

# OUTER HEBRIDES LOCAL TRANSPORT STRATEGY

2020-2030

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## Foreword

The Outer Hebrides contribute much to Scotland - culture, heritage, language and landscape. Our key sectors of tourism, aquaculture, food, drink and agriculture bring benefits beyond our shores. Our economy faces out to the world and our people reach out welcoming arms to visitors. An economy of this nature rises and falls on our external transport connectivity and the ability of people and goods to move to, from and within our islands as easily as possible.

Progress has been made, now we need to work together to achieve even more. The case for further investment is strong: delivering empowered, sustainable and resilient communities.

The external environment in which Comhairle nan Eilean Siar (the Comhairle) delivers its services and supports its communities is constantly changing and, since the last Local Transport Strategy (LTS) in 2000, significant changes have occurred. During 2020, a seismic change has taken place in the form of the COVID-19 pandemic, a crisis which looks set to result in enduring impacts on our local society and economy.

The LTS sets out our vision for enhancing transport and travel throughout the area, and to key destinations beyond. It is intended as a succinct tool in terms of prioritisation of actions to achieve this vision, identifying where the Comhairle requires support to deliver the best local services, and where we believe investment is required to revitalise the islands and transform the Outer Hebrides into a net contributor to the national economy. As we emerge from the COVID-19 pandemic, transport is a key component of our aspirations to support a strong and socially inclusive recovery that creates empowered, resilient communities, based on a green economy, and in which digital connectivity and innovation are prioritised.

## Executive Summary

The Outer Hebrides Local Transport Strategy 2020-2030 is our vision for enhancing transport and travel throughout the area, and to key destinations beyond. Enhancing the transport network is a key driver for improving the local economy and the environment, increasing social inclusion, and delivering health benefits for all residents and visitors of the Outer Hebrides.

The LTS sets out the Comhairle's policy on transport, presents Transport Planning Objectives and coordinates future priorities through a series of actions and interventions to enhance transport and travel.

The LTS has been informed by the evidence base and policy framework. It has been developed with input from Comhairle officers and partners, using their experience and evidence of issues and opportunities to inform and devise the long list of LTS options. We have also scrutinised recent community consultations to inform our understanding of relevant issues and opportunities across the area. The final version has also been informed by a public consultation exercise carried out on the draft LTS.

Travel and communication are essential to our lives. They are essential to help us access jobs, customers, education, shops, local facilities and leisure opportunities. The transport networks for the Outer Hebrides need to:

- Support the **economy** by cutting journey times, minimising journey unreliability and smoothing supply chains to minimise business costs, improving access to markets, and supporting tourism.
- Support **communities** by being safe to use, promoting healthy lifestyles, and helping everyone to access jobs and opportunities.
- Reduce any **harmful impacts on the environment** by minimising carbon emissions.
- **Innovate** in emerging technologies and practices both in transport specifically and to support means of reducing the need to travel or travel as often or as far.
- Achieve **minimum standards of service**:
  - Allow a meaningful business day in Stornoway from every other part of the islands, and to major mainland centres such as Glasgow and Inverness.
  - Allow a day trip to and from the Outer Hebrides on the Stornoway, Lochmaddy and Tarbert routes.

Five objectives have been identified through the process of developing the LTS. Our objectives to achieve this ambition bring together what we know from past work, and support local, regional and national objectives and targets.

### 1. A safe Outer Hebrides:

- Reduce the number of accidents and casualties.
- Transport networks and communities feel safe and secure for users across all means of transport and travel.

2. An active Outer Hebrides:

- Enable and encourage more trips by walking and cycling within local communities.
- Capture the benefits from active travel tourism.

3. Embed environmental protection and decarbonise transport:

- Minimise carbon emissions and support decarbonisation of transport.
- Protect vulnerable infrastructure.

4. An inclusive Outer Hebrides:

- With jobs, services and opportunities available to all.
- With transport networks that are usable by all and promote participation.
- Where cost is not a barrier and travel is affordable for all.

5. A quality place and resilient transport network to aid prosperity:

- Ensure transport network delivers movement requirements that enhance place.
- Ensure transport networks are safe, resilient, easily navigable, reliable and connected for all users.
- Minimise the whole life cost of transport networks through adopting a strategic approach and through considered maintenance programmes.

The actions set out in the delivery plan are required to deliver on the Transport Planning Objectives. No action is not an option. The interventions described in the delivery plan are essential to strengthen the communities and economy of the Outer Hebrides.

Without intervention through the LTS and associated approaches it will not be possible to realise the opportunities that have been identified, namely:

- To continue to **revitalise communities**, with people working and living closer to home, with wide-ranging employment opportunities available to all across the Outer Hebrides.
- To best meet the **needs of local communities**, geographically, and for those within our communities with particular transport needs. We need to work with our communities to shape transport to ensure we maximise the efficiency of our resources to meet needs.
- **Being prepared** to respond to areas susceptible to coastal and fluvial flooding through climate change impacts; and ensuring early identification of infrastructure at risk, including roads, piers and buildings to enable appropriate measures to be identified.
- Staying ahead with the local **Energy Economy** – ensuring transport continues on the road to decarbonisation, and realises the wider economic benefits.
- Ensure transport connections – particularly **ferry services** – fully meet the needs of our community and economy. Ensuring continued engagement with Scottish Government and key transport stakeholders to identify resources and further the interests of local priorities – addressing capacity constraints, timetabling barriers to business, and realising the full tourism potential for our islands.

## 1. The Outer Hebrides

### 1.1 The 'Long Island'

The archipelago is often referred to as the 'long island' as it stretches from north to south over 100 miles, the equivalent of the journey from Inverness to approaching Glasgow. It comprises five major islands – Lewis and Harris, North Uist, Benbecula, South Uist and Barra. Together these account for more than 26,000 of the around 27,500 inhabitants. The region features outstanding natural resources with an unspoilt environment, quality of life, and a unique community in terms of culture and heritage. Whilst Stornoway is the main settlement within the Outer Hebrides, it is a significant distance and separated by ferry crossings from many of the communities in the south of the archipelago; as such many communities have more established and strategically important connections to locations on the Scottish mainland, such as Oban. Stornoway, Castlebay, Lochboisdale, Lochmaddy Tarbert and Stornoway are key points of entry to the archipelago.

### 1.2 Population and Demographics

***Affordable, resilient, efficient transport is needed within and between the islands and the mainland to ensure the ongoing sustainability of our communities and to capitalise upon our islands' opportunities to prosper.***

The Outer Hebrides has the lowest population density of any local authority area in Scotland - 9 people per sq. km, which is lower than that for the Highlands and Islands (12 people per sq. km), and considerably lower than the Scottish average (70 people per sq. km). Twenty-eight per cent of the total population, close to 7,500 people, live in and around the town of Stornoway, with the remaining population scattered over 280 settlements across 11 inhabited islands.

In 2018 the population of the Outer Hebrides was estimated at 26,180, a reduction from 2011, with reduction forecast to continue. This, along with an ageing population, has major implications for Health and Social Care expenditure as well as social and economic consequences, and associated access and transport requirements. By 2028, 31 per cent of island residents are forecast to be aged 65 and older, compared with a Scottish average of just 23 per cent. Older, dispersed population brings particular transport needs in terms of delivery of public services, such as health, education and social care, as well as transport requirements to support people living and remaining independently in their homes and communities.

As shown in the table below, population reduction has been severe in outlying areas and islands and is projected to continue, with a resulting demographic imbalance anticipated.

ISLAND	DESCRIPTION	POPULATION 2001	POPULATION 2011	% CHANGE 01-11	% CHANGE 11-18*
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Lewis and Harris	Scheduled ferry and air services to the mainland	19,918	21,031	+6% ↑	-3% ↓
North Uist	Scheduled ferry and air services to the mainland	1,271	1,254	-1% ↓	-4% ↓
Benbecula	Scheduled ferry and air services to the mainland	1,219	1,303	+7% ↑	-1% ↓
South Uist	Scheduled ferry and air services to the mainland	1,818	1,754	-4% ↓	-7% ↓
Barra	Scheduled ferry and air services to the mainland	1,078	1,174	+9% ↑	-1% ↓
Scalpay	Connected by bridge to Harris	322	291	-10% ↓	-2% ↓
Great Bernera	Connected by bridge to Lewis	233	252	+8% ↑	-3% ↓
Grimsay North	Connected by causeway to Benbecula and South Uist	201	169	-16% ↓	-
Eriskay (Causeway)	Connected by causeway to South Uist	133	143	+8% ↑	-15% ↓
Berneray (Causeway)	Connected by causeway to North Uist	136	138	+1% ↑	-
Vatersay	Connected by causeway to Barra	94	90	-4% ↓	-3% ↓
Baleshare (North Uist)	Connected by causeway to North Uist	49	58	+18% ↑	-
Grimsay South	Connected by causeway to Benbecula and South Uist	19	20	+5% ↑	-
Flodaigh (Benbecula)	Connected by causeway to Benbecula	11	7	-36% ↓	-

\*Small Area Population Estimates have been considered for 2018 compared to the 2011 data. The 2011 Data Zones do not always fit exactly into the boundaries of other geographical areas, such as island boundaries, they are allocated on a best-fit basis. Where relevant and necessary, annual registration data from General Practitioner surgeries have been used to disaggregate data.

## 1.3 Poverty and Prosperity

***A significant share of households across the islands are in some form of transport poverty.***

Poverty and deprivation are dispersed throughout the islands, and are often hidden. Considering the indicators of transport poverty, this places a significant share of households across the islands in some form of transport poverty. Young people are particularly vulnerable to transport poverty. Feedback to the draft LTS also highlighted that people with disabilities on the islands were experiencing more expensive travel costs than others as they often needed to be accompanied. Unlike mainland areas, island residents also have to figure the cost of ferry and / or air travel into their budgeting. Poor connections, either because of reliability or timetabling, can add to cost due to meals, accommodation and other subsistence requirements that arise.



The three indicators of transport poverty relate across the islands:

- Low income (where the costs of running a car(s) place a significant strain on household budgets) – high proportion of relative poverty. A household may need to run multiple cars from a rural area to enable multiple household members to access employment.
- Significant proportion of residents live more than a mile from their nearest bus (or railway station) – which is the case for a high proportion of residents outside of the main settlements.
- Where it takes over an hour to access essential goods and services by walking, cycling or public transport – from the Scottish Household Survey, Outer Hebrides respondents are travelling distances way in excess of the Scottish Average.

Despite high car ownership, 23 per cent of households in the Outer Hebrides do not have a car available at home, and for those living in social housing this figure rises to as high as 44 per cent. A higher proportion of these households may be located within more urban areas, but the data suggests a holistic and community-based approach is required to support inclusion.

Consequently, and as captured within the Outer Hebrides Anti-Poverty Strategy, action is required to support communities to have access to a range of innovative transport solutions which reduce isolation and increase access to services and employment. And in turn, to capitalise on the area's innovation and investment, to secure a sustainable and vibrant job market with well-paid opportunities available to all.

## **1.4 Economy and Employment**

***Community-focussed transport priorities need to be linked to economic and social regeneration.***

The Outer Hebrides is an economically fragile area relatively reliant on primary industries (including crofting, agriculture, fishing and aquaculture) as well as Harris Tweed weaving, tourism, construction and the public sector. Compared with the Highlands and Islands and Scotland, the Outer Hebrides has a higher share of employment by industry in agriculture, forestry and fishing and public administration and defence. Employment in the agriculture, forestry and fishing sector is particularly important to the Outer Hebrides, with 28.1% of the area's workforce employed in the sector, more than double that of the Highlands and Islands (11.7%) and more than eight times the figure for Scotland (3.2%). Other key industries in terms of employment in the Outer Hebrides are Health, Public Administration, followed by Education, Accommodation and Food Services, Retail and then Construction. The balance between full time and part time working in Outer Hebrides is different to the regional and national average, with Eilean Siar having the highest level of part time working of all local authority areas in the region (32%), and significantly higher than the national average (26%).

In 2016, the National Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings showed that full time average earnings in the Outer Hebrides at £26,240 were 20.2% below the Scotland average of £32,880 and 23.7% below the UK average of £34,410. Three in five (62%) of households were assessed as being in fuel poverty and 26% in extreme fuel poverty with 75% of pensioner households in fuel poverty and 40% in extreme fuel poverty.

The nature of the economic area is unique, with multiple points of entry and essentially multiple sub-economies. Each of these sub-economies have an absolute dependence and reliance on ferry services particularly, the potential for economic growth has an extricable link to ferry connectivity.

It is vital to be able to travel from the islands and to the main centres of business – Glasgow, Edinburgh, Inverness and Aberdeen – for a days’ business. The advancement through the Covid-19 period in the use of remote technology for work reinforces established expertise in distance learning and work opportunities, which can pave the way for growth into the future. This can mean that good job prospects for many more people regardless of where they are located.

Food and drink is a key local sector which requires reliable access to markets to enable local producers, particularly in the fisheries, shellfish and aquaculture sectors, to prosper and grow. The Tourism sector has increased significantly in recent years, and this is anticipated to continue, again with dependency on transport links. Internal transport links – north to south within the Outer Hebrides are critical for internal markets and accessing goods and services. Future prosperity depends on effective movement of goods around, to and from the islands.

## 1.5 Towards a Sustainable Future

***The transport system needs to be resilient to disruption and also lead the way in decarbonisation if net zero targets are going to be realised.***

Climate change is leading to more extreme weather patterns. Local transport infrastructure will need to adapt to projected climate change impacts and severe weather patterns which could especially affect low lying islands and infrastructure. Low lying roads / causeways in Uist and Barra in particular are flood vulnerable.

Unleashing the potential of renewable energy resources offers the islands the prospect of transformational economic benefit. We have substantial onshore wind power resources, with planning permission for turbines which could generate 400 megawatts of power- enough to supply the Outer Hebrides 20 times over and export clean energy to Scotland and the UK. To maximise economic benefits of these, proposed and potential developments in respect of onshore, and, in the longer term, floating offshore wind, will need to be underpinned by a strong transport infrastructure that can move associated goods and services.

We have low carbon transport experience and expertise. Alternative fuels must form an important element of our future transport provision. The Comhairle has been active in Hydrogen since 2010 and hydrogen produced at the Creed Waste facility is being used to power a refuse collection vehicle. The Comhairle also has a fleet of ultra-low carbon vehicles including BMW i3 with range extenders which have worked well to overcome concerns of range anxiety amongst staff.

## 1.6 Health

***Island patients’ experience of health care differs from that of urban patients in that they often have to travel long distances to receive care.***

The provision of patient transportation is highly complex with many inter-dependencies. At its most fundamental level, it is about the need for a comfortable, timely and seamless journey where patients receive the support that they need. This should be the objective no matter where patients have to travel – either as in or out patients, to and from appointments at a hospital or clinic, or to a case assessment or case conference. Ensuring that this objective is met universally and consistently can be challenging.

Outwith the main population centres, lifeline transport infrastructure is often a single route that connects a community with key destinations. These routes need to be accessed for health provision and services and the patient experience can be affected by the distance travelled, connections between different modes of transport, and weather conditions. One respondent to the consultation on the LTS noted that an outpatient visit from the Uists to Ospadal nan Eilean, Stornoway could take 2 days.

Travel restrictions due to COVID-19 have increased innovation in terms of offering services such as 'Near Me', allowing patients to attend appointments from home or attending a healthcare hub, rather than travel to an appointment in Stornoway or travel to the mainland.

## 2. The Transport Baseline

### 2.1 Introduction

***This strategy looks to the future, providing resolution for current transport challenges and maximising economic, social and community opportunities.***

The Comhairle already undertakes a range of “business as usual” activities which sustain the area’s transport network and connections. These will continue to be undertaken throughout the lifetime of this strategy and are presented here as the starting platform from which our transport strategy, through the Delivery Plan, will build. This section sets out some of the challenges facing these “business as usual” activities; some of which are long established and others which are emerging as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Sea and air transport is crucial, with a variety of ferry and air services operating between the islands and mainland Scotland and joining the islands to each other. The ability to get around is vital to vibrant and economically active communities. A journey to the mainland or between islands will often involve more than one mode of transport, which may not necessarily be integrated in terms of timetabling and ticketing, along with requirements for overnight stay(s), something that residents from other areas do not have to contend with – both the extra time away from home and the associated costs and loss of working time.

The extensive transport assets that support our island communities require significant ongoing expenditure to deliver, maintain, sustain and develop services to meet needs, and to prevent decline and guard against problems associated with climate change. With good connections, the more remote areas in the Outer Hebrides can also benefit through new business opportunities, home working by established island businesses, and public sector reform delivering work opportunities at community hubs. This would help to reverse the drift of population towards the main island towns, and outward migration, particularly by young people, many of whom would choose to stay and live on the islands if the opportunity was there.

### 2.2 Roads, Causeways and Bridges

***Business, public services, and the community and visitors are heavily reliant on the road network.***

The Comhairle is responsible for 1195km of public roads, with maintenance costs significantly higher than equivalent mainland areas. The Spinal Route, the main network from the north to south of the island chain is of variable quality, with 90km remaining as single track sections with unsuitable foundations and alignment. Together with its own high prioritisation for investment, this categorisation has previously enabled the Comhairle to secure external EU-level funding for several phases of the upgrading of the road from poorly-founded single track carriageway with passing places, to double-track carriageway designed and constructed to modern standards. The consequential reduction in journey times, improvements to road safety, and the impact on environmental considerations have all contributed to positive outcomes in terms of the economic development of the islands.

Between 1942 and 2001, a number of bridges and causeways were constructed across the archipelago to enhance accessibility between islands. Many of these were created with Scottish and European funding, but now the Comhairle does not have the funding to adequately maintain them. Due to a reducing level

of internal and external capital funding, the upgrading programme has stalled. It is a long-standing aspiration of the Comhairle to secure additional investment in the Western Isles Spinal Route to enable upgrade of all the spinal route network to double track.

The Comhairle has no roads capital investment planned for the next 3 years, also the roads revenue budget has been reduced significantly. The road condition will inevitably deteriorate. Road conditions will be monitored, but with increased volumes of tourism and business development this is a concern. Should the Spinal Route be fittingly classified as a Trunk Road it would be eligible for priority capital funding through the national allocation across the Trunk Network that Transport Scotland is responsible for.

Bridges and fixed link causeways have also been a product of major investment in the past number of years. These structures are in need of significant capital maintenance and in the majority of cases are the single lifeline connection to a community.

In terms of climate change, there are vulnerable parts of the network, and a reliance on causeways, which will be potentially at risk from sea level rises. Of additional concern over recent years has been the effect of coastal and fluvial flooding on the road network. Storm surges have had a damaging effect on coastal defences that are putting road, and private dwellings at risk of erosion if not maintained. Increased rainfall intensity is also evident resulting in structural damage to roads and increasing the likelihood and frequency of landslides.

Large vehicles, particularly associated with aquaculture, frequently utilise single track rural roads of unsuitable construction. Car parking can be an issue at popular tourism sites. Further, there are often limited facilities for the growth in tourism, and including particularly visitors travelling with campervans.

The Comhairle participates in the Roads Asset Management Process facilitated by SCOTS and in the Northern Roads Collaboration Joint Committee. The Roads Condition Index for the Western Isles has been maintained at a relatively steady level over the past five years albeit with a backlog maintenance figure in the order of £42m, however at current investment levels the percentage of the road network requiring maintenance is predicted to increase considerably over the next 20 years.

## **2.3 Road Safety and Traffic Management**

***The 1988 Road Traffic Act puts a 'statutory duty' on local authorities to deliver an appropriate road safety education service and for the provision of a safe local road network.***

In the islands, road safety activity is carried out in partnership with Police Scotland and other relevant partners. A Road Casualty Reduction Plan has been developed for the Highlands and Islands area and localised to be specific to the Western Isles. Work has included information campaigns for visiting drivers and cyclists to the islands, covering the specific challenges of island roads.

As Roads Authority, the Comhairle has responsibility for maintaining the public road network in a condition that allows safe movement of traffic in winter conditions, including gritting and street clearing as required. Provision of well-designed and maintained street lighting is a further element of road/public safety. The Council has a statutory responsibility for the installation, management and maintenance of streetlights (including associated signs, bollards, traffic lights and pedestrian crossings).

Continued increases in car usage has created town centre and residential parking pressures and competing demands for limited space, notably in Stornoway and Tarbert, where both settlements have struggled to adapt to these changes and balance them with the needs of pedestrians and other users. Solutions are not easily achieved as the infrastructure is not readily adaptable to the increased vehicular ownership and dependence. There are a number of off-street car parks in Stornoway and one in Tarbert.

The introduction of car parking charges apply in a number of the car parks and in a small number of on-street spaces in Stornoway and has helped ensure parking availability for users of town centre facilities. Enforcement is carried out by Police Scotland through a Service Level Agreement between the Comhairle and Police Scotland, which also covers a number of traffic management related activities in Stornoway.

## 2.4 Active Travel Network

***Promotion of Active Travel opportunities can support, promote and facilitate healthier journey choices and reduce number of car journeys. We recognise that the opportunities for active travel are more limited in remote and rural areas.***

The Comhairle has produced an Active Travel Strategy in close consultation with communities. This seeks to identify active travel opportunities in local communities, with a view to accessing funding to put in place the infrastructure to support increased cycling and walking.

Active travel has allowed the creation of businesses in the local supply chain such as bike transportation businesses and increased offering from accommodation providers along the Hebridean Way. Building on the momentum created by the Hebridean Way Cycling & Walking Route, a range of third sector organisations are also proactively involved in initiatives to promote cycling and walking in our communities. In addition, the NHS Western Isles 'Walk on Hebrides' initiative aims to provide Health Walks in communities across the Outer Hebrides, providing people with an opportunity to be physically active and improve their health through walking.

Active travel can be challenging in rural parts of the Outer Hebrides where many villages have no footpaths and instead have high grassed verges and deep ditches or steep embankments. It is important that people in rural areas have access to safe space for exercise. Although roads can be quiet in some areas, they can be narrow and used by heavy machinery and trucks. There is demand within local communities for investment in their local path infrastructure for walking, cycling and running, however there is a lack of resource available within the capital or maintenance budgets to develop this, including where significant match funding is required. A number of local groups have identified active travel routes and are seeking funding for safe, well designed paths for active travel users. Funding this can be challenging, however, with most sources of funding for active travel routes only providing 50% funding towards capital costs.

Sustrans has recently declassified the Spinal Route National Cycling Network (NCN) route, but will continue to publicise the Hebridean Way route. Regardless of this, it is as important for a child to be able to walk and cycle safely in the Outer Hebrides as it is for a child in the Central Belt on an NCN route. Cycling and walking is also popular amongst visitors, but conflict can exist, and safety issues arise, between cyclists / walkers and other traffic, particularly on narrow sections of single track road, and on stretches with steep gradients. Road safety is therefore a concern in terms of promoting further walking and cycling. The Covid-19 experience has seen more and more people spending more time at home and more time walking and cycling in their local community.

While external funding can be sought for active travel network development, the required specifications for such developments are often incommensurate with the local and island context and existing infrastructure and needs. Nonetheless, protected lanes, particularly within settlements, for running, cycling and walking will be pursued where practicable and we will seek to work within the context of the National Islands Plan Route Map to look at promotion and development of active travel in islands.

## 2.5 Bus and Community Transport Services

***Innovation and reform in delivery of public transport will be required to sustain and enhance accessibility.***

All bus services in the area are operated under subsidy by the Comhairle. Declining budgets have impacted on frequency of services and rationalisation of services has been a feature of recent years. Services tend to provide morning and evening workers' buses, and with multiple runs through the middle of the day. Bus usage figures have been in decline across the Outer Hebrides, which mirrors national trends. There is a high level of subsidy, with no single commercial route, and with reducing service budgets on an ongoing basis. It is difficult to achieve savings on a very thin network without drastic reduction to services and the Comhairle faces ongoing budgetary pressure.

However, this needs to be balanced against public transport being a central part of inclusive access to employment, health and other services. Public transport cuts have a disproportionate impact on people already vulnerable to transport poverty

Fares are comparatively low. It is anticipated a reasonable proportion of passengers are travelling for free using the National Entitlement Card, and yet passenger numbers remain low. There may be scope to investigate this further, including new models to incentivise usage. Respondents to the consultation on this strategy also highlighted the importance of associated infrastructure, such as bus shelters, to encourage increased use of public and school transport, with gaps reported in parts of the Southern Isles. Concessionary fares for carers were also highlighted.

Community transport is variable across the islands and there is a gap in understanding as to whether it is best meeting needs or if individuals or areas are isolated. There is some Community Transport provision – funded by the Comhairle – and provided by Voluntary Action Barra and Vatersay, Tagsa Uibhist and Third Sector Hebrides / Staran CIC. The Outer Hebrides Community Planning Partnership has an aspiration to increase the number of Rural Community Transport Partnerships to promote and provide community-led accessible, affordable and alternative transport services.

## 2.6 Ferry Network

***Sea transport is crucial – the variety of ferry services operating between the islands and the mainland are lifeline services, but NOT just lifeline services – also the means, delivered well, that will grow the economy.***

Ferry services to and within the Outer Hebrides are operated by CalMac Ferries Ltd., a subsidiary of David MacBrayne Ltd., which in turn is wholly owned by the Scottish Ministers, under the terms of the Clyde

and Hebrides Ferry Service (CHFS) contract. The main sea-links from the islands are Stornoway to Ullapool, Tarbert to Uig (Skye), Lochboisdale and Castlebay to Oban, and Lochboisdale to Mallaig. Inter-island sea links operate from Eriskay to Barra and Leverburgh (Harris) to Berneray (North Uist).

The current contract (2016-2024) is half-way through at the time of writing, and work will need to commence in early course to inform the routemap for how ferry services are to be operated following the present contract.

Cost, capacity issues and timetabling are critical issues for ferry services. There is significant and increasing lack of capacity on a number of routes during the widening peak summer period, and severe challenges are caused by the age and condition of vessels and lack of resilience across the fleet and within the network, and evidence of significant delays, disruption and cancellations. HITRANS reports that of the 32 vessels on the CalMac routes, all owned by Caledonian Maritime Assets Limited (CMAL), 18 of them are more than 20 years old, with six more than 30 years old. An ageing ferry fleet is leading to reduced service reliability and breakdown interruptions, perhaps coupled with changing weather patterns. It also contributes to vehicle capacity constraints on some routes. It is important that efforts are taken to accelerate procurement of new vessels, coupled with more flexible and responsive deployment of vessels within the network.

Road Equivalent Tariff (RET) has delivered lower fares and resulted in a noticeable increase in passenger numbers, but it took considerable time following its introduction for local business to invest and grow. This investment however has now been realised through top-end accommodation, food and drink. However, the full potential is not realised from tourism due to capacity constraints, for example on the Stornoway – Ullapool services.

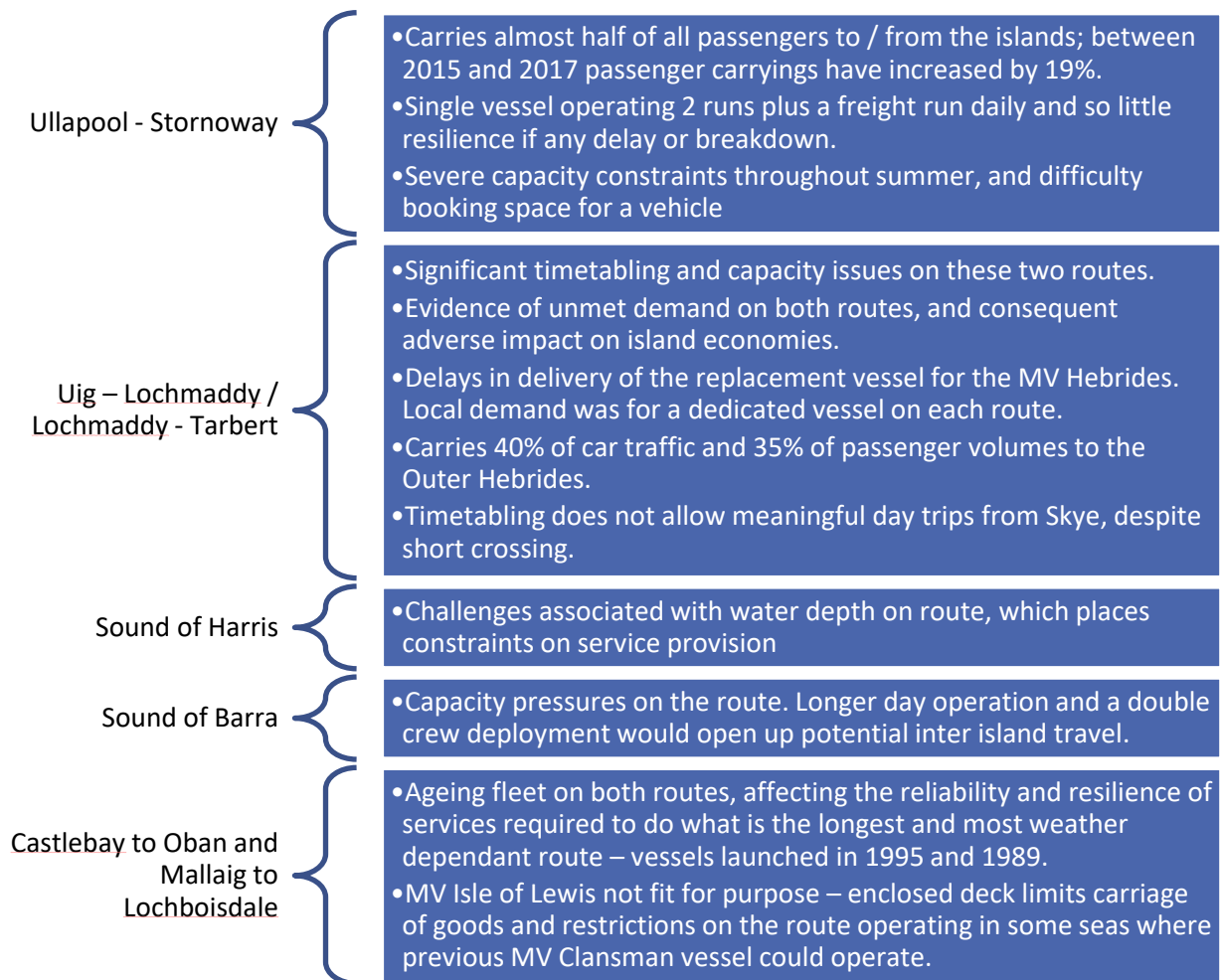
For freight, while significant work was done on the Ferry Freight Fares Review between 2014 and 2016, a decision by Transport Scotland on implementation of any of the proposed options appears to have stalled. Haulage of materials into the area is challenging due to capacity constraints, and this can adversely affect projects, such as the new Castlebay Project (Hospital, Care Home and Schools), whereby the transport challenges and costs are estimated to add in excess of one-third to the project costs compared to a similar build at a remote location of the Scottish mainland.

Mainland ports are at significant distance to key centres, such as Inverness and Glasgow, and so onward travel and connections are vital. Bus and rail services on the mainland do not consistently integrate. Ferry timetables and frequency could allow for better integration.

The Comhairle has a long-standing policy position advocating the locating to the islands management, administrative and operational posts associated with transport services, not only for the economic benefit of these communities but in order to lead to better informed strategic and operational decision making.

### ***Route Specific Issues and Constraints***





## 2.7 Piers and Harbours

The Comhairle is responsible for 32 harbours throughout the islands, including five ferry ports. Similarly to the roads, the investment in Comhairle owned piers and Harbours has reduced over the years, which means that conditions of piers will also deteriorate over time and there would be benefit in a strategic approach to guide and deliver investment in Comhairle owned piers and harbours.

There is some cruise activity in the islands, mainly into the larger Stornoway harbour, which is operated by a Harbour Trust – Stornoway Port Authority (SPA). SPA has a proposed development for a Deep Water Port that will enable larger cruise vessels to come into Stornoway, and will upscale other marine capacity around the port, including that associated with renewables. There is an opportunity to develop the bespoke cruise market, particularly smaller ‘explorer’ style cruises which can access smaller harbours, and could support distributing the benefit of the cruise market across the island chain.

## 2.8 Air Travel

The majority of scheduled passenger services operate commercially. Loganair is the main operator of routes connecting the Outer Hebrides with Scottish hub. In addition there are routes provided via Public Service Obligations (PSOs), whereby the minimum timetables and maximum fares are set through a tendering process with subsidy provided. This encompasses internal flights and Transport Scotland-sponsored routes connecting Barra with Glasgow.

Highlands and Islands Airports Ltd (HIAL) (a wholly-owned Scottish Government Subsidiary) operate and manage 11 airports including at Barra, Benbecula, and Stornoway.

There are scheduled air services between Stornoway and Glasgow, Inverness and Benbecula, and between Benbecula and Glasgow, and Barra and Glasgow. Flights to / from Barra land on the famous wide shallow bay of Traigh Mhòr, and consequently the timetable is variable to coincide with tide times. The flights to / from Barra operate using a Transport Scotland PSO, and between Benbecula and Stornoway using a Comhairle PSO, with all other elements being operated commercially. The timetables and frequency of air services vary between winter and summer.

**Stornoway** has frequent links with Glasgow (23 return flights per week during the summer and 19 in the winter); this is followed by 14 flights per week year round to Inverness, and eight flights in the summer and four in the winter to Edinburgh.

For **Benbecula** there are five flights per week year round to Glasgow and three flights per week year round to Inverness; plus operated under PSO to the Comhairle a Monday and Friday single return flight to Stornoway and morning and afternoon return flights on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday.

For **Barra** there are two return flights per day; for Barra during the winter the scheduled flights are not always operated; however, there is a 'bank' of unused flights that the community can then use as they see fit (e.g. for attendance at funerals, functions, etc).

Flights are expensive, and the issue of cost is often brought up in consultation with the community. The Air Discount Scheme (ADS) is an initiative by the Scottish Government (under the General Block Exemption Regulation of the European Union) that has a principal objective of making air travel more affordable for remote communities in the Highlands and Islands. It is available to those who have permanent (or main) residency in Colonsay, Orkney, Shetland, the Western Isles, Islay, Jura, Caithness and parts of Sutherland. This has been a significant success, offering discounts of up to 50%. The discount is not available on PSO routes and for those travelling on business or on NHS-funded health trips are not eligible.

The nature of the air services, other than the PSO routes, operated commercially, with a single operator, presents concerns around how commercial decisions can affect a lifeline service. The operator in recent years has demonstrated their commitment to enhance services with increased capacity and replacement fleet, but concerns remain, and especially compounded by the Covid-19 impact on demand for services. In a normal year, some capacity issues, particularly for group travel exist, for example sports teams travelling for matches.

There continues to be the question as to the requirement for the Benbecula-Stornoway PSO route and work will continue to consult with the community and partners on how connectivity can be delivered.

HIAL's proposals to centralise Air Traffic Control management services and functions to Inverness are of significant concern to island communities. ATM (Air Traffic Management) 2030 is the largest programme of its kind within UK air traffic control, seeking to bring together air traffic management of seven airports into a single location, including HIAL airports at Sumburgh, Dundee, Inverness, Wick, John O'Groats, Kirkwall, Stornoway and Benbecula. The Comhairle has expressed concerns around the potential robustness of the Islands Community Impact Assessment proposed by HIAL, and resilience of the Digital Tower Technology, and will continue lobbying Scottish Government and HIAL to retain an Air Traffic Control presence in Stornoway and Benbecula on the basis of safety, economic and cost/benefit impacts. A small number of well-paid jobs such as these lost from the islands is the equivalent of losing a large factory from an urban area.

Low Carbon is likely to be a feature in the future Highlands & Islands aviation sector, with Scottish Government and HIAL expressing commitment to the world's first zero emission aviation region through a new programme of activity to decarbonise airport operations, infrastructure and flights across the Highlands and Islands, and parallel activity around low and zero emission planes.

The Barra Traigh Mhor airstrip imposes operational difficulties due to the tidal nature of the landing strip. The Comhairle recognise the positive steps taken to improve timetables within these physical constraints by Transport Scotland through the PSO on this air route.

## 2.9 Alternative Fuels

***Transport is a major contributor to carbon emissions, and we support continued focus on low carbon transport in order to ensure Scottish Government Net Zero Carbon targets are met by 2045.***

Low carbon fuels and transport decarbonisation look set to be a major focus of UK and Scottish Government policy direction and associated funding and are a priority within this strategy. The islands are in a position to support national and local targets for reduction in climate emissions due to our renewable resources, and the recognition of the decarbonisation of transport as a central element to this by facilitating and promoting increased use of low carbon vehicles (hydrogen and electric) across a range of sectors, and as far as possible, using renewable sources of energy as part of this process.

There is now good coverage of EV charging infrastructure in the Outer Hebrides, with investment having been supported through funding from Transport Scotland, which has seen the phased implementation of Electric Vehicle (EV) charging posts at key points across the Outer Hebrides since 2012, providing a network to enable EV travel throughout the island chain.

This strategic approach has enabled the identification of remaining key sites where there are opportunities to enhance and strengthen the network, particularly with rapid charging capability, or where particular challenges exist for which additional funding is required. Demand on the islands for EV charging points is visibly increasing and this trend is projected to continue. The Outer Hebrides have moved from an extremely low baseline of EV usage and ownership to one where there is a noticeable increase in tourists visiting the islands utilising EVs, either by bringing their own or hiring EVs locally, and there is greater commitment within the public sector through Comhairle purchasing EVs for use by staff.

The opportunity also may exist to use surplus, locally generated renewable electricity to fuel this growing sector. There are some issues with further rollout of charging infrastructure, with some constraints around sites requiring both power and mobile connection, which rules some potential sites out either on practical or cost terms.

Despite good coverage of chargers, which users pay to use (since 2020), there continues to be modest uptake of EV ownership in island households. Upfront investment in a vehicle is undoubtedly a barrier, with those households that could benefit most from the cheaper-to-run (than ICE car) EVs costs, the least likely to be able to afford the upfront investment of the vehicle.

Hydrogen fuel cell electric vehicles (FCEVs) are recognised as having potential in supporting transition, recognising that there remain challenges with capital cost and refuelling infrastructure. The Comhairle has experience in production of hydrogen from renewables for the transport sector through its Outer Hebrides Local Energy Hub project. There is scope to scale up this activity beyond the current Refuse Collection Vehicle to fuel higher numbers of Comhairle vehicles, public transport vehicles and refuelling for businesses, the public and the visitor economy. Funding is actively being sought to upscale hydrogen refuelling facilities to enable this scaling up to take place.

Point & Sandwick Development Trust (PSDT), in collaboration with seven industry partners, have produced 'The Scottish Western Isles Ferry Transport using Hydrogen (SWIFTH2)' report. Two ferry routes have been identified for further study – Stornoway to Ullapool (large ferry) and Barra to Eriskay (small ferry). Replacing existing vessels on these routes with Hydrogen Ferries could save 22,491 tonnes of Carbon Dioxide equivalent emissions per annum and equate to taking 4,889 cars off the road each year. PSDT are currently working with partners, including the Comhairle, to progress further work on the two identified routes.

## 2.10 Reducing the Need to Travel

The Covid-19 experience, as is the case nationally, has seen an influx in people working from home, and the entrepreneurial spirit flourish. Digital connectivity supports this, and the experience is providing a solid foundation of understanding what is possible in terms of people working and doing business at or closer to home. Much of the islands have good digital connectivity, yet there remains some 'not spots' where internet is poor and / or there is no mobile phone connection, which places limitation on working remotely and also the siting of EV charging infrastructure which requires a mobile signal.

## 2.11 Funding

Funding for maintaining and improving our transport network, comes through two sources.

**Revenue Budget:** Includes monies from Council Tax payments and grant from the Scottish Government. This is typically spent on ongoing maintenance and repair of existing infrastructure and operations and includes: roads, pedestrians and cycle facilities, street lighting, winter maintenance, road signing, flood protection, and bridge/causeway refurbishment.

**Capital Budget:** Includes monies from grant funding. This is typically spent on improvement works. Funding is on an individual project basis and is normally secured through funding applications to external agencies, with funding therefore not guaranteed.

The distribution of general capital to councils on the basis of road length and population does not address the additional costs faced by islands in terms of asphalt production and transportation. A severe reduction in maintenance expenditure has seen a change in emphasis from reconstruction or major resurfacing projects into minor resurfacing / surface dressing works.

Diminishing capital and revenue budgets, coupled with increased costs within the supply chain, affect the local availability of surfacing and quarry materials. This is reaching the point where the viability of obtaining locally sourced materials is at jeopardy, which will in the future further increase costs significantly.

Prior to Brexit and Covid-19, the Comhairle was operating in a prolonged period of economic austerity and public sector funding constraints. Emerging from the impact of COVID-19, unless further funds are received from central government, the pressure on Comhairle's budgets and reserves will be increasingly challenging. The investment that the Comhairle has been able to make to transport infrastructure and services has declined over the last decade. Revenue and capital reductions have an increasingly adverse effect on road users due to the Comhairle's capacity to undertake surface repairs and structural remediation works. Deterioration of the existing roads infrastructure will impact on safety, journey experience and journey times for business and visitors, and business performance and productivity. It is critical that we work with the Scottish Government to ensure our roads get the investment they need to make them safer, resilient, reliable and future-proofed.

The Scottish Government, and its agency Transport Scotland, provide a vital component of our grant funding. We will continue to seek funding from this source. The Scottish Government has a range of funding programmes to which we will make funding bids where appropriate. These include:

- Smarter Choices, Smarter Places (SCSP): Supporting walking, cycling and public transport initiatives to reduce dependence on the car.
- Low Carbon Travel and Transport Challenge Fund to facilitate the delivery of active travel and low carbon transport hubs, as well as paths. It should be noted that accessing funding for active travel has proved to be challenging in the island context. Most sources of external funding for active travel routes only providing 50% funding towards capital costs, and require a design specification that exceeds that which would be practical and pragmatic in our area.

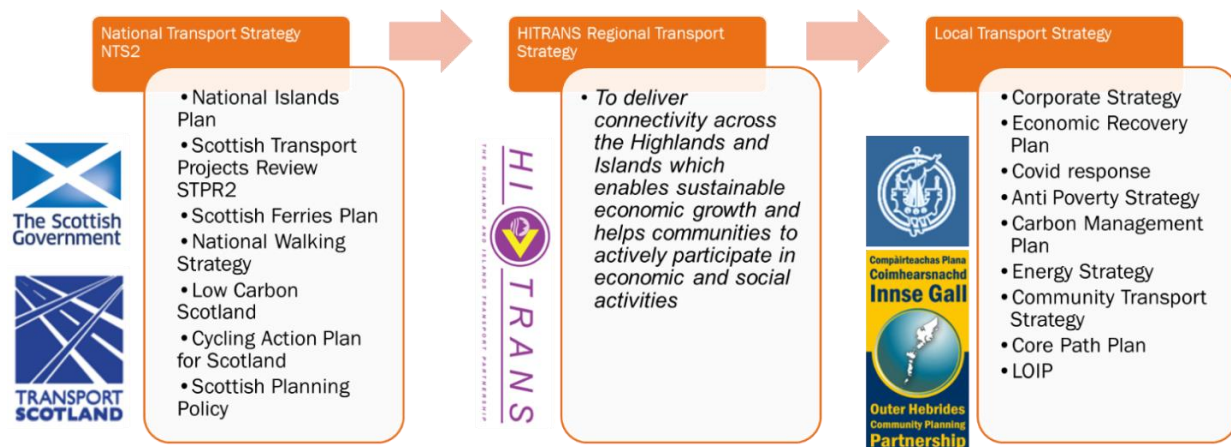
Historically, EU funds have supported businesses, major infrastructure, facilities and transport in the islands. Beyond Brexit, the loss of EU Structural and Rural Development funds is of great concern to local authorities and the Comhairle and partners, in consultation with Scottish Government, will lobby for early clarity as to the shape of a future regional policy and funding. If it is to be the Shared Prosperity Fund, it must continue to recognise particular geographic, demographic and economic challenges on islands and peripheral rural areas. In recent years, EU funding has become more restrictive and there is now an opportunity, with greater flexibility, to ensure that regional and local economic development, regeneration and competitiveness are at the heart of the objectives of the Fund. It is also vital that, *"the annual budget of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund is no less, in real terms, than the EU and UK funding streams it replaces"*.

We will be responsive to funding opportunities in keeping with the guiding principles of this LTS. There will be a need also to consider innovation in funding models through the LTS, such as borrowing routes and charging mechanisms.

### 3. Developing the Local Transport Strategy

#### 3.1 Policy Linkages

Key relevant national, regional and local strategies and plans have been reviewed to inform the development of the Local Transport Strategy as illustrated below.



Unifying themes emerge from the policy review and underpin this LTS. The requirement for a shift to equitable and low carbon transport is a key driver of the current policy context at all levels. Equitable and low carbon transport can support inclusive economic growth, reduce isolation, and improve health and the environment.

#### 3.2 National Islands Plan

##### *Improving transport services to island communities.*

Improvement of transport to island communities is included within the Islands Act 2018 and this is reflected in the National Islands Plan, which has 'To Improve Transport Services' as one of its thirteen strategic objectives. The National Islands Plan is underpinned by the principles of being, 'fair, integrated, green and inclusive'. Island communities should therefore receive equality of access in respect of transport. It states, 'A fair, low carbon transport system is needed so that island communities are put on an equal footing with people on the Scottish mainland, and in order for transport to fully enable the fulfilment of basic human rights'.

The National Islands Plan recognises the importance of transport for economic development on islands. Improving resilience is another objective within the National Islands Plan. It is highlighted that Transport Scotland are working with CMAL, CalMac and other relevant stakeholders to improve ferry resilience. Furthermore, improving connections between the Central Belt and the Highlands and Islands is noted as being crucial for economic development. In terms of improving transport, objectives include:

- Produce a long-term plan and investment programme for new ferries and development at ports to improve resilience, reliability, capacity and reduce emissions to give confidence to island communities on our ongoing commitment.

- Develop a new Ferries Plan that will meaningfully contribute to delivering the outcomes of wider Scottish Government strategies as set out in the National Transport Strategy and the National Islands Plan.

As part of the Plan, the need to review and promote integration between ferries and other modes of transport on the mainland and islands is identified, with a view to better facilitating the use of active, public or shared transport for all or part of journeys to and from islands in an affordable and accessible manner. For the Clyde and Hebrides ferry services specifically, the need to develop and introduce a new booking, reservation and ticketing system, with Smart Ticketing capability, to replace the existing system, is highlighted.

The National Islands Plan also describes working in partnership with local authorities and communities to improve walking and cycling infrastructure, the design of place and access to bikes, facilities, promotion and education to make walking and cycling the most popular choice for shorter everyday journeys including as part of multi-modal journeys; and, finally, the need to explore the potential to reduce the need to travel by using the planning system to promote places which bring people and services together.

### 3.3 National Transport Strategy (NTS2)

#### *Protecting the climate and improving lives.*

The National Transport Strategy (NTS2) sets out the vision for Scotland's transport system for the next 20 years. The vision is for a sustainable, inclusive, safe and accessible transport system helping deliver a healthier, fairer and more prosperous Scotland for communities, businesses and visitors. There are four priorities to support that vision.

- reduces inequalities
- takes climate action
- helps deliver inclusive economic growth
- improves our health and wellbeing

### 3.4 HITRANS Regional Transport Strategy (RTS)

#### *"a prosperous economy and inclusive, connected and healthy communities."*

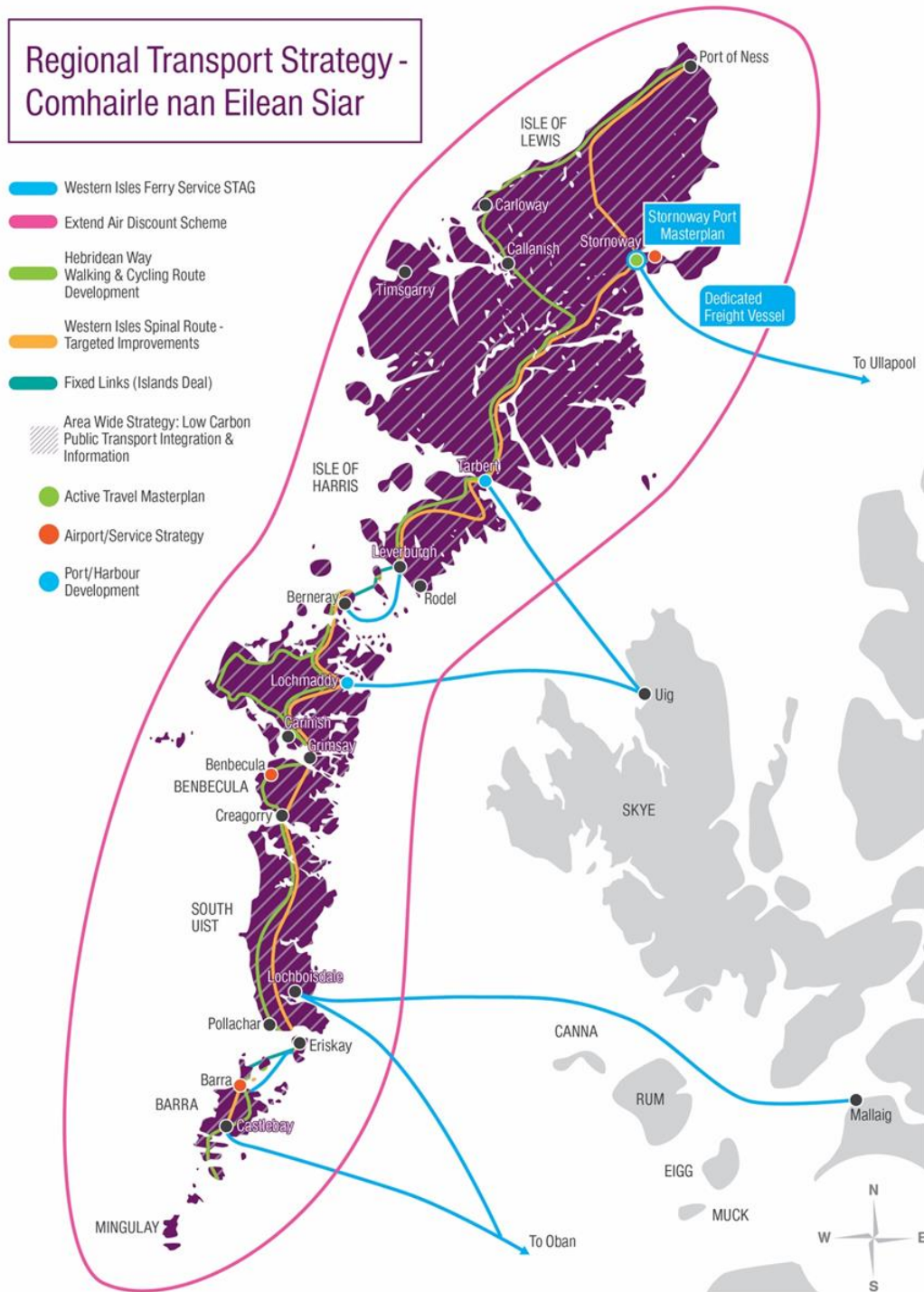
The RTS vision is, "To deliver connectivity across the Highlands and Islands which enables sustainable economic growth and helps communities to actively participate in economic and social activities."

HITRANS activities should contribute to these high-level objectives by supporting, making the case for, and delivering the following transport objectives:

- Reducing journey times and improving journey reliability and resilience.
- Improving/maintaining the safety of transport and travel.
- Tackling capacity constraints across the network.
- Improving the quality, accessibility, affordability and integration of travel.
- Protecting the environment and mitigating the adverse impacts of travel/transport.
- Improve health and well-being.



The map below is taken from the RTS and sets out the key transport nodes within the islands and connections between them, along with some of the opportunities and priorities for the islands highlighted in the RTS.



### **3.5 Strategic Transport Projects Review (STPR2)**

The second Strategic Transport Projects Review (STPR2) will inform transport investment in Scotland for the next 20 years. STPR2 should help to deliver the vision, priorities and outcomes for transport set out in the National Transport Strategy (NTS2) and will align with other national plans such as the National Planning Framework (NPF4) and the Climate Change Plan. An STPR2 consultation survey ran from December 2019 to January 2020, and the final STPR2 report is expected in 2021, giving Scottish Ministers a programme of potential transport investment opportunities for the period 2022-2042.

STPR2 objectives:

- A sustainable strategic transport system that contributes significantly to the Scottish Government's net zero emissions target
- An inclusive strategic transport system that improves the affordability and accessibility of public transport
- A cohesive strategic transport system that enhances communities as places, supporting health and wellbeing
- An integrated strategic transport system that contributes towards sustainable inclusive growth in Scotland
- A reliable and resilient strategic transport system that is safe and secure for travellers.

STPR2 will be integral to option appraisal of strategic projects relating to the Outer Hebrides.

### **3.6 Scottish Ferries Plan 2013-22**

The Scottish Ferry Services Ferries Plan (2013-2022) included recommendations on:

- Where investment should be focussed to make connections better for island and remote rural communities.
- Improving reliability and journey times.
- Seeking to maximise opportunities for employment, business, leisure and tourism.
- Promoting social inclusion.

The Scottish Ferries Plan is to be updated in the form of an 'Island Connectivity Plan' following the completion of the Strategic Transport Projects Review 2. This will take a broader and more holistic approach to islands travel, looking not just at ferries but also the interaction between different modes of transport – air, sea, bus, etc.

### **3.7 Comhairle Corporate Strategy & Economic Recovery Plan**

The Comhairle's Corporate Strategy has been refreshed (2020-2022) in light of the Covid-19 pandemic. Our Corporate Strategy, within the context of overall economic recovery, is to be delivered under three strategic themes: Community and Public Services; Economy; and Energy and Climate Change. Transport sits as a specific priority within the Community and Public Services theme, under which the following actions sit:

- Introduce a new Outer Hebrides Local Transport Strategy to support the delivery of affordable, reliable and high quality external and inter-island transport links, underpinned by principles of decarbonisation and social inclusion.
- Ensure continued engagement with Scottish Government and key transport stakeholders to identify resources and further the interests of local priorities.

The Economic Recovery plan sets out to support a “Community Wealth Recovery” that builds on the concepts of localism, community capacity and resilience and that positively prioritises local supply chains and local procurement. Actions relevant to the LTS include:

- Identify opportunities to decentralise the local public sector to create new opportunities in communities across the Outer Hebrides.
- Identify opportunities through the Planning (Scotland) Act 2019 for the establishment of Local Place Plans – identify and work with a community wishing to test and pilot such an approach.
- Support a “Green Recovery” that maximises the Outer Hebrides unrivalled renewable resources; that aspires to achieve Net Zero Carbon by 2035 and that ensures a robust set of climate change mitigations and adaptations.
- Support the delivery of green hydrogen production at the Outer Hebrides Energy Hub for on island use (heat and transport).
- Develop a route-map for the full decarbonisation of the Outer Hebrides transport system.
- Support an enhanced programme of active travel.
- Ensure early identification of “at risk” infrastructure such as roads, piers and buildings.

### **3.8 Outer Hebrides Local Development Plan**

The Outer Hebrides Local Development Plan (LDP) sets out a vision and spatial strategy for the development of land in the Outer Hebrides over the next 10-20 years. The Plan provides the planning framework for the Outer Hebrides and contains the land use planning policies which the Comhairle will use for determining planning applications. The LDP provides the statutory land use planning framework within which the OH Local Transport Strategy sits.

Policy EI 9 (Transport Infrastructure) sets out the policy areas for improving and developing the transport infrastructure serving the Outer Hebrides, including roads, ports, airports, and harbours. Other particularly relevant policies within the LDP include: PD1: Placemaking and Design, and PD2: Car Parking and Roads Layout.

The LDP notes that efficient transport infrastructure plays a vital role in supporting successful economic development as well as ensuring maximum accessibility of facilities to residents and visitors. The LDP states the Comhairle’s land use planning objectives for transportation as being, “to support improvements in the transport infrastructure including public transport and where possible to deliver highway improvements and traffic management initiatives”. It recognises that the creation of new footpaths and cycle-ways in and around settlements, particularly those which allow safe access between residential areas and shopping and other community facilities and between transportation nodes may be required as part of new developments. The Development Policies set out the requirements for different types of development and explains what uses are acceptable in different areas.

The priority areas for the upgrading and development of the transport infrastructure within, and serving the Outer Hebrides, are highlighted in the LDP as:

- a) the spinal and inter island routes;
- b) the airports at Barra, Balivanich and Stornoway;
- c) ports and harbours, including ferry facilities for mainland and inter island connections.

Development proposals associated with new or improved transport infrastructure and traffic management measures will be required to meet all the following:

1. fit with the character of the area in relation to the Development Strategy and the immediate surrounding area and include a landscaping plan;
2. utilise a sustainable drainage system (SuDS) to deal with surface water;
3. accommodate pedestrians (within settlements) and cyclists, and secure improved road safety related to the proposal, in particular around schools, community or leisure facilities.

It also notes that the Comhairle will support the provision of electric car charging points in new development (subject to appropriate design and layout).

A key function of the Development Plan is to identify areas of land for a range of uses, and for strategic economic development purpose with the wider policy framework, recognising the distinct nature of economic activities in the islands and the need for an adaptive and responsive policy approach. The Outer Hebrides Spinal Route is identified as a specific Development Proposal in this respect.

### **3.9 Outer Hebrides Local Outcome Improvement Plan (LOIP)**

The Outer Hebrides Community Planning Partnership (OHCPP) is committed to working together in partnership with our communities to create transformational change and achieve a sustainable population. The priorities for the OHCPP over the next 10-20 years include:

- Our islands are connected with high quality, affordable and reliable broadband, mobile networks and transport connections.
- Communities will have access to a range of innovative transport solutions which reduce isolation and increase access to services.

Sitting within the OHCPP is an anti-poverty group, which has developed the Outer Hebrides Anti-Poverty Strategy 2019-2024. Existing actions to mitigate poverty include the provision of free transport to and from nursery for vulnerable families. The strategy also looks to a number of longer-term actions to mitigate poverty in the Outer Hebrides such as making changes to school transport structures and school closing times to maximise participation in after school events, and expansion of digital methods to attend appointments.

## 4. Objectives, Actions and Delivery Plan

### 4.1 Transport Planning Objectives

The Transport Planning Objectives (TPOs) for the Outer Hebrides LTS are detailed below, along with the rationale for their inclusion and their link to the policy framework.

#### 1. A **safe** Outer Hebrides.

- **Evidence for objective:** Safety is paramount for an accessible and effective transport network. Number of recorded KSI between 3 and 5 per year in recent years, and it is important to reduce this level.
- **Key links to policy:** NTS2, Scotland's Road Safety Framework, RTS, LOIP, STPR2

#### 2. An **active** Outer Hebrides.

- **Evidence for objective:** Levels of active travel for everyday journeys are lower than average, although current Covid-19 experience has seen an increase in walking and cycling around local communities.
- **Key links to policy:** NTS2, A long term vision for Active Travel in Scotland to 2030, National Walking Strategy, Cycling Action Plan for Scotland, RTS, Active Travel Strategy, STPR2, Corporate Strategy

#### 3. Embed **environmental protection** and **decarbonise transport**.

- **Evidence for objective:** At threat infrastructure due to climate conditions. Need and requirement to decarbonise transport to support reduction in carbon emissions.
- **Key links to Policy:** NTS2, Islands Plan, SG Climate Change Plan, STPR2, Corporate Strategy & Economic Recovery Plan.

#### 4. An **inclusive** Outer Hebrides.

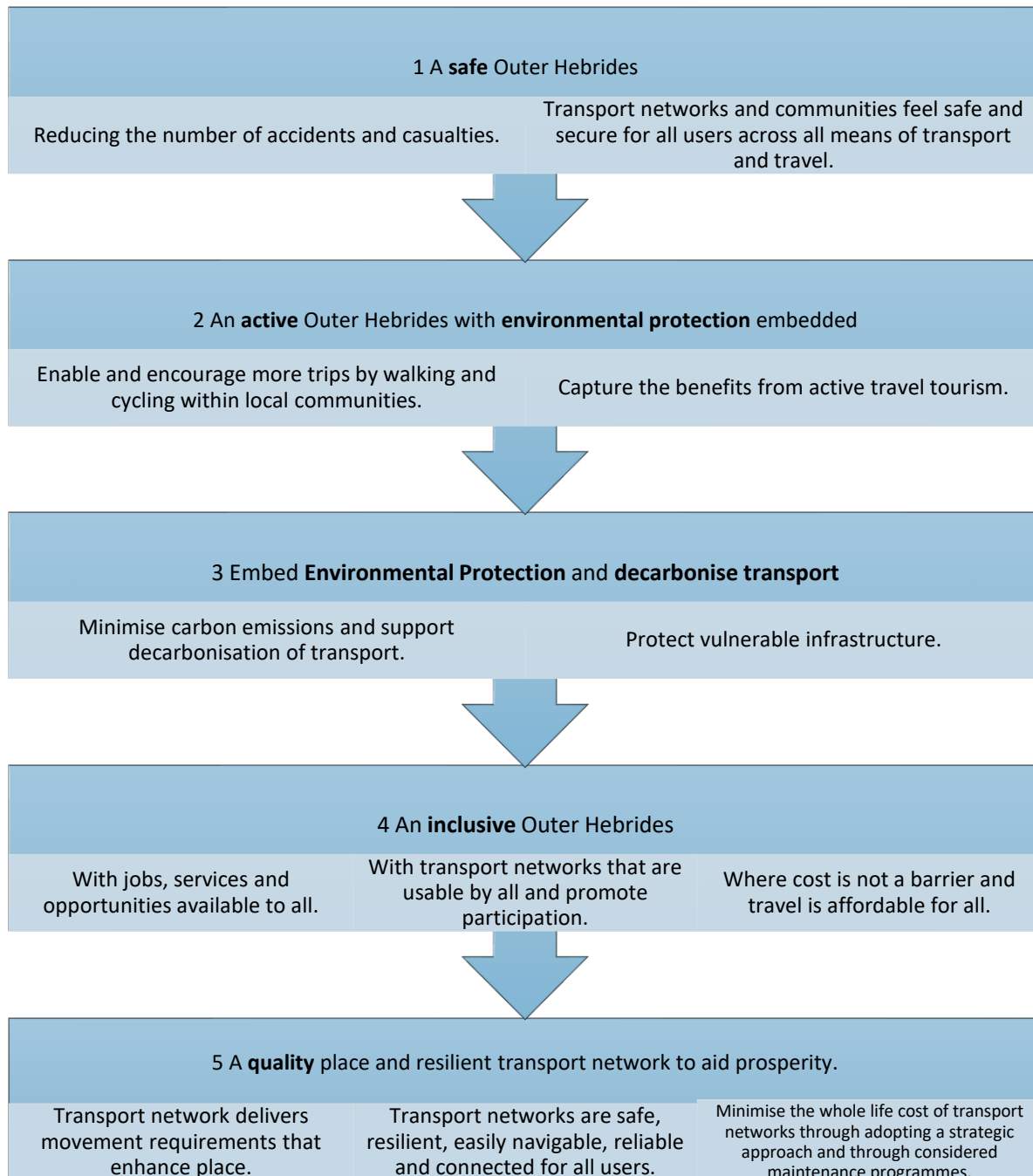
- **Evidence for objective:** Economic barriers to access exist for some groups in society, especially those who are unemployed or low paid. Physical barriers to access also exist, and some transport is in variable supply across the area.
- **Key links to policy:** NTS2, Islands Plan, Scotland's Economic Strategy, Corporate Strategy & Economic Recovery Plan, LOIP, RTS, STPR2

#### 5. A **quality** place and **resilient transport network** to aid prosperity.

- **Evidence for objective:** An effective transport network will enable economic development. Having jobs in local communities is the lynchpin in sustainable communities, making them good places to live, work and visit. People should be able to easily move around, to and from their local community, with resilient and good transport connectivity.
- **Key links to policy:** NTS2, Islands Plan, LOIP, RTS, STPR2, Corporate Strategy & Economic Recovery Plan

## 4.2 Appraisal and Prioritisation

A long-list of actions and interventions were drawn up through consultation with key officials and partners and a review of relevant documents and data, with actions identified to address the issues and opportunities identified through the development of the LTS. This long list of LTS proposed projections and interventions was then appraised. This considered the actions against the LTS objectives more fully detailed below:



Appraisal was undertaken qualitatively against the LTS Transport Planning Objectives and against the STAG criteria of *Environment, Safety, Economy, Integration and Accessibility and Social Inclusion*, together with consideration of feasibility, affordability and public acceptability. Each aspect was scored on a five point scale from *positive impact / factor* through to *negative impact / factor*. A judgement has then been taken across all aspects through the appraisal as to whether each project / intervention is therefore a *high priority or medium priority* as follows:

- High priority: will deliver, or offers the potential to deliver, significant benefits across the Transport Planning Objectives and should be progressed in the short term.
- Medium priority: will deliver across the Transport Planning Objectives, including significant benefits in some areas, and should be worked towards progressively.

The Appraisal Summary Table is set out in Appendix 1.

### **4.3 Local Transport Strategy Delivery Plan**

The Delivery Plan presents the key actions which we will undertake during the lifetime of this strategy. The Delivery Plan is an improvement plan and builds on current activities. We will continue with our current 'business as usual' activities alongside the delivery of the strategy actions.

The actions contained within the Delivery Plan are presented alongside the main objective(s) they are working towards through their delivery. This allows ease of identification of how individual actions are seeking to accomplish the strategy's objectives. The Delivery Plan presents the high priority actions from the LTS appraisal, and this is followed by a list of the medium priority actions.

The Delivery Plan comprises actions that will be led by the Comhairle and actions that the Comhairle will need to work with Partners to achieve, as well as those which are within the gift of others to deliver, such as the Scottish Government, but which will bring significant benefit for the Outer Hebrides and Scotland.

## 4.4 High Priorities

A summary of the LTS Delivery Plan is below, with the full version at Appendix 2.

ACTION	Delivery Plan How delivered, delivery partners and funding	Timescale Ongoing (will be progressed on an ongoing basis) Short-term (1-2 years) Medium-term (2-5 years) Long-term (5+ years)
1. Make the case for island-proofing funding allocation processes	The Comhairle will work collaboratively with SG within the framework of the National Islands Plan to progress this action.	Short-term
2. Long-term 30 years Roads and Infrastructure Investment Plan, covering: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maintain and improve the Spinal Route</li> <li>• Maintain and improve connections to the Spinal Route</li> <li>• Tailored programme to address pinch points and barriers to Active Travel</li> <li>• Improvements to the formerly classified NCN</li> <li>• Walking and cycling infrastructure island-tailored approaches</li> </ul>	<p>Plan to be developed by the Comhairle, and requires securing of external / supplementary funding to advance plan.</p> <p>Liaison with SG and other partners required to break down ring-fenced funding barriers that prohibit progress of the plan, particularly to highlight island-specific issues. In parallel with this, pursue consideration of the trunking of the spinal route in keeping with similar routes on other islands; and in dialogue with other islands areas with a similar opportunity for the trunking of a core route that connects major ferry services.</p>	Ongoing
3. Ensure island communities are heard in terms of the future strategy and timetable for new / replacement vessels, ports and harbours to increase capacity and improve reliability, with priority being given to actions below.	The Comhairle will work collaboratively with SG and delivery partners. The SG has set out its ferry investment plans through successive Vessel Replacement and Deployment Plans (VRDP), with the latest version due to be published. The second Strategic Transport Projects Review (STPR2) is ongoing and work has commenced on the 'Island Connectivity Plan', the successor to the Ferries Plan.	Short to Medium term progress required.
4. Seek to implement improvements identified in the 2019 STAG review of OH ferry routes.		
5. Dedicated freight vessel for Stornoway-Ullapool route until aspiration of dedicated two RoPax ferry service is achieved.		



6. De-coupling of Uig-Lochmaddy and Uig-Tarbert routes		
7. High-level review of connectivity across the two Sounds, considering economic impacts and whole life costs		
8. Improve service between Barra and Oban by replacing the existing vessel with one capable of making the crossing in all but the poorest weather and by improving the frequency and shortening the duration of the run.		
9. De-centralisation of ferries' management and administration as well as transport policy jobs to the islands	The Comhairle will work with partners, including SG, Transport Scotland, HIAL and others to deliver this action progressively.	Ongoing, with some initial short-term deliverables.
10. Reduced costs, including freight charges, to meet the needs of islands and enabling enterprise and island economies to flourish	The Comhairle will work collaboratively with SG to ensure progress. SG initiative to instigate.	Required in the short-term after significant delay in implementing any of the proposed options arising from the Ferry Freight Fares Review.
11. Progress Comhairle Harbours Masterplan to identify opportunities and develop business case for investment.	The Comhairle will work with partners to develop a Plan for Investment in its Marine Infrastructure, setting out a clear outline of issues, constraints and opportunities, together with a detailed market assessment as part of an Outline Business Case.	Medium-term
12. Support the concept of Local Place Plans and continue to progress Comhairle Community Hubs, underpinned by public sector reform, digitisation and decentralisation.	The Comhairle will continue to develop programme, and in partnership with other public sector agencies through the CPP	Immediate short-term aspects deliverable building on successes through Covid-19 experience; full development through the short to medium term, including identifying emerging opportunities.
13. Comprehensive review of Community Transport (coordinated with Public Transport) in partnership with communities and a resulting Action Plan	Comhairle to work through the CPP to progress the Community Transport review; working with local communities and building on the success of the Participatory Budgeting exercise to devise Action Plan.	Short-term and ongoing
14. Call for Scottish Government to recognise the role of Community Transport in remote / rural areas where public transport is challenging – island-proof the scheme, and hence adopt such services as part of the National Concessionary Travel Scheme.	Comhairle to work with partner Local Authorities and HITRANS to challenge that the national Concessionary Travel policy should be subjected retrospectively to an Islands Community Impact Assessment.	Short-term

15. Seek additional funding to pilot, pump-prime and develop an innovative, flexible and holistic community-focussed approach to Community and Public Transport in islands, including reducing carbon emissions through efficient use of appropriate sized vehicles and ultra-low emissions vehicles, and also looking at areas such as fare structure, bus shelters and routes, to incentivise greater passenger numbers.	Additional and / or innovative funding solutions required to progress with community-focussed approach to the future of a mixed model of public and community transport.	Short-term and ongoing
16. Consider e-bike library to redress affordability barriers, which could be linked through the CT review above.	Comhairle to work with communities and Community Energy Scotland Energy in Motion project to identify and support opportunities.	Short-term
17. Make changes to school transport structures and school closing times to maximise participation in after school events reducing effects of rurality and poverty	Progressed through the Anti-Poverty Strategy for FSM children across all areas.	Medium-term
18. Promote digital methods of attending appointments / health care / health services.	Support NHS WI and other partners through CPP to progress and capitalise on advancements that have been made through Covid-19 experience.	Short to Medium-term and ongoing
19. Explore the feasibility of Green Hydrogen production at an Outer Hebrides Energy Hub (Arnish) for on-island use, and work with partners on the development of Hydrogen Ferry potential. Actively seek funding and investment opportunities for hydrogen production, storage and refuelling facilities for transport, throughout the island chain.	Comhairle to secure partner support and funding to develop the project and opportunities.	Short to Medium-term and ongoing
20. Improve air service connectivity – reducing the cost of air travel and recognising commitment in NTS for every part of the country to achieve meaningful day of business in Edinburgh / Glasgow.	The Comhairle will work with partners, including HITRANS and SG to achieve this action.	Short to Medium term progress required.
21. Removal of Air Passenger Duty from incoming flights to the islands	The Comhairle will support the continuation of the exemption from UK Air Passenger Duty for flights departing from airports in the area; and will continue working with HITRANS to present the case of the need for, and benefit arising from an exemption from the current UK Air Passenger Duty and any successor duty.	Short-term
22. Support the retention of Air Traffic Control management services and functions within the Outer Hebrides	Liaise with SG and in partnership with other affected local authority areas in opposing the centralisation plans and calling for a moratorium on them pending an Islands Impact Assessment.	Short-term

### 4.3 Medium Priorities

The process has identified actions that sit as medium priorities within the Delivery Plan. These projects will deliver across the Transport Planning Objectives, including significant benefits in some areas, and should be worked towards progressively or accelerated should need or opportunity arise.

ACTION
23. Call for a review of the future design and procurement of ferries in Scotland.
24. Consider socio-economic and wider economic impacts of establishing PSO on Benbecula – Glasgow route.
25. Town Centre plan assessing options for managing traffic flow and parking in Stornoway and Tarbert.
26. Contribute to the promotion of the Highlands and Islands as low / zero emission aviation region.
27. Support regional approach to achieving resilient EV charging corridors (on and along main corridors including in Mainland Scotland).
28. Develop Low Carbon Transport Hubs in Stornoway, and other larger settlements where required, to fill gaps in current EV charging and step up hydrogen refuelling infrastructure.

## 4.4 Monitoring & Evaluation

***Monitoring of the transport strategy's Action Plan is vital to ensuring that the strategy's vision is realised, and that the actions provide the targeted benefits we seek to attain.***

The progress being made in the delivery of each action contained in the Delivery Plan will be monitored throughout the lifetime of the Strategy and we will aim to carry out an overarching review of progress of actions on an annual basis. The progress being made in delivering against the TPOs will also be monitored by recording progress across a number of indicators. Indicators will be provided through national, regional and local datasets which can then through evaluation be supplemented by information recorded by Comhairle services. The LTS Monitoring Framework will provide the means for an annual 'state of transport and travel' report, which will allow the Comhairle to oversee progress and changes in transport and travel across the area. Proposed monitoring indicators and current baseline are in the table below:

A Safe Outer Hebrides.	Outer Hebrides	Scotland
Rating of road condition 2018-19	Red condition 7% Amber condition 36%	Red condition 7% Amber condition 29%
Casualties by police force division, council and severity	2019 (provisional) 2 fatal 13 serious 32 all	2019 (provisional) 168 fatal 2001 serious 7,594 all
An Active Outer Hebrides.	Outer Hebrides	Scotland
Adults (16+) frequency of walking as a means of transport in previous 7 days	None 67% 1-2 days 15% 3-5 days 11% 6-7 days 8%	None 31% 1-2 days 19% 3-5 days 26% 6-7 days 23%
Travel to school	TBC	TBC
Adults (16+) - use of local bus services	Every day or almost every day 3% 2 or 3 times per week 4% About once a week 2%,	Every day or almost every day 10% 2 or 3 times per week 10% About once a week 7%

	About once a fortnight, or about once a month 8% Not used in past month 83%	About once a fortnight, or about once a month 15% Not used in past month 58%
<b>Environmental Protection and Decarbonisation of Transport.</b>	<b>Outer Hebrides</b>	<b>Scotland</b>
Number of bicycles available for private use by households	None 73% One 13% Two 11% Three or more 3%	None 65% One 16% Two 13% Three or more 6%
Charging devices per 100,000 population	Charging devices per 100,000 population 89.8 Rapid charging devices per 100,000 26.2	Charging devices per 100,000 population 35.0 Rapid charging devices per 100,000 8.9
<b>An Inclusive Outer Hebrides.</b>	<b>Outer Hebrides</b>	<b>Scotland</b>
Number of cars available for private use by households: 2018	None 23% One 46% Two 26% Three or more 5%	None 29% One 42% Two 24% Three or more 6%
Employed adults (16+) not working from home - usual method of travel to work: 2018	Walking 15% Driver car/van 68% Passenger car / van 6% Bicycle 1% Bus 6% Other 3%	Walking 12% Driver car/van 63% Passenger car / van 5% Bicycle 3% Bus 10% Other 8%
Adults aged 60+ - possession of a concessionary fare pass, and use in the past month Has pass 84%	Every day 1% Almost every day 1% 2-3 times per week 4% Once a week 5% Once a fortnight 4% Once a month 6% Not used 63%	Every day 3% Almost every day 7% 2-3 times per week 18% Once a week 9% Once a fortnight 7% Once a month 10% Not used 34%

A Quality Place and Resilient Transport Network.	Outer Hebrides	Scotland
People aged 17+ - frequency of driving: 2018	Every day 51% At least three times per week 13% Once or twice per week 8%	Every day 41% At least three times per week 15% Once or twice per week 6%
Adults' views on satisfaction with public transport	Very satisfied 13% Fairly satisfied 53% Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied 23% Fairly dissatisfied 6% Very dissatisfied 5%	Very satisfied 21% Fairly satisfied 44% Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied 15% Fairly dissatisfied 12% Very dissatisfied 7%
Reliability and punctuality of lifeline ferry services	2018/19 CalMac Reliability 99.5 Punctuality 99.6	
Employed adults (16+) - place of work: 2018 and car/van commuters - could they use public transport: 2018	Could use public transport 20%, could not use public transport 80%	Could use public transport 44%, could not use public transport 56%
Traffic on Subsidised ferry services (2018)	687,500 passengers 247,300 cars 24,700 commercial vehicles and buses	
Terminal Passengers at Airports (Stornoway, Benbecula, Barra) 2018	Stornoway 133,000 Benbecula 35,000, Barra 15,000	

## 5. Delivering the Strategy

### *Working in partnership, community engagement and involvement*

The Comhairle can only achieve the LTS objectives by working in partnership with the residents and businesses of the Outer Hebrides, the Scottish Government, other public sector agencies and private sector providers. Together we can solve problems and provide innovative solutions. The delivery programme outlined in the LTS is based on discussions across the Comhairle and with partner organisations, as well as reflecting on a variety of recent community consultations that have been undertaken.

To ensure the success of the Delivery Plan it will be essential that the detail of actions are developed with full participation of communities, partner organisations and industry; this participative approach going forward will be fundamental to achieving the best outcomes through the LTS.

### *Governance*

Delivery of the Local Transport Strategy is the responsibility of a number of teams across the Comhairle. An annual monitoring report on the LTS Delivery Plan, along with a refreshed version of the Delivery Plan, will be put forward for review and approval to the Transport Member Officer Working Group and the Transport and Infrastructure Committee within the Comhairle.