

The Highland Council

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| Agenda Item | 5 |
| Report No | CIA/32/24 |

Committee: City of Inverness Area

Date: 18 November 2024

Report Title: Sustainable Transport Update – Mobility Hubs

Report By: Assistant Chief Executive - Place

1 Purpose/Executive Summary

1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide The City of Inverness Area Committee Members with background information and an update on the future of Mobility Hubs in and around Inverness. The report includes the following:-

- What are Mobility Hubs;
- Connecting Inverness STAG Appraisal Update;
- Future Plans & Aspirations for Mobility Hubs; and
- Hi -Bike Mini Mobility Hubs

2 Recommendations

2.1 Members are asked to **note** the Sustainable Transport Update – Mobility Hubs

3 Implications

3.1 **Resource** - The Transport Scotland Bus Partnership Fund (BPF) programme has been paused for the current financial year 2024/25 meaning that there is no funding available to allow for resource to be allocated to the project programme. Funding from the BPF had previously allowed The Highland Council to employ a Project Manager and Project Officer. We await a Scottish Government announcement, early in 2025, to confirm if the funding will recommence and if so, we can then consider replacing resource to allocate to the work programme. Officers are in regular contact with Transport Scotland contacts on this matter.

3.2 **Legal** - There are no statutory duties for the council to operate mobility hubs. In respect of the Bus Partnership Fund depending on the announcement of further funding the Council will be responsible for the management of any future grant awarded and will be responsible for ensuring compliance with the grant criteria.

- 3.3 **Risk** - The BPF funding is currently paused and in the current funding landscape there could be a risk of a further pause in funding or a reduction in the previous level of funding through BPF. This presents a risk for The Highland Council in trying to deliver mobility hubs. There is also risk in securing alternative funding other than BPF.
- 3.4 **Health and Safety (risks arising from changes to plant, equipment, process, or people)** - there is no specific implications connected with the delivery of the future BPF Mobility hubs.
- 3.5 **Gaelic** - There are no direct Gaelic implications to this report.

4 Impacts

- 4.1 In Highland, all policies, strategies or service changes are subject to an integrated screening for impact for Equalities, Poverty and Human Rights, Children's Rights and Wellbeing, Climate Change, Islands and Mainland Rural Communities, and Data Protection. Where identified as required, a full impact assessment will be undertaken.
- 4.2 Considering impacts is a core part of the decision-making process and needs to inform the decision-making process. When taking any decision, Members must give due regard to the findings of any assessment.
- 4.3 This is an update report and therefore an impact assessment is not required.

5 What are Mobility Hubs

5.1 Guidance

The UK Mobility Hubs Guidance ([Mobility Hub Guidance](#)) defines a Mobility Hub as:-

“A recognisable place with an offer of different transport modes supplemented with enhanced facilities and information features to both attract and benefit the traveller.”

It is recommended that the best practice guidance and an appraisal framework for mobility hubs in Scotland is developed in collaboration with stakeholders, building on work developed elsewhere, to facilitate the creation of high-quality mobility hubs across Scotland which would produce outcomes aligned to sustainable travel and investment hierarchies and National Transport Strategy Outcomes. Best practice guidance can also be found in international best practice adapting it to a Scottish geography and policy context.

The Guidance sets out key aspects to be considered in developing mobility hubs as being; accessibility, safety, furniture, weather protection, information, services, placemaking, car interface, bike interface, and enhanced operations and it highlights common characteristics to be considered in developing mobility hubs. These include:-

- the co-location of public and shared mobility modes;
- the redesign of space to reduce private car space and improve the surrounding public realm; and

- clear signage identifying the space as a mobility hub which is part of a wider network (ideally providing digital travel information).

Further mobility hub quality standards defined by CoMoUK's Mobility Hub Accreditation can be found at [Mobility hubs > Accreditation](#) and includes: visibility and accessibility; safety; a choice of sustainable modes; ease of switching between modes; practical features; and visual, social and community appeal.

The guidance highlights that mobility hubs are not just a point of convergence for multi-modal transport options, they comprise several different components which overall contribute to the hub being an interface between the transport network and the surrounding environment. Hubs achieve this through their utilisation of both mobility and non-mobility urban improvement components.

For example, a generic hub may contain 3 mobility related components such as shared mobility (i.e., bike share), EV charging points and public transport stops / platforms. These would be complemented by urban improvements such as urban landscaping improvements, outdoor cafes / co-working spaces and phone charging points. Multi-modal transport hubs could be developed into existing transport hubs (e.g., bus and rail stations, and ferry terminals) as well as other appropriate sites within cities, towns and villages across Scotland.

There is no "one-size fits all" model for the hubs, as the form must take cognisance of the local environment and existing active travel and public transport provision. The preparation of a Scottish guidance document and appraisal framework would provide a coordinated and consistent approach to determining the most suitable locations and facilities to meet local and regional objectives whilst contributing to the outcomes of the National Transport Strategy 2 (NTS2).

5.2 *National Transport Strategy 2 & Strategic Transport Project Review 2*

The [National Transport Strategy](#) identifies the need for integration as a means to encourage modal shift from private vehicle use.

Deterrents / barriers identified which discouraged commuters choosing sustainable travel modes included lack of connections or accessible modes of transport, long wait times and the need for multiple tickets. The [Draft Infrastructure Investment Plan](#) (DIIP) published by the Scottish Government also recognised the need to invest in a sustainable, resilient and integrated strategic transport system as a means strengthen connectivity and also drive inclusive economic growth.

Integration was a key issue highlighted by respondents to the STPR2 Online Survey with 68% of all respondents stating they were either dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with integration between modes of transport. Opportunities to encourage interchange between travel modes at existing rail and bus stations through the provision of improved information, services and facilities was also a strong message raised across many of the national and regional stakeholder engagement sessions carried out for STPR2.

5.3 *BPF Officer Experience*

Experience by officers through the work of the BPF also highlights the need to consider other elements that should work in parallel with Mobility Hubs for example if we consider integration of bus services with a mobility hub then we need to consider frequency of services, punctuality and reliability, timetable suitability depending on target market or envisaged demand and journey times need to be attractive and favourable to encourage the use of bus compared to the private car. The mobility hub and all these elements should work interdependently. Many of these other elements will form part of the Bus Service Improvement Partnership.

6 Connecting Inverness STAG Appraisal Update

6.1 *Status of process*

The BPF is currently on pause for the financial year 2024/25 so all work ceased on the Connecting Inverness STAG Appraisal in March 2024. This STAG Appraisal work contained the Mobility Hub element alongside bus priority lanes featured within the programme. Background Papers for the BPF Programme can be accessed with the links provided below at the respective section.

The STAG Appraisal Report for Connecting Inverness is currently with Transport Scotland for consideration and officers had been working through what was called the gateway review process with Transport Scotland (TS) when funding was paused. The gateway review process is conducted through a process of meetings to determine which elements of the STAG appraisal report would be progressed. TS would subsequently take the outcome(s) to their internal evaluation board to seek approval for the progression to the next stage of the programme which would be outline business case (OBC) and subsequent funding would then be released through BPF to the Highland Council if the evaluation panel resulted in a positive outcome.

6.2 *Packages/Options generated for the Connecting STAG Appraisal*

As part of the Connecting Inverness STAG Appraisal 5 packages were developed some but not all had attached bus priority measures as this met with the criteria set by Transport Scotland (TS):-

1/ Torvean mobility Hub

This location was identified as a “Quick Win” this hub opened in Summer 2024 and further enhancements such as EV charging and connecting steps are currently being progressed through non BPF funding streams.

2/ Stratton Mobility Hub

This location was sifted out from the gateway review process by TS due to the fact there are developer contributions within a planning condition at a specific build out point which would provide funding. The gateway review process is still to be formally concluded but there was a clear position adopted by TS for this package. It should be noted the trigger for the planning condition will be several years from now and is dependent on the build out rate that materialises. Consideration should also be given to time frames for the dualling of the A96 for this location to maximise bus priority measures/active travel measures on this corridor and connecting corridors such as Millburn Road.

3/ Milton of Leys Mobility Hub

This location was considered and on summary based on BPF funding criteria was seen less favourably by TS and it would be officer opinion that this location would not be funded through BPF in future, however the gateway review process would need to conclude to know the outcome. This location however could be considered subject to alternative funding to BPF being found.

4/ & 5/ North Kessock & Tore Mobility Hubs

Both locations were subject to an additional piece of work to the STAG Appraisal at the request of TS. This further work was to produce an evidence based preferred option on an either-or basis. This further work was completed in March 2024 but has yet to be reviewed by HC officers and TS when resources are in place on the basis BPF funding is introduced 25/26.

Once this additional piece of work has been reviewed by HC officers, a recommendation of location will be taken by officers to Economy and Infrastructure (E&I) Committee.

6.3 *Connecting Inverness STAG Appraisal – Next Steps*

Assuming BPF funding resumes the Connecting Inverness, STAG Appraisal will be completed, and a committee paper will be prepared that will update Members. If Members are in agreement, this document will then be submitted to TS to take to their internal evaluation panel to seek approval for further funding to be awarded to The Highland Council to allow progress to OBC stage.

7 Future Plans & Aspirations for Mobility Hubs

7.1 *Torvean Mobility Hub & Inverness Castle*

Torvean Mobility Hub will also have a role to play when Inverness Castle opens in Summer 2025. There will be a dedicated coach drop off area on Castle Street which will allow coach parties to be dropped off and collected at pre-booked times. Torvean Mobility Hub will have allocated coach bays for coaches to layover while their passengers visit Inverness Castle. It is also anticipated that private vehicles with visitors for the Castle will make use of Torvean Mobility Hub and be able to utilise public transport into the city or alternatively use an e-bike which will also be available.

7.2 *Green Freeport Opportunities*

The Sustainable Transport Team has initiated conversations with the operators of the Ardersier Freeport to have initial discussions on whether mobility hubs could be utilised to transport staff to and from their site when operations commence. These conversations are very much at a preliminary stage.

7.3 *Mobility Hub Strategy*

It is officers' opinion that a Mobility Hub Strategy for The Highland Council area should be prepared. Branding, Marketing and Communications should form part of this strategy. For example, Inverness Airport Rail Station is essentially a mobility hub offering integration between several modes of transport bus / rail / air and provides EV charging and efforts could be made to brand this location (and any others) to encourage people to use more sustainable transport options.

7.4 *Rural Mobility Strategy*

In the same way as we see Torvean Mobility Hub offering a way to support demand management at Inverness Castle, the mobility hub concept could be used to reduce traffic and parking issues at visitor attractions throughout Highland including sites such as Glenfinnan viaduct and the Cairngorm Mountain area.

7.5 *Commercial & Place Making Development*

There is also potential to develop the commercial, retail and place making elements of mobility hubs with Torvean Mobility Hub offering a "test case" opportunity.

7.6 *Inverness Station Masterplan Work*

HiTrans are hoping to secure funding to progress with feasibility work as part of the Inverness Station Masterplan for the carpark and bus station, this work would look at the creation a mobility hub and would link in with other mobility hubs from and to arterial routes within the City of Inverness and beyond.

7.7 *Resource & Funding*

Any aspirational work would need to be suitably resourced and funding streams investigated and secured to take these aspirations forward.

8 Mini-Mobility Hubs - HITRANS

8.1 *Hi-Bike Scheme*

We would also highlight the work by HITRANS in respect of the Hi-Bike scheme which are mini-mobility hubs where each location is either adjacent to or in the vicinity of a Bus Stop or in the case of some locations which have integration between various different modes Rail / Bus / Aviation and either have EV charging in-situ or have future plans to include this infrastructure. The current map of HIBIKE locations can be accessed [here](#)

Torvean is currently awaiting the power supply connection and Raigmore is due to have infrastructure installed in November 2024.

HiTrans are looking at potential locations for expanding the Hi-Bike scheme in Inverness and Fort William subject to future funding. This includes the potential for provision at Inverness Airport and Aviemore.

8.2 *Pop-Up Mobility Hub*

CoMoUK, the sustainable transport charity, and HITRANS have been working together on delivering their 'pop-up mobility hub' project that makes it easier for people to walk, wheel or cycle for short local journeys. Funded by Paths For All's [Smarter Choices Smarter Places Active Nation Programme](#), the project began in November 2023 and the hub has been put up in different locations in Inverness, including the Tesco Ness Side Superstore and most recently on Church Street in the city centre. The hub is installed at one location for 4 to 8 weeks before moving onto another and includes a bike repair stand, seats, planting and a temporary docking station for the Inverness Hi-Bike scheme. As part of the project, CoMoUK arrange different activities to engage with the local community and spread awareness of the hub. These free activities have included led walks, bike repair sessions, smoothie bikes and bike sharing try-outs.

The movement of the hub around Inverness has provided a good opportunity for HITRANS to trial locations that could be used for expanding the Hi-Bike scheme. HITRANS have worked with CoMoUK to help decide where to put the hub and provide local contacts for arranging the hub activities.

8.3 *E-Cargo Bike Offering*

HiTrans are introducing 4 E-Cargo bikes in Rose Street carpark that will be available to hire through the Hi-Bike app. This has involved the integration of an app-based locking system with the Hi-Bike app and the project is due to go live within the next few weeks. After the initial trial, there may be scope to roll this out in other locations.

9 **Conclusion**

- 9.1 It can be concluded there has been a considerable amount of work carried out to date on Mobility Hubs but with clear acknowledgement that there is still further work to do which will be very much dependent on future funding streams.

Designation: Assistant Chief Executive - Place

Date: 22 October 2024

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Background Papers: BPF [Report](#) May 2021
E&I Committee Bulletin Item 2 December 2021
BPF [Report](#) February 2023
BPF [Report](#) February 2024

Appendices: None