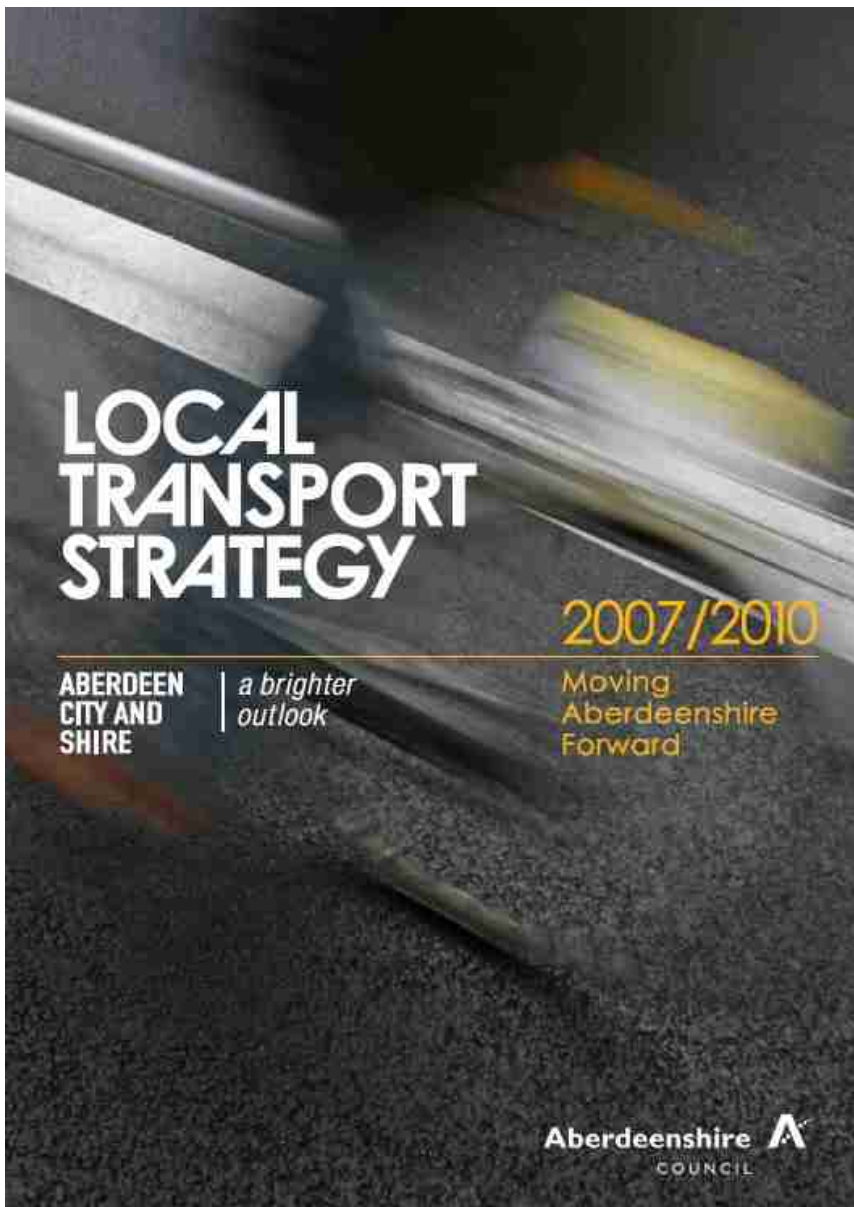


Scottish Transport Local Authority of the Year



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 the 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, 120 bus services and 5 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 recent Single Outcome Agreement with the Scottish Government. The Local Transport Strategy (LTS) clearly links the 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.

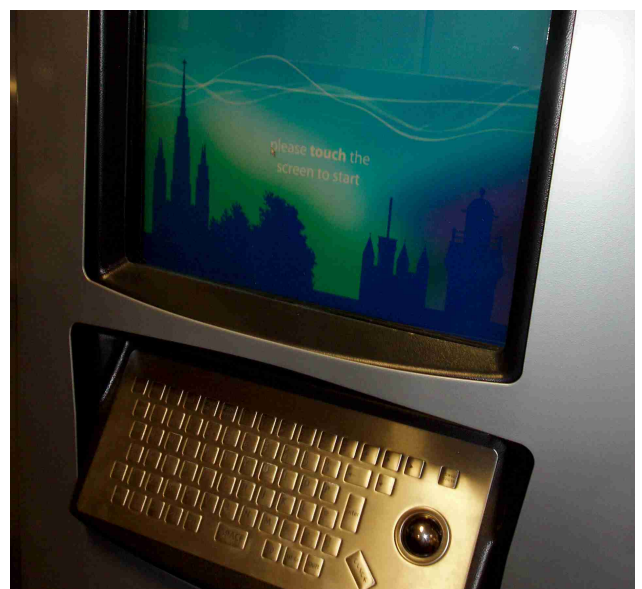
Partnerships are an essential delivery mechanism and the Council is currently leading partnerships covering issue such as, safety cameras, school travel plans, rail freight, public transport and economic development.

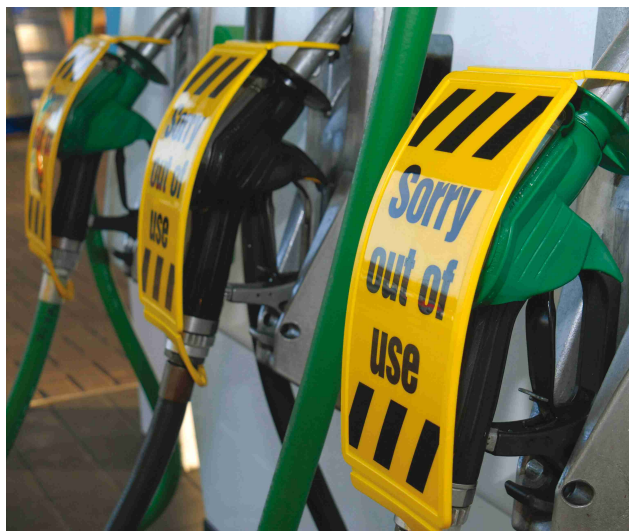
Social inclusion and access to services are crucial in Aberdeenshire, and transportation has a major role to play in ensuring that opportunities are available to all. Aberdeenshire Council has a long standing commitment to the provision of Demand Responsive Transport (DRT) services, with rising passenger numbers, a real testament to policies being delivered. The continued commitment to assisted access to taxis, through the TaxiCard scheme, with 3000 members also demonstrates the implementation of this essential policy.

Innovation

Aberdeenshire Council has a long record of embracing innovation in the transport sector, from initiatives such as StepChange and the early DRT services, to the first interactive signs and part time speed limits outside schools in Scotland.

This has continued with the establishment of interactive transport planning terminals at 24 key public transport locations across our network, enhancing travel planning services. The Council also maintains up to date information, including that for neighbouring authorities, to support Traveline Scotland. In addition the Traveline SMS service number is now displayed on 83% of bus stop information flags.





Through its involvement in the North East Scotland Rail Freight Development Group, Aberdeenshire Council is also delivering for freight. Having successfully lobbied for the delivery of rail gauge enhancement to the area, new services are being developed by industry. At this time these proposals are still confidential, but Rail Freight Operating Companies are actively pursuing the opportunities available through gauge enhancement, helping to remove HGVs from the road network.

Aberdeenshire Council's LTS links transportation services to the corporate Vision and it is essential that its aims and objectives are met. The improvements outlined above show significant progress towards those ends.

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 deliver continued improvements in the future

Conclusion

Aberdeenshire Council considers transportation to be a crucial aspect to the future of our area, and have demonstrated a long term commitment to the delivery of high quality, innovative services to meet the needs of all.

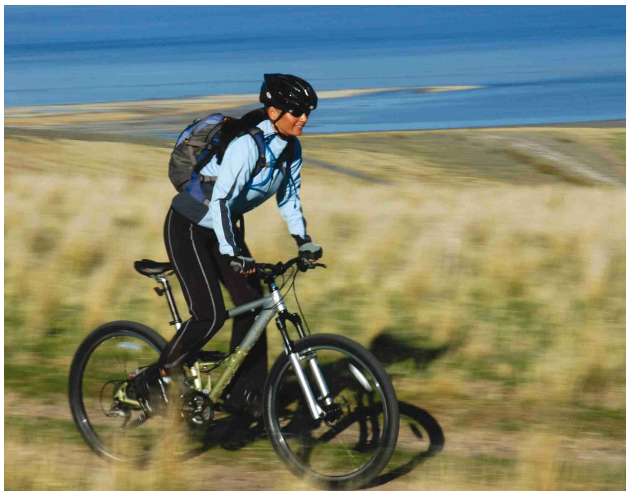
This commitment comes from the highest levels within the Council, as exemplified by the publication of the new Local Transport Strategy 2007-2010.

As outlined above the policies already in place, combined with the hard work, dedication, and innovation of the Transportation team, are delivering tangible results for all in Aberdeenshire.



Car based travel to our schools has reduced by 4% to 21% since 2006, ahead of the Local Transport Strategy target. These improvements are being driven by the Council's continued support for the School Travel Planning process, now including some 151 (90%) schools across the area.

This positive trend is also recognised in the recently published Cycling Scotland Audit, indicating the Council's performance has improved by 10% compared to 2005. This places the Council in the top 5 performing Local Authorities, a result to be proud of – and one on which we intend to build.



Aberdeenshire Council is a proud member of the longest standing Quality Partnership for Public Transport in Scotland. Through this partnership Bus Route Development projects have been completed on three major radial routes, Stonehaven–Aberdeen, Banchory–Aberdeen, and very recently Westhill–Aberdeen. The improved infrastructure and service levels have led to impressive increases in passenger numbers. Both the Stonehaven–Aberdeen and Banchory–Aberdeen routes have shown growth in excess of 20% since their inception in 2006 and 2007 respectively, with the early results on the Westhill corridor exceeding 15%.

These are complemented by the information and infrastructure provided across the network and clear progress has been made. In 2008 across Aberdeenshire there are:

- Over 70% of stops with information panels
- Over 80% of stops displaying Traveline Scotland SMS bus time details
- Over 97% of timetable displays, with comprehensive and up-to-date information

In addition to conventional public transport services, Aberdeenshire Council has been at the forefront of DRT provision for some time. Within the Council's LTS the commitment to extend these services is clear, and good progress is being made. Passenger numbers are up by 24% across all services this year alone, and since January 2008, 4 new services have been introduced. .



A recent programme of replacement has seen the introduction of some 203 solar powered bus shelters. As well as delivering improvements to transport infrastructure the commitment to use this technology is assisting Aberdeenshire Council in achieving its broader sustainability targets, and reducing our Carbon Footprint.

The Aberdeenshire Council Travel Plan team continually seek new ways to raise awareness and market behaviour change initiatives. By building local campaigns around national issues they take every opportunity to exploit potential synergies.

Most recently this has focused on a cycling video competition being run on our Travel Planning You Tube site (<http://www.youtube.com/AberdeenshireTP>) which has seen around 1000 hits in the first month and significant interaction with Aberdeenshire residents, councillors and staff

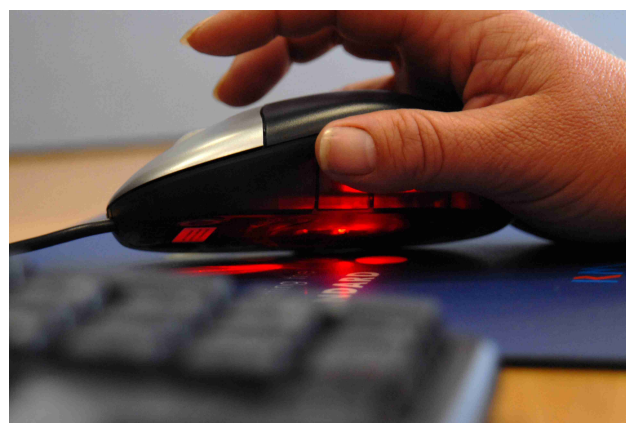
School Travel Planning has been a core area of work since 2002 and innovation is at the heart of their approaches to engage with pupils. For instance a current initiative involves children at various schools taking digital photographs of their journey to school, to explain what is important for them in relation to cycling and walking. As well as feeding the individual School Travel Plan, this information is being used to inform the emerging Cycling and Walking Strategy. This area of work is covered more fully in a separate submission.

Aberdeenshire Council continues to provide IT HotStops in two of our major towns, Peterhead and Huntly as per our 2007 submission. Following the review of the initial trials, both these award-

winning sites are now delivered through community partnerships in town centre locations. An extension of this initiative is to provide free Wi-Fi access at Ellon Park and Ride (where passenger levels rose by 8% in the last year) allowing the service to be marketed as a business tool, and following discussion with the commercial bus provider Wi-Fi access may be introduced on the A90 corridor.

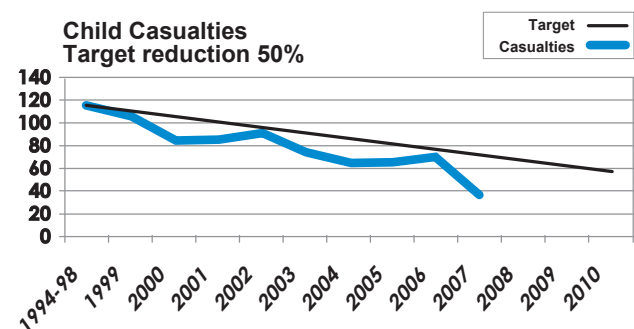
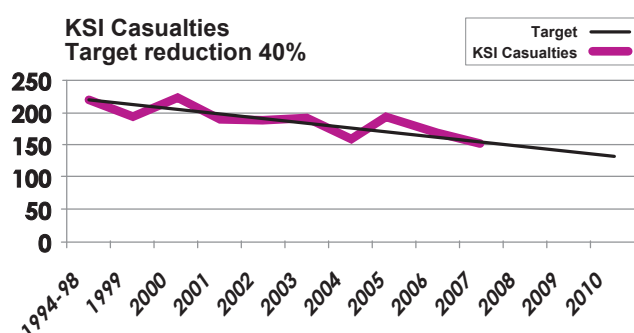
As a large service, with responsibility for some of the major corporate initiatives, such as the Travel Plan, the Transportation Service has a clear role to lead by example.

Transportation has been at the forefront of trials in relation to travel reduction projects, such as remote ICT access and other flexible working initiatives. Within the Service a wide range of



staff, at all grades, are undertaking such trials. The results to date are very encouraging, with one Manager reducing commuting mileage by over 2400 miles/pa.

Through ground breaking initiatives such as STARS (Secondary Two and Road Safety) and “Safe Drive Stay Alive” the Council continues to innovate in the delivery of the road safety message. Combined with innovative infrastructure improvements good progress is being made towards the 2010 targets.



The creation of a Road Casualty Reduction Partnership, under the auspices of the North East Scotland Joint Public Sector Group, is another “first”. Since July 2007 a group of officers representing the transport, health, education and the emergency service sectors have been developing a new conjoined strategy to tackle the levels of death and serious injury on the road network. This is about to go out to consultation and represents a major step forward in how this aspect is addressed.

Measurement of Results

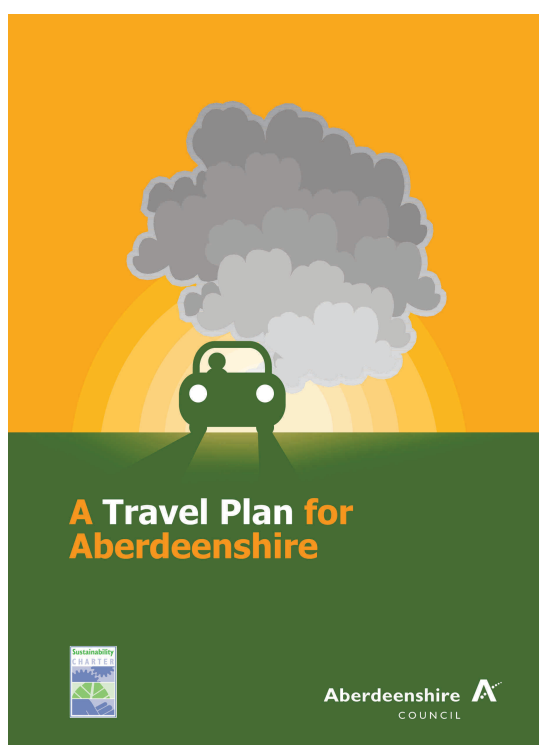
Following a critical review of the previous version, the current LTS includes a robust monitoring regime based around the analysis of many existing, nationally produced, data sources to measure the strategy’s key performance indicators.

In addition 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, for example 28 automated traffic counters, bus user surveys, and the Annual Hands Up Survey - giving a snapshot of travel data for some 30,000 pupils.

Bus passenger data is collected through partnership arrangements with the operators, and augmented by “on service” surveys. DRT information is retrieved from in-house booking and dispatch centre software, providing a highly useful data set. These passenger figures are combined with a wide range of Management Indicators to inform Council Performance Indicators, which are reported to members on a quarterly basis, and will ultimately link to the outcomes in our 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 supported bus services.

The quality of the road network is of major importance to Aberdeenshire's residents, and they tell us so in biannual Resident's Surveys. Whilst the annual Road Condition Survey for 2007 shows Aberdeenshire 3rd in Scotland the national statistics on journey patterns are less revealing and until recently little local data has been collected on the actual journey characteristics of trips on the local road network.

To that end Aberdeenshire Council is currently undertaking a Journey Data Logger Study involving the collection of trip information across all travel modes, using a range of different technology. Early indications are that this information will provide a valuable data set to augment that already collected from our fixed automatic traffic counters, allowing better decisions to be made regarding network management. An additional benefit is the ability of the Travel Planning team to use the information to demonstrate that the car is not always the best option – a valuable resource in our Behaviour Change aims.



The publication of the Local Transport Strategy Annual Progress Report provides the opportunity to take a step back and review what has been delivered, and flag up areas where performance could be better. The annual Publication of the report online, both internally and externally, will also prove beneficial in helping to increase the visibility of the Local Transport Strategy as a working document.

Evidence of Progress

In the past few years Aberdeenshire Council has continued to build upon the aims and aspirations to become the "Very Best of Scotland". Within the Transportation sector the fruits of these labours are beginning to be recognised and across a range of areas of work there is evidence of real progress. This has been acknowledged through the Audit of Best Value and Community Planning for Aberdeenshire Council published in June 2008 which stated "The Council has a clear approach to transportation, with strategies aligned and well articulated. Significant improvements have been made in road safety and public transport infrastructure and usage, and the road condition is among the best in Scotland."

In the sphere of Active Travel the Council has seen impressive improvements in areas such as travel to school. Over the past two years our Hands Up Surveys have recorded improvements at most schools, with Active Travel modes now accounting for 50% of school journeys across Aberdeenshire in 2007, compared to 47% in 2006.

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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

