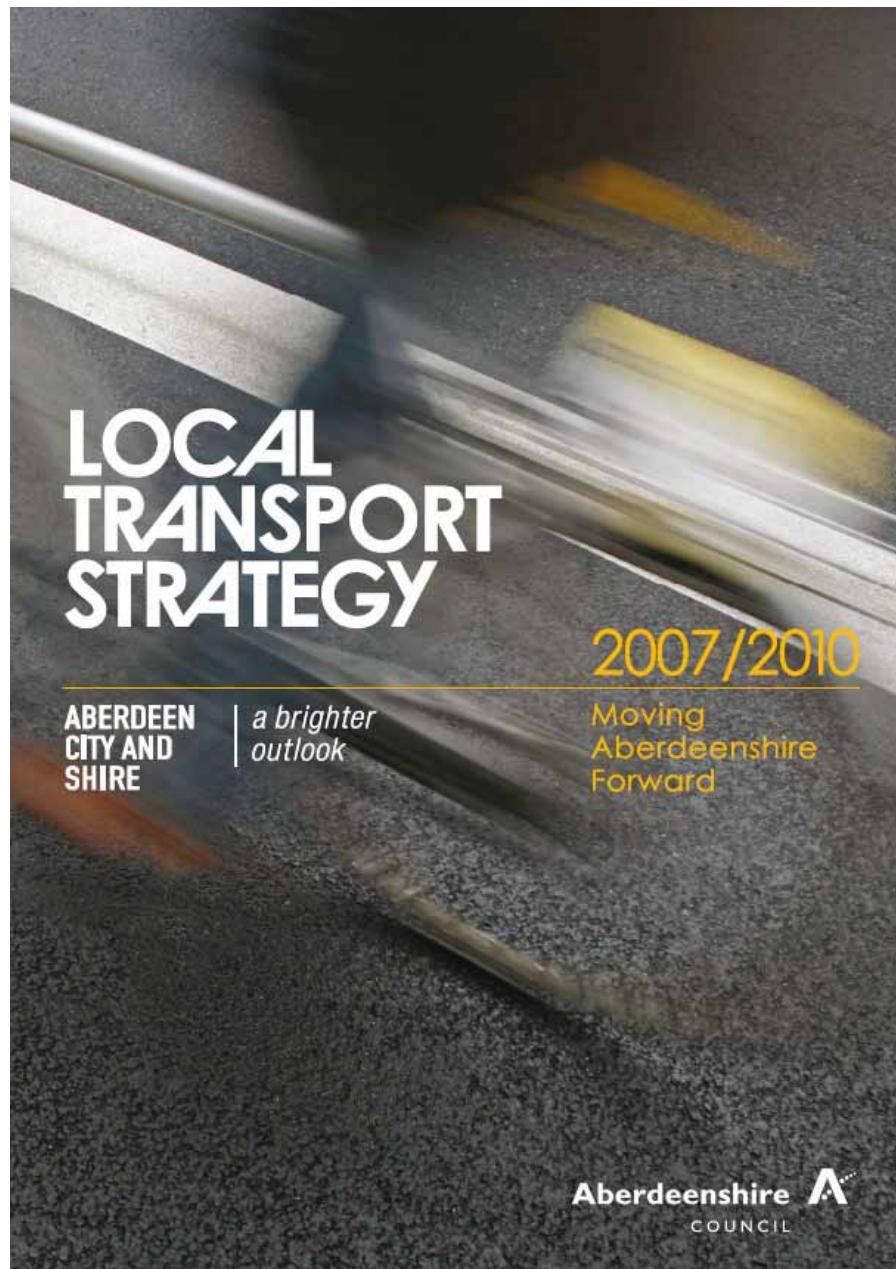


Scottish Transport Local Authority of the Year



Moving Aberdeenshire Forward

Background

The Aberdeenshire Council area covers some 6313 sqkm, has an expanding population, currently estimated at around 236,000, and with our partners in Aberdeen City is home to a powerhouse of the Scottish economy operating at a global level. The area is linked by some 5500 kms of roads, over 10% of the national stock, around 100 bus services and 6 railway stations. The transport challenges faced by Aberdeenshire Council are numerous and varied, however through clear strategies supported across political lines the Transportation Service is rising to these challenges and delivering improved services for the residents and businesses of Aberdeenshire.

Approaches to Delivery and Putting Policy into Practice

Clear corporate leadership and direction is provided by the Council's high level Strategic Priorities and the Single Outcome Agreement with the Scottish Government. The Local Transport Strategy (LTS) clearly links transportation aspirations to the strategic corporate agenda, while informing the development of practical delivery objectives within the Service Plan. Strong political support from elected members and the commitment of staff ensures that ink is translated to action.

Our LTS states:

"The Council can't discuss "what we do" without asking "how we do it." The LTS process must be considered alongside the Council's established ways of working, taking into account issues such as inclusion, accountability, partnership working, evidence-based decision making and efficiency. It must also be an active document, which can be reviewed, revised and disseminated at regular intervals."

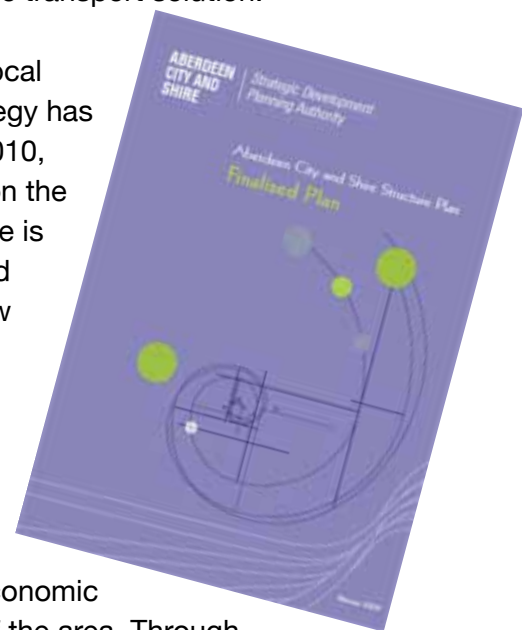
This approach is adopted across the Council's transport related services. Delivering travel behaviour change, improving road safety, and reducing the environmental impact of transport will not simply happen overnight and requires a long term, sustained effort on behalf of all – not just Council services.

The success of this partnership ethos is vividly demonstrated by the successful reopening of

Laurencekirk Station, after over 40 years of closure. A specific aspiration with our LTS has been realised through a partnership at national, regional and local levels to deliver a £3.4 million project, providing the opportunity of rail travel to an estimated 36,000 passengers annually.

The desire to create an "integrated transport system" is highlighted by the Council's recent opening of a 70 space car park to serve the new station. However we have gone a step further through the launching of a new A2B Demand Responsive Transport (DRT) service in the area, with a specific remit to serve the station – a truly integrated public transport solution.

Although the Local Transport Strategy has a life span to 2010, concentration on the short term future is not enough, and a long term view is required to ensure that we can continue to provide a transport system that supports the economic development of the area. Through substantial involvement in the development of the Aberdeen City and Shire Structure Plan long term transportation needs have been fully embedded into decision making at the highest level.



Innovation

Aberdeenshire Council has a long record of embracing innovation in the transport sector, and this has been recognised through numerous awards, including at last years Scottish Transport Awards and the 2009 National Transport Awards.

However opportunities always exist to improve the services that we provide, both internally and externally, through continued innovation. Within our Public Transport Unit this is demonstrated by our commitment to improve the transportation of pupils to school. With 13,000 pupils to transport on a daily basis, by over 100 operators, deploying around 950 vehicles, the impact on Council resources is enormous – amounting to more than £15 million annually.



To ensure that this service is delivered in as efficient a manner as possible a School Transport E-Scheduling package from Trapeze software has recently been purchased. It is believed that this is the first time an e-scheduling solution has been deployed for mainstream primary and secondary school transport.

The breadth of trips covered to accommodate the needs of mainstream primary and secondary, along with those of Special Education Needs (SEN) nursery, primary and secondary children, added an additional level of complexity to the development of a working solution. Ultimately this solution must provide e-scheduling capability for over 5.5 million pupil movements per year.

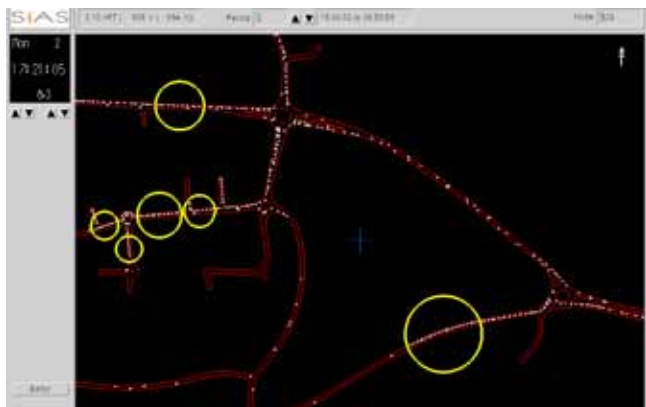
School Travel Planning has been a core area of work since 2002 and innovation is at the heart of the approach. Impressive results continue to be made through engagement with our schools, and importantly the pupils. Recently we have developed strategic partnerships with a number of other Local Authorities to drive forward more ambitious projects. One such initiative is GO FOR IT. Although initially launched some time ago, a strategic partnership with Highland Council has allowed the initiative to be developed through a process of continuous improvement. Through sharing of experiences, both positive and negative, the initiative has developed more quickly than could have been achieved through working in isolation. The benefits achieved from this approach far outweigh the “sum of the parts” and we will seek to utilise this model for future events.

Looking to the future we have recently completed micro simulation traffic models for seven of our main settlements. As well as modelling the current situation these now include the impacts associated with all currently consented planning applications plus all remaining unused land allocations within



the current Aberdeenshire Local Plan. This information has proved to be a valuable resource for our colleagues currently developing the new Local Development Plan.

In partnership with the Planning Service a strategy was adopted to carry out a limited number of “what if” tests for future development scenarios with options to include new infrastructure where the road network was under strain.



The requirements for additional residential and commercial provision identified in the new Local Development Plan process will undoubtedly place additional pressures on existing public infrastructure, managed and maintained by a range of public bodies.

To address these issues Aberdeenshire Council has established the Future Infrastructure Requirements for Services (FIRS) Group. Transportation plays a lead role within this group and the work done to model the main settlements has proved an invaluable tool in the work of this group.

Public transport provision is an essential plank within our current LTS, and the role that it has to play in modal shift is crucial.

Through partnership working with Operators, innovative initiatives have been developed to add to the attractiveness of public transport within the area. For example the Ellon Park and Ride site has been used to trial two “added value” initiatives. Aberdeenshire Council has installed free to use

Wi-Fi capability to the Park and Ride waiting room, with a recent user satisfaction survey indicating that this has been well received.

In addition, the bus Operator, Stagecoach Bluebird, has used the site for a trial of a reverse vending machine. This allows users to deposit drinks containers for recycling in return for vouchers providing discounts on future bus travel.

Measurement of Results

Alongside analysis of nationally produced indicators, broad spectrum local surveys, such as the Citizen’s Panel, the regular Area Bus Forums, and the comprehensive Aberdeenshire Resident’s Survey, are used to gather data on progress, actual and perceived. This is augmented with targeted work, such as 28 automated traffic counters, 6 automated cycle counters, bus user surveys, and the school travel Annual Hands-Up Survey.

Bus passenger data is collected through partnership arrangements with the operators, and augmented by “on service” surveys. An extensive customer satisfaction survey was



completed in March 2009 reaching over 3,300 bus users, with results showing high levels of satisfaction with the infrastructure and services provided. In addition to customer surveys, DRT management information is retrieved from in-house booking and dispatch centre software, providing a highly useful data set.

All information is used, along with a wide range of Management Indicators to monitor effectiveness of the Local Transport Strategy. The results of the LTS reviews are published annually in the Annual Progress Report (APR) via the Council's website. As well as providing an invaluable tool internally, allowing the opportunity to take a step back, the publication of the APR document ensures that our progress is available to all stakeholders in a transparent manner.

This wide range of data streams is used to compile the Council's Performance Indicators, which are reported to Elected Members on a quarterly basis, and ultimately inform progress towards the outcomes in the Single Outcome Agreement.

This information allows Elected Members to make information based investment decisions, ensuring that the ethos of best value is maintained in the provision of infrastructure and services.

Evidence of Progress

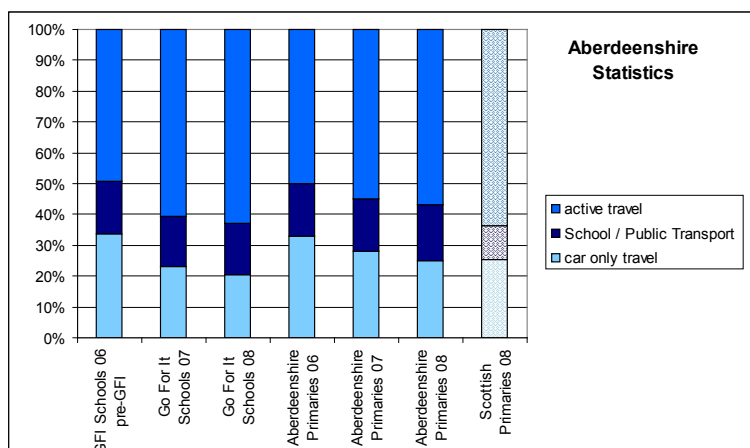
Aberdeenshire Council is committed to be the "Very Best of Scotland". Within the Transportation sector we aim to deliver a network, both in terms of infrastructure and services, that supports this aspiration.

As outlined earlier the deployment of e-scheduling software for school transport has already demonstrated the potential for real benefits. Evaluation of two trial locations have suggested a 21% reduction in vehicle mileage for Special

Education Needs services, and a 7% reduction in vehicle mileage for services to an Academy campus.

While the full financial savings will only become apparent following re-tendering of services, substantial savings are anticipated, along with significant reductions in associated carbon emissions.

School Travel Planning continues to be a success story, showing year on year reductions in pupils travelling to school by car. Over the past three years our Hands-Up Surveys have recorded improvements at most schools, with Active Travel modes now accounting for 52% of school journeys across Aberdeenshire, compared to 47% in 2006, while car based trips have fallen to 19% from 24% in 2006.



These improvements can only be delivered in partnerships with school communities. Through sustained effort and commitment by the School Travel Planning team some 159 (92%) schools across the area are now involved in the process.

Public transport is a key element of the region's transport provision, and Aberdeenshire Council is a proud member of the longest standing Quality Partnership for Public Transport in Scotland. Over recent years several Bus Route Development projects have been completed along our major radial routes, while Ellon Park and Ride and Peterhead Transport Interchange add to the recent infrastructure improvements.

Investment of £1.2 million has seen the development of 43 bus interchange points at strategic locations across the network. These interchanges provide a wide range of high quality passenger facilities including illuminated bus shelters, raised kerbs and augmented information displays. 19 of these locations also include interactive travel planning terminals providing the opportunity to check timetable information and plan journeys across Aberdeenshire – and beyond.



Through partnership with Operators currently 55% of services are covered by the Aberdeenshire Connect through ticketing initiative. When combined with service improvements initiated by Operators the overall public transport “product” has undergone significant improvements in recent years.

This is borne out by impressive patronage growth, of up to 27% on the Deeside Corridor, as well as high user satisfaction indicators.

In March 2009 an extensive customer satisfaction survey, reaching over 3,300 bus users, indicated that service delivery exceeded the national benchmark in 80% of the high level national Bus Quality Indicators.

A targeted survey at Ellon Park and Ride also indicated that the high quality infrastructure provide at the site, including the recent installation of free Wi-Fi, is appreciated by users and ensures that the patronage figures continue to rise, up 23.4% in 2008/09 alone.

By demonstrating a long term commitment to Demand Response Transport (DRT) Aberdeenshire Council has continued to build on its pioneering role in the development of such services. The importance of DRT to Aberdeenshire residents is demonstrated by 19.5% patronage growth, in 2008/09, across the Aberdeenshire A2B dial-a-bus service.

Through its involvement in the Interreg North Sea Programme project StratMoS, Aberdeenshire



Council is also delivering for freight. The project specifically looks at the role ports can play in an integrated logistics chain. As a peripheral region improved connectivity is essential and through involvement in this project it has been possible to share experiences across 29 partner organisations from across northern Europe.

As well as directly achieving targets set within the LTS these improvements are assisting the Council achieve corporate goals in relation to carbon neutrality and the climate change agenda. The Council is committed to extending these positive trends, regarding the progress made to date as encouragement to deliver continued improvements in the future.

Conclusion

Aberdeenshire Council shares the Scottish Government's view that transportation is a fundamental requirement for a Wealthier and Fairer, Smarter, Healthier, Safer and Stronger, and Greener Scotland. Through a consistent, coordinated approach, supported from the highest political level the Council has demonstrated a long term commitment to the delivery of high quality, innovative services to meet the needs of all.

In recent years tangible results have been the reward for this approach. However the details contained within this submission highlights the commitment to build upon these previous successes, to strive to be "the very best of Scotland."



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The Council has a clear approach to transportation. Its strategies are aligned and well articulated, and it has made improvements to infrastructure and public transport usage. It works well with other partners and responds to local needs. It has made significant improvements in road safety and the condition of its roads is among the best in Scotland.

Extract from Aberdeenshire Council – Audit of Best Value and Community Planning:
Prepared by Audit Scotland, June 2008.



Aberdeenshire
COUNCIL

