

Report to Partnership Meeting 23 August 2013

EUROPEAN PROJECTS

European Union QUEST Project - Inverness

PURPOSE OF REPORT

To provide Members with an overview of the QUEST project undertaken in Inverness. QUEST is a European Commission funded project to help assess and improve sustainable transport in participating cities across Europe.

Background

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.

Participation was open to settlements with a population of between 50,000 and 250,000 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.

Further information about the project can be found at the following link. <http://www.quest-project.eu/>

Project Methodology

The QUEST project is part of a wider EU policy initiative to develop Sustainable Urban Transport (Mobility) Plans (SUMP's) in cities across Europe.

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.

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 proposed Action Plan which has been recommended for approval at the forthcoming Inverness City Committee 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.

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.

Benefits of participating in QUEST

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 the shared learning of best practice in other cities and also increase prospects for future investment.

As a follow-up to the 2011 Transport White Paper 'Roadmap to a Single European Transport Area', the European Commission intends to produce an 'Urban Mobility Package' later in 2013 that will address initiatives in the White Paper, including Initiative 31 on 'Sustainable Urban Mobility Plans' and indications are that this may establish a link between EU funding and sustainable urban transport strategy. It is anticipated that more information may be forthcoming at a conference for cities participating in QUEST in September.

Another outcome of this EU Initiative is expected to be the training of additional QUEST Auditors and this may open up the opportunity to apply the QUEST methodology in other towns across the HITRANS area.

Recommendation

1. Members are asked to note this report.

Report by:
Designation:
Date:

Neil MacRae
Partnership Manager
09 August 2013

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 Waling and Cycling map for Inverness will be developed as art 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 waling 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 and Fort William	Transport Scotland and Sustrans have funding to implement a 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.