic of User Needs, all four of the responses available were selected by at least two of the 18 respondents. For the second of the two questions, respondents were fairly evenly split in selecting the statements that related to Levels of Development 1, 2 and 3. Some stakeholders expressing a rather negative view of the local authority’s understanding of user needs qualified their opinion with a comment that suggested that too little was being done to meet the accessibility needs of all of the city’s inhabitants, (particularly older and disabled people). Specific comments included: -

“Should not concentrate on sustainability and mode shift – access for all levels of ability is not being recognised.”

“Many buses are not accessible, and more thought needs to be given to user needs”

“The city has to cater for the needs of people who cannot cycle, walk or use public transport”

There were also specific comments that expressed doubt as to the general effectiveness of the Council’s stakeholder engagement procedures, such as: -

“I don’t sense, when it comes to local politics, that the will of the people is truly heard”

“Stakeholder advice is sought via Local / Regional Plans, but usually few changes are made to consultation drafts”

However, one stakeholder pointed out that the local authority is improving its stakeholder engagement procedures, pointing out that: -

“The recent development of the University campus and the current proposals for further retail development provide evidence that progress is being made”

Responses on public transport provision in the city suggested very strongly that Inverness was at Level of Development 1 or 2, in terms of its sustainable transport policy development. Comments made on the questionnaire to support this response referred to the need for bus priority measures to make public transport more attractive, the lack of consistency in bus timetables which discourages public confidence in services, and the lack of coordination between bus and train services coming into Inverness, and bus services within the city. It was noted, however, that: -

“Recent work on the City Development Brief and the Local Plan should reap rewards”

When asked to rate the city’s parking policy in the context of the use of parking provision to encourage sustainable travel, on a four-point scale that provided the options “Poor”, “Moderate”, “Good” and “Excellent”, all but three respondents selected either “Poor” or “Moderate”. This appears to have been a judgement based on the fact that car parking is inexpensive and plentiful in Inverness, which does little to encourage residents and visitors to use alternative means of transport. Supporting comments included: -

“Parking in the city is cheap and plentiful, therefore little disincentive not to take the car”

“Current parking policy is driven by traffic management need rather than overtly discouraging car use. Further encouragement of sustainable transport may require more of a “stick” approach”

2.3 Choice of focal area(s)

After a brief discussion and summary of the questionnaire returns, it was confirmed that the focus of the stakeholder meetings would be the inter-related mode-specific topics of Public Transport, Parking and Traffic Management, and on the process-related issues of engaging with stakeholders in order to gain a better understanding of user needs, and monitoring procedures.

2.4 Stakeholder meetings: identification of problems and actions

Main Outcomes from Stakeholder Meeting 1

The first QUEST Stakeholder Meeting in Inverness took place in the Netley Conference Centre, on the 1st of November. During this meeting the results of the Self-Assessment Questionnaire were presented and discussed. Twelve stakeholders took part in this meeting. Five were representatives of The Highland Council (Two from the Traffic and Transport Planning Department, one from Planning Development, the Sustainable Development Coordinator and the Transport Development Officer), the City Manager of Inverness, two representatives of the public transport operator Stagecoach, representatives of HiTrans and the Highland Cycle Campaign, and two city councilors.

The discussion focused on four of the topic areas that were included in the Questionnaire, namely User Needs, Public Transport, Traffic Management and Parking. The topic of User Needs was selected in recognition of the importance of effective on-going engagement with local stakeholders. The rationale for concentrating on the other three, mode-specific, topic areas was that they are interdependent in terms of their potential impact on people’s choice of transport mode. Furthermore, the Council was confident that progress could be made in other important areas, such as Walking & Cycling, and Land Use & Transport Planning, through Active Travel Audits and the ongoing work of the Transport Infrastructure for Growth project, which was seeking to assist in the development of the Inner Moray Firth Local Plan.

One outcome from a full and frank discussion was that the view of the local authority's current Level of Development in relation to understanding user needs was revised "upwards", to Level 3, (which represents a "System-oriented Approach"). Among the evidence to support this revision was the inter-disciplinary approach that had been taken during recent work on the Inner Moray Firth Local Plan. Work on this plan has involved workshop meetings which have enabled the authority to consider user needs from a strategic point of view. It was also pointed out that there had been collaborative working in relation to work on the A96 corridor. However, it was agreed that the following are priority areas for improvement, in relation to the Council's processes for stakeholder engagement, and other internal procedures: -

- It was felt that there were areas where The Highland Council's structures could be improved to ensure that officers liaised and worked in a cross-departmental manner. In addition, it was noted that THC had been unable to fill the post of Integrated Transport Manager for 2½ years.
- There was a need to further extend the Council's partnership working with the voluntary and community sector, and to improve communication of where good partnership working exists.
- There appeared to be some misunderstanding, during the meeting, as to the priority given to public transport within the Council's City Centre Development Brief. As a result, it was agreed that communication on future development of public transport might be improved.

A theme that emerged from the discussion of public transport in Inverness was that there was a strong desire for the development of bus priority measures, as a strategic objective. At the time of the first stakeholder meeting, bus priority was limited to two bus gates in the city. Another major theme was a recognition of the need to improve publicity and communication in relation to public transport, in order to make the public feel better informed in how they should take advantage of the bus services, in particular, that are available. It was felt that some of the positive aspects of public transport were not sufficiently well communicated, such as the fact that children can travel free, up to the age of five, the provision of low-floor buses for all city centre services, and the availability of the traveline Scotland journey planner, which can be used as a smartphone app. The following is a summary of the priorities for change that were identified, at the meeting, in relation to public transport: -

- It was reported that there was a technical fault with one of the two bus priority "gates" in the city, so that it did not deliver the intended priority for buses. Whilst this was a very specific issue, it was identified as perhaps being symptomatic of a wider issue concerning the monitoring of the effectiveness of such measures, and the communication of any issues that arise.
- It was felt that there was a need for better provision of information for people in the city, to help them to use public transport, (through, for example, increased publicity about fares and routes), and that there was a need to make bus services more "family friendly".
- There was a suggestion that the frequency of bus services is reduced at times when people might consider using the bus to commute to work, (i.e. between 8am and 9am), and that this might be due to vehicles being used instead for schools transport.

On parking and traffic management policies, there was further discussion of the importance of providing parking facilities in the centre of Inverness, from the point of view of both making the city commercially attractive, and maintaining the competitiveness of businesses in the central area in the face of competition from the peripheries, where parking on retail premises is usually provided free of charge. These objectives were discussed in the context of a genuine desire to make the city more sustainable, and a recognition that an urban area that is "walkable" will be more attractive to tourists and other visitors. It was also acknowledged that Inverness is a regional centre with a very rural hinterland – it has the highest percentage of two-car households of any rural region in Europe – which creates a requirement for

parking facilities to be provided for those for whom a car is the only realistic option for accessing vital goods and services.

The disconnection between city centre car parking policy, and policies relating to commercial and retail developments on the periphery of the city, were discussed. This led to a preliminary airing of ideas as to whether such peripheral sites might be used as part of a park & ride strategy for the city. It was thought that this might alleviate another problem that was identified – that of parking in residential areas on the edge of the city centre. It was recognised that any park & ride system would need to be linked to public transport policy, in as much as peripheral parking locations would need to be connected to the city centre by a high quality bus corridor.

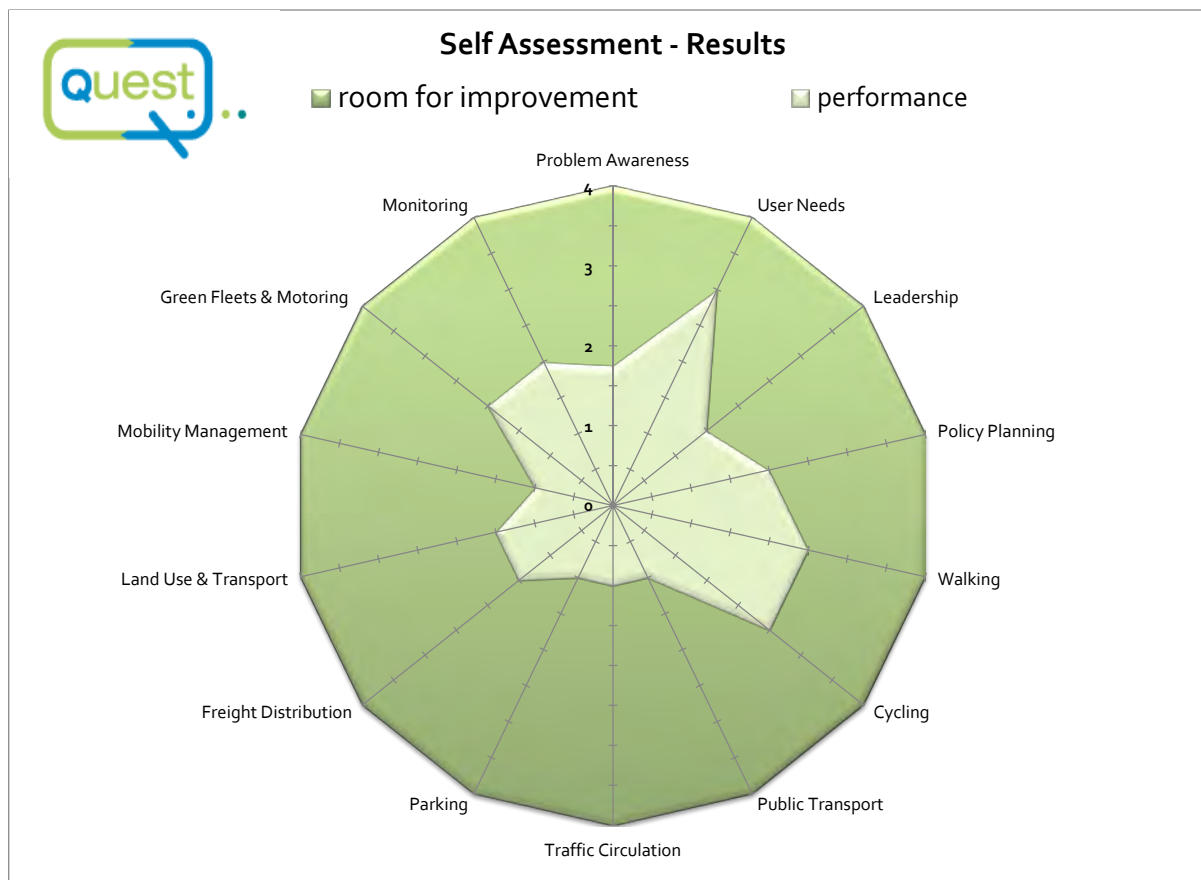
Forthcoming trunk road works which will have a substantial impact on traffic flows on the Kessock Bridge were discussed in the context of providing an opportunity to test the viability of various initiatives to change the travel habits of people travelling in and out of Inverness. These included encouragement for car sharing and communicating the expected time savings that people will be able to derive from using the bus service on the bridge during this period of disruption, which is scheduled to begin in February 2013. .

Priority areas identified in relation to parking and traffic management policy were as follows: -

- There appears to have been a lack of connection between policies for parking in the city centre, and policies influencing the growth of major retail facilities, (providing free parking), in peripheral locations. The development of such retail facilities has an impact on demand for services offered by businesses located in the city centre.
- Specific parking-related issues identified included a tendency for visitors to park in residential areas on the outskirts of the city centre, and a general lack of parking provision in the city to the West of the River Ness, and South of the City Centre.
- There was uncertainty as to the extent to which the city's major private sector employers were encouraging their employees to travel to and from work more sustainably, (including the extent to which travel plans were being implemented, the level of awareness of car sharing web-sites, etc.). Whilst this issue is related to mobility management policy, which was not one of the topics chosen for detailed discussion, major employers' attitudes towards the travel choices of their staff nevertheless has an impact on the availability of road space and parking spaces in the city.

During the discussion, a consensus was achieved for all of the topic areas selected for further discussion. For topic areas not discussed during the meeting, a conclusion was drawn by the QUEST Auditor, based on the completed questionnaires from all stakeholders. On the basis of this analysis, the "radar diagram", shown as Figure 1, was constructed. This diagram summarises the agreed current Level of Development of sustainable urban transport policy in Inverness, using the 14 modules defined by the QUEST Method.

Figure 1. Spider Diagram Summarising the Level of Development of Aspects of Sustainable Mobility Planning in Inverness.



As shown in this diagram, the agreed current Level of Development of sustainable urban mobility policy in the topic areas selected for detailed discussion with the stakeholders was as follows: -

Understanding of Users' Needs	Level 3
Public Transport	Level 1
Parking	Level 1
Traffic Management	Level 1

These assessments imply that there is scope for improvement in policy implementation and procedures in the topic areas chosen. Figure 1 does, however, show that the local authority performs better on sustainable mobility planning in other areas, such as walking and cycling policy, where the Level of Development of policy was defined as being between levels 2 and 3. This justifies the decision for the QUEST process to concentrate attention on the inter-related areas of public transport, parking and traffic management.

Main Outcomes from Stakeholder Meetings 2 and 3

After discussion and agreement on the main priorities for change in Inverness, during Meeting 1, the focus of Meeting 2 was potential solutions to these problems. During his opening introduction, the QUEST Auditor explained that the objective of the day's discussions was to produce a set of agreed actions that would form the basis of the QUEST Action Plan that would subsequently be created. This meeting was held on the 20th of

November, in the Headquarters of the Highland Council, in Inverness. A total of nine stakeholders attended this meeting. The City Manager and the representative of the Highland Cycle Campaign were unable to attend, and both Stagecoach and the city's councillors this time had just the one representative; however, the group was supplemented by The Highland Council's Head of Transport & Infrastructure.

Stakeholder Meeting 2 was followed immediately by an additional meeting involving the QUEST Auditor, city representatives and the councillor representing the City Council. A separate agenda was prepared, explaining that the objective of Meeting 3 was to focus on internal working processes and organisation, exploring how improvements to internal processes might improve the implementation of actions to promote sustainable mobility. The desired end product was a list of suggested process improvements that could be added to the outcomes of Meeting 2 as a contribution to the QUEST Action Plan.

A summary of agreed actions to be taken forward as part of the QUEST Action Plan follows: -

Internal Processes: Improving cross-departmental working within THC, and communication with the local community

- Better communication might be encouraged by the introduction of a structured series of regular, city-specific meetings, to improve collaboration between both Council departments, and outside bodies. These meetings should be formal, in as much as they should be guided by an agenda. They should involve, as a minimum, Transport Scotland and HiTrans, building on communications that HiTrans already has with operators of all modes of public transport. A structure of meetings should incorporate and utilise existing inter-departmental meetings, (such as the fortnightly meetings that are held between the city's Planning Service and the Traffic & Transport Planning Department). A first step should be the formulation of objectives, and of Terms of Reference, for these meetings. This will enable subsequent monitoring of the extent to which these meetings are being successful. Ultimately, the level of success of these meetings will be measured in terms of the extent to which there are increases in the use of more sustainable modes of transport in Inverness – and this is information that is already collected annually.
- It was acknowledged, during the stakeholder meetings, that funding these meetings might be a challenge, particularly given the fragmentation of funds among a number of sectors and budgets. An important action would therefore be to investigate means of funding that is available from different sources can be combined, in general.
- For an example of good practice in successful local authority engagement with the voluntary and community sector, THC might consider the success of Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council (BwDBC) with its development of community rail services. Important elements of successful implementation have included the setting up of a Project Management Board, (which, at a smaller scale, might be analogous to installing one individual in an overall coordinating role), a small but dedicated team able to act as a “conduit” with community groups, and a formal means of maintaining on-going engagement with stakeholders (i.e. regular update meetings and a two-monthly newsletter). The remit for the project has been very much focused on practical issues, such as improved station facilities, (e.g. new shelters, CCTV, landscaping and improved information), and better integration with other means of transport. A formal partnership approach has been necessary for funding improvements, specifically through working with the Clitheroe Line and East Lancashire Line Community Rail Partnership, which consists of both large enterprises, (such as Network Rail, Lancashire County Council and Transport for Greater Manchester), and various “friends of station” groups. Another important element for success has been the combination of a champion of the community rail cause at a senior level, (together with the interest shown by local MPs Jack Straw and Jake Berry), and the availability of an “infantry” of volunteers “on the ground”.

- Communication with the local community might also be improved through greater effort being put on following up stakeholders' contributions to consultation exercises, and on providing feedback on the outcomes of the consultation. It is understood, however, that it is unrealistic to expect THC to respond to every contributor to major consultation exercises, where the number of respondents might be several thousand.
- Discussion of recent consultation efforts in relation to the City Centre Development Brief resulted in the conclusion that, generally, key stakeholders should be consulted at an early stage of the planning process, (i.e. before the first draft of any major planning document such as the CCDB is produced).
- Communication with the community might be effected through existing processes of engagement with parents' groups and organisations representing disabled people. A starting point would be to investigate the level of such activity that currently takes place, and the extent to which transport-related elements are a part of this process. This should include a review of the current activities of the existing Access Panel; this is something that might be the responsibility of THC's Equalities Officer. The feasibility of establishing a Bus Users' Group should also be investigated – this might involve existing interested organisations, such as Friends of the Far North Line (which promotes the railway line that joins Inverness with Thurso and Wick), and the Black Isle's Million Miles Project, (which aims to reduce car mileage among Black Isle residents, and already receives funding from the Scottish Government's Climate Change Fund). The Inverness Access Panel and/or the Citizens' Panel should also be asked whether they might have a role in helping to set up such a group.
- Copy for press releases should be made available for the Council's media and public relations specialists, for them to distribute, on a more regular basis. This will entail procedures being put into place to trigger the production of publicity material at certain milestones, (e.g. when funding is secured for a given project, to coincide with periodic reviews, at the conclusion of a project, etc.). The Highlands & Islands Airport company (HIAL) is very active in the provision of stories for the local press, and so provides a good example of good practice, locally.
- A strategy should be developed for making greater use of social media, such as Twitter and Facebook, etc. This will provide a means of communicating timely and immediate information in specific situations, but can also be used in more general terms, to publicise the Council's successes and other "good news stories". Particularly important information to be communicated to the public will be updates on any changes in the modal share of more sustainable modes of transport in the city, (e.g. changes in cycling activity since the 2012 Olympic Games). Innovations in services, such as the introduction of low-floor buses, and the provision of WiFi facilities, should also be well publicised. This should be done in conjunction with operators' public relations resources, (i.e. Stagecoach's PR Department). The use of social media can be trialed in the immediate future, and its impact monitored, in connection with forthcoming disruptions caused by trunk road improvements to the Kessock Bridge. Implementation of this should begin with a survey of which social media are already used by people in Inverness for mobility-related purposes. It will be particularly informative to monitor the use of Twitter during the Kessock Bridge works; in November 2012, THC had some 500 followers on Twitter. THC's own survey data already shows that 31% of members of a survey panel were aware that they could access information through social networking, in 2012, which was a marked increase on the 2011 figure of 22%. Within the 25-44 age group, this figure rose from 13% to 27%, from 2011 to 2012. It is important for further data gathering to thoroughly investigate how younger people, in particular, access information. Data from the same panel survey show that 35% of this sample can receive information by text to a mobile device, and this is a figure that has been rising steadily since 2009. The expertise of THC's Public Relations team should be utilised, to support the development of social media-related activities. In addition, any information distributed

using social media should be complemented with equivalent information in media that are accessible to people who do not use social media. (Typically, approximately 10% of people aged 60 or over own a smartphone, and this is the sector of the population among which the growth of smartphone ownership is slowest).

Public Transport: Bus priority in the city

- There was a strong feeling that the promotion of bus priority measures should be adopted as a long-term, strategic goal. Preference was for Intelligent Bus Priority, given that all buses in Inverness have GPS. There is a need for THC and HiTrans to work together to develop proposals, with additional support being provided by Stagecoach and developers' contributions. A good example of a city that has successfully implemented a bus priority scheme is Ljubljana, in Slovenia. Congestion in this city had reduced average traffic speeds to between 10 kph and 18 kph in the city centre. Using Galileo satellite positioning and direct contact between 210 of the city's buses and traffic lights at 15 key intersections, Ljubljana reduced bus travel times along the main bus corridor by up to 10%, and reduced average delays at the beginning and end of this corridor by 10% to 20%. At the same time, there were reductions in fuel consumption and emissions, and an improvement to passengers' satisfaction with bus services in the city. The bus priority project in Ljubljana was supported by the CIVITAS ELAN Project.
- With reference to this longer-term objective, a study should be carried out to identify the locations and junctions at which bus priority can be implemented, and a costing exercise undertaken.
- The Inner Moray Firth Local Development Plan should contain the directive that any upgrades to traffic signals should include a bus priority function, where necessary and appropriate.
- The advantages of bus priority, and the fact that it can be made readily available, should be promoted to planners and developers at every opportunity. Linking bus priority with major new developments will be a good means of implementation.
- Similarly, the advantages that bus priority measures provide for public transport, over the private car, should be disseminated and marketed to the general public. This should initially be done in connection with the trunk road works that are to be carried out on the Kessock Bridge; the public should be made aware of the precise journey time advantages that bus priority will provide for bus services during the period of the works, and the overall impact on travel behaviour should be monitored. Of particular interest are any changes in people's travel to work patterns, and any changes in working times, during the period of works. A strategy for gathering data on such issues, which might include a workplace questionnaire survey, should be developed.

Public Transport: Provision of information, to encourage the public to use public transport services

- Current information services that are available to the public should be more widely promoted, but recognising the fact that different groups of people have different preferences and capabilities when it comes to accessing information. Examples include traveline's telephone-based information service, traveline Scotland's smartphone app and the facility to receive information to a mobile 'phone by SMS.
- Better information on the bus network should be provided "on the ground", i.e. basic route, timetable and fare information at all bus stops. A simple map of the network, and bus fare information, will suffice. (The "spider maps" used by Transport for London to illustrate its bus network are a good example of good practice in this

context). Conspicuous road markings and more prominent signage at bus stops should also be provided, to help to inform the public as to where bus routes and bus stops are.

- The process of providing better “visibility” of the bus network should begin with a mapping and costing exercise, with a focus on road markings and bus stop information. Implementation should begin with the major stops in the network, (which should be identified during the mapping process), and then subsequently rolled out to the remainder of the network.

Parking: Scope for introducing the concept of Park & Ride

- There is a preference for adopting the concept of Park & Ride as a long-term strategy, particularly in areas of the city to the West of the River Ness. Development plans should therefore be updated to reflect this strategic aspiration. An example of a successful implementation of a Park & Ride facility in the British Isles is provided by the city of Cork. This features a local authority that sought a solution to the issue of the number of cars entering the city increasing at a rate of 4.5% per year. Drawing upon funding from the CIVITAS MIRACLES Project, Cork’s objective was to develop a major, purpose-built facility to replace a temporary Park & Ride site that had been operating on Saturdays. The aspiration was to create an out-of-town site that would encourage people to leave their car on this site, or “walk and ride” or “cycle and ride” taking advantage of supervised, secure cycle parking. The facility provided has spaces for 900 cars, as well as provisions for bicycles and motorcycles, and has high levels of usage during peak hours and week-ends. In order to achieve the requirement of a peak throughput of 700 passengers per hour, bus priority measures were implemented at signal-controlled junctions along the route, which also reduced both inbound and outbound journey times, and made it possible to provide a peak service of buses at 10-minute intervals. Income from the scheme had started to meet operating costs within 50 weeks of the operation’s inception. Another good example of a successful Park & Ride scheme, provided from within the QUEST Project, can be found in Bath, where three out-of-town sites provide capacity for 450, 878 and 1,230 cars. Each site provides the opportunity for a ten-minute bus ride into the city centre, with frequencies varying between ten and 15 minutes.
- The first step in adopting the concept of Park & Ride should be to identify sites and locations where visitors to the city centre can be “intercepted”, and encouraged to transfer to public transport. Given the relatively short walking distances that are involved in the city centre, some of these car park locations might be identified, and later promoted, as “Park & Stride” facilities.
- Again, monitoring any behavioural changes among commuters during the forthcoming works on the Kessock Bridge will provide information as to the scope there might be for Park & Ride in the future, (i.e. the extent to which people will effectively “park & ride”, parking their car on one side of the bridge and then crossing the Beaully Firth by bus, train or bike, as opposed to opting to car share or make changes to work patterns).

Other Traffic Management Policy Issues

- THC and other public partners should seek to encourage employers to apply for grants that are available for providing facilities that might encourage “active travel” among their employees. Such facilities might include covered, secure bike parking and changing and showering facilities at the work place, whose current general absence was identified as being a major disincentive for active travel. Sources of funding suggested included HiTrans’ grant scheme and Cycling Scotland.

- A monitoring strategy should be developed and implemented, in order to assess the public's reaction to, and take-up of, the facility for bicycles to be carried on buses. Plans are already in place for Stagecoach in the Highlands and THC to cooperate in providing such a service. Local cycling groups might cooperate in promoting and monitoring this service.
- In relation to the promotion of walking and cycling in Inverness, the stakeholder group recognised the need to continue to implement the key priorities and actions identified in the Inverness Active Travel Audit. These stated priorities, which should be taken into account alongside the recommendations of the QUEST Action Plan, are as follows: -
 - Priority 1: The East Inverness Active Travel Corridor (EIATC), including improvements to cycling facilities between Inverness City Centre, the new University of the Highlands and Islands campus, retail park and Culloden.
 - Priority 2: Quick wins identified in the Active Travel Audit.
 - Priority 3: Active travel promotion.
 - Priority 4: Planning and Transport coordination.
 - Priority 5: Seek funding for Cycle City.
 - Priority 6: Improve other key active travel corridors.
 - Priority 7: Review, improve and extend streetscape works.
- Similarly, there was a feeling that improvements to walking, cycling and public transport facilities in the centre of Inverness should be delivered in conjunction with the West Link Road project, in order to maximise the benefits of reduced traffic on key city centre streets, and to ensure synergies with the footway/cycleway linkages that are to be part of the West Link project.
- Car sharing should be more widely publicised as an alternative to single occupancy car travel to work. HiTrans' car sharing web-site was mentioned as an example of a facility that might be more widely used, (and it was also suggested that this web-site could be substantially improved).
- It was acknowledged that the Council could focus on promoting sustainable travel among its own employees, especially in the context of a forthcoming increase in the number of people that will be based in Glenurquhart Road. Car sharing and cycling were mentioned as being more sustainable means of travel that might be promoted among Council employees. Leadership in sustainable travel shown by the Council, in this way, would provide good material for promoting sustainability, through the Council's media department.

3 Action plan and recommendations

A summary of recommended actions is as follows: -

Internal Processes

Immediate actions

- An investigation should be undertaken of current engagement activities that are taking place with local stakeholder groups, and the extent to which these activities involve a transport element. This might involve the Inverness Access Panel, THC's Equalities Officer and local groups with an interest in climate change issues, and should lead to consideration of the feasibility of the setting up of a Bus Users' Group, or similar body.
- More regular copy for press releases should be made in relation to transport-related developments. This will entail Procedures should be put into place to trigger the production of publicity material at certain project milestones. Such procedures will ensure that copy for press releases and other publicity materials is made available for the Council's media and public relations specialists to distribute on a more regular basis.
- The development of a strategy for making greater use of social media should begin with a detailed survey of which social media are already used by people in Inverness for mobility-related purposes. This will build upon data that are already collected by THC.
- There is an immediate opportunity to monitor the use of Twitter and other social media during the upcoming disruptions caused by the Kessock Bridge works.

Medium-term

- Introduce a structured series of regular, city-specific meetings, to improve collaboration between both Council departments, and outside bodies.
- Investigate how funding that is fragmented, in as much as it is available from different sources, can be combined to fund the above meetings.
- Where resources permit, greater efforts should be made to follow up stakeholders' contributions to consultation exercises, and on providing feedback on the outcomes of the consultation.
- Ensure that key stakeholders are consulted at an early stage of the planning process, before key drafts, such as the City Centre Development Brief are circulated.
- A strategy should be developed for making greater use of social media, to both communicate timely and immediate information in specific situations, and publicise the Council's "good news stories".

Public Transport: Bus priority in the city

Immediate actions

- A study should be carried out to identify the locations and junctions at which bus priority can be implemented, and a costing exercise undertaken.
- The Inner Moray Firth Local Development Plan should contain the directive that any upgrades to traffic signals should include a bus priority function, where appropriate and necessary.
- The trunk road works that are to be carried out on the Kessock Bridge also provide the opportunity for the public to be made aware of the precise journey time advantages that bus priority will provide for bus services during the period of the works. The impact on travel behaviour of the bus priority on the bridge should be monitored.

- A strategy for gathering data on any changes in people's travel to work patterns, before and after the Kessock Bridge works, should be developed. This might include a workplace questionnaire survey.

Medium-term

- The advantages of bus priority should be promoted to planners and developers at every opportunity, and bus priority measures should be included in major new developments, wherever appropriate.
- The advantages that bus priority measures provide for public transport should be disseminated and marketed to the general public.

Long-term, strategic

- Bus priority measures should be adopted as a long-term, strategic goal. Preference is for Intelligent Bus Priority, using GPS to track the location of buses.

Public Transport: Provision of information

Immediate actions

- The process of providing better "visibility" of the bus network should begin with a mapping and costing exercise, with a focus on road markings and bus stop information on fares etc..

Medium-term

- Current information services that are available to the public should be more widely promoted; these include traveline's telephone-based information service, traveline Scotland's smartphone app and the facility to receive information to a mobile 'phone by SMS.
- Better information on the bus network, (i.e. basic route, timetable and fare information), should be provided at all bus stops, and conspicuous road markings and more prominent signage at bus stops should be provided, to help to inform the public as to where bus routes and bus stops are. Implementation should begin with the major stops in the network, and then subsequently rolled out to the remainder of the network.

Parking: Scope for introducing the concept of Park & Ride

Immediate actions

- The first step in adopting the concept of Park & Ride should be to identify sites and locations where visitors to the city centre can be "intercepted", and encouraged to transfer to public transport, walk or cycle.

Long-term, strategic

- THC to promote Park & Ride as a long-term strategy, and development plans should therefore be updated to reflect this strategic aspiration.

Other Traffic Management Policy Issues

Immediate actions

- Encourage employers to apply for grants that are available for providing facilities such as covered, secure bike parking and changing and showering facilities, in order to encourage "active travel" among their employees.
- A monitoring strategy should be developed and implemented, to assess the public's reaction to the planned project to pilot the carriage of bicycles on buses.
- THC should show leadership by focusing on promoting sustainable travel among its own employees, in time for the forthcoming increase in the number of people based at its Glenurquhart Road site.

Medium-term

- Car sharing should be more widely publicised as an alternative to single occupancy car travel to work. This might involve improvement, and better publicity, of HiTrans' car sharing web-site.

4 Executive Summary

Inverness is a city of a population 58,963 (in 2010). It is the administrative centre for the Highland Council area, and is a net attractor of trips, being by far the dominant centre for employment and retail services in the region. Geographically, the city is located at the mouth of the River Ness. The city's transport network is both defined and constrained by three road bridges, a railway bridge and two footbridges over the Ness. The Kessock Bridge, which carries the main A9 trunk road across the Beaully Firth, links Inverness with the Black Isle and Easter Ross, on the other side. This bridge is due to be the location of major road works, from February 2013. This period of disruption to a main commuter corridor serving the centre of Inverness was readily identified as providing an opportunity to observe travellers' behaviour, in the context of their willingness to seek out and implement alternative journey to work strategies.

The QUEST Audit

Three documents in particular were identified, during the QUEST Audit, as being key to encouraging sustainable mobility, namely The Highland Council's Local Transport Strategy (LTS) for 2010/2011 to 2013/2014 for the Highland Area as a whole, the Inverness Active Travel Audit, which audits existing walking and cycling infrastructure in the city and identifies priorities for future investment, and the draft Inverness City Centre Development Brief (CCDB). Modal split data were provided for Inverness on the basis of 2001 Census data, the Scottish Household Survey (SHS) and the UK National Travel Survey (NTS). According to the 2001 Census, travel by non-sustainable means accounted for 59.8% of the city's modal split. As is general in the UK, Census data were the most robust data available, in spite of being some eleven years out of date. (Data from the 2011 Census are expected to be available later in 2013).

One of the conclusions from the Audit was that, whilst there are detailed plans for improving the sustainability of transport, both for Inverness itself, and for the Highlands as a whole, there is a lack of integration of these policies, and a lack of an overall strategic vision. A major challenge identified during the audit was the need to provide better coordination of sustainable mobility policy and practices. There was also evidence of there being no established engagement procedures for incorporating users' needs in the formulation of sustainable mobility policies. This is in spite of public consultations being carried out for the Active Travel Audit for the city, and for the City Centre Development Brief.

A positive finding from the Audit was evidence of a political commitment to sustainable mobility, on the evidence of the new Council administration's stated policies. Policies to expand cycling facilities, improve public transport services and develop a Green Transport Strategy are supported by personnel dedicated to implementation, such as a full-time Travel Plans Officer and other dedicated staff within the Council's Transport Planning, Road Safety and Public Transport teams. There is also evidence of a considerable financial commitment to support the implementation of sustainable mobility policies, although such funding is derived from different sources, and is allocated to different sectors.

Analysis of the Audit Questionnaire returns was followed up with a formal discussion, by telephone, between the QUEST Auditor and Neil MacRae (TEC Services), on the 18th of July 2012. The purpose of this conversation was to address any points that needed clarification, but also to come to a conclusion on the focus of the subsequent stakeholder meetings. It was agreed that the meetings would concentrate on the inter-related topics of Public Transport, Parking and Traffic Management, and on the process-related issues of engaging with stakeholders in order to gain a better understanding of user needs, and monitoring procedures.

The QUEST Self-Assessment and Consensus Forming Process

An important task for the QUEST Auditor and the city representative was to devise an effective and equitable means of engaging stakeholders in the QUEST process. This was achieved using a two-tier approach of defining both a “core” stakeholder group that would be invited to attend the stakeholder meetings, and a larger group representing a diverse range of interests. Both samples were constructed with a view to having a roughly even number of representatives from five broad stakeholder groups: City Staff, Politicians, Service Providers, Business & Commerce and End Users. There was a good response rate to the Self-Assessment Questionnaire, with 18 completed questionnaires being returned – eight from the core stakeholder group, and ten from the wider group. Of the five broad stakeholder groups, all were fairly evenly represented, in terms of questionnaires completed. The exception was “Politicians”, none of whom returned a questionnaire, although this was off-set by a good representation of councillors taking part in the actual stakeholder meetings.

Questionnaire returns revealed a mixed response on the issue of the Council’s understanding of user needs and the processes that are in place to enable effective engagement with stakeholders to better meet these needs. Some respondents specified the issue of too little being done to meet the accessibility needs of older and disabled people. Responses on public transport provision were largely fairly critical, with there being a consensus that Inverness was at Level of Development 1 (Ad hoc approach) or 2 (Isolated approach), in terms of its sustainable transport policies. Additional comments referred to the need for bus priority measures to make public transport more attractive, the lack of consistency in bus timetables and the lack of coordination between bus and train services. When asked to rate the city’s parking policy, as a tool for encouraging sustainable travel, all bar three respondents rated it as being “Poor” or “Moderate”. This appears to have been due to car parking in Inverness being inexpensive and plentiful, providing little disincentive for visitors to not use their car.

The first Stakeholder Meeting took place in the Netley Conference Centre, on the 1st of November 2012. Twelve stakeholders took part in this meeting. The main objective of this meeting was to discuss and agree upon the main priorities for change in Inverness. This was followed by the second Stakeholder Meeting, which was held on the 20th of November 2012, in the Headquarters of the Highland Council, in Inverness. The aim of the second meeting was to discuss potential solutions to the priority issues that had been identified, and to produce a set of agreed actions that would form the basis of the QUEST Action Plan. Nine stakeholders attended this second meeting. Stakeholder Meeting 2 was followed immediately by an additional meeting involving the QUEST Auditor, city representatives and a city councillor, with the objective of focusing on internal working processes and means of improving the implementation of actions to promote sustainable mobility.

One outcome from the first Stakeholder Meeting was that the view of the Level of Development of Inverness in relation to understanding user needs was revised “upwards”, to Level 3, (a “System-oriented Approach”). This was largely due to evidence of an interdisciplinary approach being taken during recent work on the Inner Moray Firth Local Plan, and collaborative working on the A96 corridor project. However, it was nevertheless felt that THC’s structures could be improved to ensure more cross-departmental working. Similarly, it was agreed that the Council could extend its partnership working with the voluntary and community sector. A theme that emerged from the discussion of public transport was that there was a strong desire for bus priority as a strategic objective, and there was recognition of the need to improve publicity and communication in relation to bus services, in particular. The discussion of parking and traffic management policies included a recognition of the importance of providing parking facilities in order to make the city centre commercially attractive, and maintaining the competitiveness of businesses in the face of competition from large retail premises on the peripheries, where parking is usually provided free of charge. The apparent disconnection between city centre car parking policy, and policies relating to these peripheral retail developments was also discussed. The related subject of the extent to

which the city's major private sector employers encouraged their employees to travel more sustainably also featured, in the context of impacts on the availability of road space and parking in the city.

Agreed Actions from the QUEST Process

Among the recommended improvements to internal processes, agreed upon by attendees at the second stakeholder meeting, was the introduction of a structured series of regular, city-specific meetings, to improve collaboration between both Council departments, and outside bodies. A discussion of how these meetings might be funded led to the recommendation that there should be an investigation into how rather fragmented sources of funding might be combined.

Various potential solutions were put forward to improve communications with the public, particularly to meet the objective of promoting public transport. Opportunities identified included increased emphasis on engagement mechanisms that are already in place, (such as the Inverness Access Panel, and other groups working on local projects to improve sustainability, e.g. the Black Isle's Million Miles Project). There was also the suggestion that more use should be made of social media for communicating with the public, and that the Council's own Public Relations specialists were an under-used resource.

Bus priority emerged as the preferred means of encouraging people to view public transport as a viable alternative to travel by car. This was in terms of there being both a long-term, strategic aspiration for an Intelligent Bus Priority system using the city's buses' GPS tracking facility, and a recognition that there was an immediate opportunity to promote the advantages of bus priority on the Kessock Bridge during the upcoming period of road works disruption. Recommendations have also been made concerning improvements to the visibility of the bus service network "on the ground", through improved provision of information at bus stops, and road markings to make bus stops more conspicuous.

The long-term recommendation in relation to parking strategy was for the concept of Park & Ride to be adopted. One immediate recommended action was the identification of sites and locations where visitors to the city centre might be "intercepted", and encouraged to transfer to public transport.

In summary: -

Internal Processes: -

- An investigation should be undertaken of current engagement activities that are taking place with local stakeholder groups, and the extent to which these activities involve a transport element.
- More regular copy for press releases should be made in relation to transport-related developments. This will entail Procedures should be put into place to trigger the production of publicity material at certain project milestones.
- The development of a strategy for making greater use of social media should begin with a detailed survey of which social media are already used by people in Inverness for mobility-related purposes.
- There is an immediate opportunity to monitor the use of Twitter and other social media during the upcoming disruptions caused by the Kessock Bridge works.
- Introduce a structured series of regular, city-specific meetings, to improve collaboration between both Council departments, and outside bodies.
- Investigate how funding that is fragmented, in as much as it is available from different sources, can be combined to fund the above meetings.
- Where resources permit, greater efforts should be made to follow up stakeholders' contributions to consultation exercises, and on providing feedback on the outcomes of the consultation.

- Ensure that key stakeholders are consulted at an early stage of the planning process, before key drafts, such as the City Centre Development Brief are circulated.
- A strategy should be developed for making greater use of social media, to both communicate timely and immediate information in specific situations, and publicise the Council's "good news stories".

Promoting public transport in Inverness: -

- A study should be carried out to identify the locations and junctions at which bus priority can be implemented, and a costing exercise undertaken.
- The Inner Moray Firth Local Development Plan should contain the directive that any upgrades to traffic signals should include a bus priority function, where appropriate and necessary.
- The trunk road works that are to be carried out on the Kessock Bridge provide the opportunity for the public to be made aware of the precise journey time advantages that bus priority will provide for bus services during the period of the works. The impact on travel behaviour of the bus priority on the bridge should be monitored.
- A strategy for gathering data on any changes in people's travel to work patterns, before and after the Kessock Bridge works, should be developed. This might include a workplace questionnaire survey.
- The advantages of bus priority should be promoted to planners and developers at every opportunity, and bus priority measures should be included in major new developments, wherever appropriate.
- The advantages that bus priority measures provide for public transport should be disseminated and marketed to the general public.
- Bus priority measures should be adopted as a long-term, strategic goal. Preference is for Intelligent Bus Priority, using GPS to track the location of buses.
- The process of providing better "visibility" of the bus network should begin with a mapping and costing exercise, with a focus on road markings and bus stop information on fares etc..
- Current information services that are available to the public should be more widely promoted; these include traveline's telephone-based information service, traveline Scotland's smartphone app and the facility to receive information to a mobile 'phone by SMS.
- Better information on the bus network, (i.e. basic route, timetable and fare information), should be provided at all bus stops, and conspicuous road markings and more prominent signage at bus stops should be provided, to help to inform the public as to where bus routes and bus stops are.

Recommended changes to parking policy in Inverness: -

- Identify potential Park & Ride sites and locations where visitors to the city centre can be "intercepted", and encouraged to transfer to public transport, walk or cycle.
- Promote Park & Ride as a long-term strategy, and update development plans to reflect this strategic aspiration.

Other traffic management policy recommendations: -

- Encourage employers to apply for grants that are available for providing facilities such as covered, secure bike parking and changing and showering facilities, in order to encourage "active travel" among their employees.
- A monitoring strategy should be developed and implemented, to assess the public's reaction to the planned project to pilot the carriage of bicycles on buses.

- Sustainable travel should be promoted among THC's own employees, in time for the forthcoming increase in the number of people based at its Glenurquhart Road site.
- Car sharing should be more widely publicised as an alternative to single occupancy car travel to work. This might involve improvement, and better publicity, of HiTrans' car sharing web-site.

The role of The Highland Council in the QUEST process

The QUEST Project has enjoyed a high level of co-operation from The Highland Council. Comprehensive information was provided in support of the QUEST Audit, and senior members of staff and local politicians contributed their time to support the consensus forming stages of the process.

Methodological considerations

More benefit might have been derived from Meeting 3 if it had been held on a separate date to the second Stakeholder Meeting, as this would have provided more time for preparation – although it is acknowledged that the constraints of the QUEST Project budget made an additional visit to Inverness unrealistic. There were also some criticisms, from respondents, of the detail of the Self-Assessment Questionnaire. In some cases, these criticisms referred to ambiguous wording, but there was also the view that some of the options available, in response to some questions, did not accurately reflect the Level of Development that they attempted to describe.

