

1. Introduction

The Highlands and Islands Transport Partnership (HITRANS) is the statutory regional transport partnership (RTP) covering Eilean Siar (Western Isles), Orkney, Highland, Moray and most of the Argyll and Bute area.

HITRANS has developed a Regional Active Travel Strategy to define the approach to encouraging walking and cycling at a regional level. This builds on work already done by HITRANS and local authorities, including the development of Active Travel Audits and Masterplans for seventeen towns within the region.

The Regional Active Travel Strategy will complement the HITRANS Regional Transport Strategy which has been refreshed in 2016, and will support future planning as well as providing evidence for use in funding applications.

Benefits of Active Travel

Walking and cycling, particularly for everyday journeys, have a wide range of well documented benefits – including positive health, environmental, economic and accessibility impacts. As a result, enabling active travel is strongly embedded in national, regional and local policy.

2. Overview

The Regional Active Travel Strategy was developed in early 2016, following a review of existing national, regional and local policy. Guidance from Sustrans and Transport Scotland has been used to inform the strategy development.

A stakeholder workshop was held in late 2015, and local authority advisors were engaged throughout the development of the draft. The workshop focussed on identifying and prioritising challenges and opportunities in four key areas:

- Travel within towns;
- Travel between towns;
- Longer distance routes; and
- Multi-modal journeys.

The Regional Active Travel Strategy details priority areas and an action plan as summarised in sections 3 and 4 which follow.



HITRANS Area

3. Priorities

Emerging from the work to develop the strategy, and the consultation exercise to date, there are a large number of areas in which HITRANS, member local authorities and other partners can act to promote walking and cycling.

These priority areas offer an opportunity to build on work already being undertaken for the promotion of active and sustainable travel.

All initiatives should be targeted as far as possible on delivering everyday active travel, and supporting the active travel tourism economy.

The proposed areas of focus can be broadly grouped as follows (in no particular order):

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| Marketing & Promotion |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positive messages about everyday active travel • Consistent messages sustained over long term • Promotional activities including training • Strong active travel tourism message |
| Infrastructure |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Walking and cycling infrastructure, appropriate for the setting and targeted where it can have most impact • Ensure that opportunities to enable everyday active journeys, are maximised through major infrastructure projects such as trunk road upgrades • Cycle parking/storage and trip end facilities |
| Planning and Policy |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continued partnership working between HITRANS and Local Authorities • Funding applications • Monitoring |
| Public Transport Integration |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilities at stops/stations • Bike carriage on vehicles • Public information |
| Maintenance |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning and delivery of long term maintenance to ensure best value from infrastructure |
| Development Planning |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maximise active travel opportunities achieved through new development |

Continuing to make progress in these areas, based on the excellent levels of walking and cycling already achieved in parts of the HITRANS region, there are significant opportunities to further increase active travel levels.

This could have a range of benefits including improved accessibility, enhanced quality of place including air quality, and increased levels of physical and mental health.

4. Action Plan

The table below presents a proposed set of actions to deliver the Active Travel Strategy.

Table 4.1 HITRANS Active Travel Action Plan

| Marketing & Promotion | | |
|---|---|--|
| Action | Description | Key Delivery Partners |
| Messaging and imagery (everyday travel) | Agree consistent core messaging, strongly promoting the benefits. Share/develop image library. | HITRANS Local Authorities |
| Messaging and imagery (tourism) | Agree consistent core messaging Share/develop image library. | HITRANS Local Authorities |
| Hltravel promotion | Use the Hltravel brand for all relevant marketing and promotion | HITRANS Local Authorities |
| Hltravel web presence and social media accounts | Establish Hltravel online as hub for Smarter Travel information across HITRANS region – linked to local sources | HITRANS Local Authorities |
| Cycle training | Ensure consistent availability of adult and schools cycle training | HITRANS Local Authorities Cycling Scotland Sustrans Scotland |
| E-Bikes | Knowledge sharing to learn from existing schemes and widen availability of e-bikes | HITRANS Local Authorities |
| Planning and Policy | | |
| Action | Description | Key Delivery Partners |
| Funding | Lobbying for ongoing and increased national Government spending | HITRANS Local Authorities Sustrans Scotland Cycling Scotland Community Planning Partners |
| Funding | Maintain existing levels and work to increase Local Authority funding | Local Authorities |
| Funding | Continue to maximise diverse funding opportunities addressing different objectives – including EU InterReg: (COMBI (Commuting by Bike in Rural Areas)) and other ERDF Funding opportunities | HITRANS Local Authorities Transport Scotland |
| Procurement | Investigate opportunities for best value through joint procurement of services/supplies | HITRANS Local Authorities Community Planning Partners |
| Implement Monitoring Plan | See Chapter 6 | HITRANS Local Authorities Transport Scotland Sustrans Cycling Scotland Paths for All |
| Strategic Planning | Ongoing partnership working to promote active travel, knowledge sharing between authorities | HITRANS Local Authorities Community Planning Partners |

| Public Transport Integration | | |
|-------------------------------------|---|--|
| Action | Description | Key Delivery Partners |
| Bikes on Buses | Best practice knowledge sharing; expand bike carriage more widely through Local Authority areas and encourage bus operators to adopt consistent bike friendly policies | HITRANS Local Authorities Local Bus Operators |
| Public information strategy | Plan for disseminating walk+ and cycle+ information to visitors and residents | HITRANS Local Authorities Public Transport Operators |
| Cycle parking / Facilities | Cycle parking and facilities at key locations including ferry terminals, bus and rail stations, rural bus stops | HITRANS Local Authorities Public Transport Operators |
| Bus Stop Review | Review gaps and opportunities in rural bus stop provision (encourage walk+bus, cycle+bus) | HITRANS Local Authorities |
| Ferry Facilities | Increase the consistency and quality of conditions for bike carriage on ferries. Ensure dedicated cycle storage facilities included in specification for new or refurbished ferries. | HITRANS Local Authorities Transport Scotland Public Transport Operators |
| Maintenance | | |
| Action | Description | Key Delivery Partners |
| Existing route maintenance | Maintain existing levels and work to increase Local Authority funding | Local Authorities |
| New route maintenance | Lobby Transport Scotland for multi-year maintenance funding to support new infrastructure | HITRANS |
| Infrastructure | | |
| Action | Description | Key Delivery Partners |
| Active Travel Masterplans | Continue to implement the prioritised infrastructure improvements included in the 17 Active Travel Masterplans | HITRANS Local Authorities Sustrans Scotland |
| Strategic Route Audits | Audit of strategic/long distance route to prioritise localised improvements | HITRANS Local Authorities |
| Trunk Roads | Work with Transport Scotland to ensure appropriate active travel provision on the trunk road network when upgrades are taking place, in particular current strategic upgrades on A82, A9 and A96 – with a particular focus on enabling everyday active journeys | Transport Scotland HITRANS Local Authorities |
| Travel Hubs | Knowledge sharing with other Scottish authorities Secure funding including ERDF Introduce travel hubs at key locations | HITRANS Local Authorities |
| Cycle Parking | Install cycle parking at key destinations | HITRANS Local Authorities Ferry / Rail Operators |
| Speed Limits | Encourage consideration of 20mph speed limits in urban areas | HITRANS |

| | Knowledge sharing with other Scottish Local Authorities | |
|--|---|--|
| Design Standards | Chair discussions between Local Authorities and funders regarding flexibility of design standards for rural locations | HITRANS |
| Development Planning | | |
| Action | Description | Key Delivery Partners |
| Planning guidance | Explore the Active Travel Strategy being adopted as Supplementary Planning Guidance, and the Active Travel Action plan being incorporated into Local Development Plans | HITRANS Local Authorities/ Planning Authorities |
| New developments | Ensure active travel built into new developments, including improvements to surrounding networks | Local Authorities / Planning Authorities Transport Scotland |
| High quality design and Designing Streets principles | Ensure new developments apply high design standards for active travel, with comprehensive and consistent use of Designing Street principles (including street user hierarchy which considers pedestrians first) | HITRANS Transport Scotland Local Authorities/ Planning Authorities |
| New developments and other consultation exercises | Promote the use of the Scottish Government's Place Standard Tool | HITRANS Local Authorities/ Planning Authorities |

5. Next Steps

The Regional Active Travel Strategy will be finalised following consultation on the current draft. An abridged version will be included with the refreshed Regional Transport Strategy also being published in 2016.