

ISSUED: 1st September 2019

Glen Urquhart and Strathglass Transport Feasibility Study

PREPARED FOR: Soirbheas



Soirbheas

Investing in the communities of Glen Urquhart & Strathglass

Soirbheas is a registered charity, whose objectives are to strengthen and support the communities of Glen Urquhart and Strathglass, through investment in local renewable energy schemes. The organisation aims to improve energy efficiency of the housing within our communities, strengthen the local economy, protecting our environment for future generations and providing services that enable elderly people to live longer in their own homes.



Urban Foresight® is a multidisciplinary innovation practice that is dedicated to advancing the next generation of technologies, services and policy frameworks for cities. We work with ambitious organisations around the world on projects that improve lives, protect the environment and boost local economies.

Photo opposite: Dan Thomas

The study has been funded through the Delivering Community Benefits of Civic Energy (COBEN) Project; Soirbheas and Highland Council.



Transport Feasibility Study

Why?

The Local Energy Plan for Drumnadrochit (July 2018) identified a number of actions that could reduce carbon emissions and energy consumption across different sectors. Transport was identified as a key area with clear options for reducing car use and improving mobility access.

What?

The Transport Feasibility study evidences the transport challenges faced by residents and visitors in Glen Urquhart and Strathglass gathered through a process of stakeholder engagement. It appraises options that were originally identified as a result of the outcomes of the Local Energy Plan.

How?

To address these challenges, the Transport Feasibility Study explores different transport options which also aim to reduce private car dependency in the area. These have been developed to produce an understanding of the scope, timelines and approximate cost of the different opportunities moving forward.

Stakeholder engagement

The main aims of the stakeholder engagement included:

- to ascertain where people are travelling,
- how they are travelling, and
- why they are opting for that particular mode of transport.

Engagement activities included:

- targeted interviews of over 25 stakeholders across Glen Urquhart and Strathglass;
- surveys completed by over 250 people including residents and visitors;
- a stakeholder workshop to refine transport options.

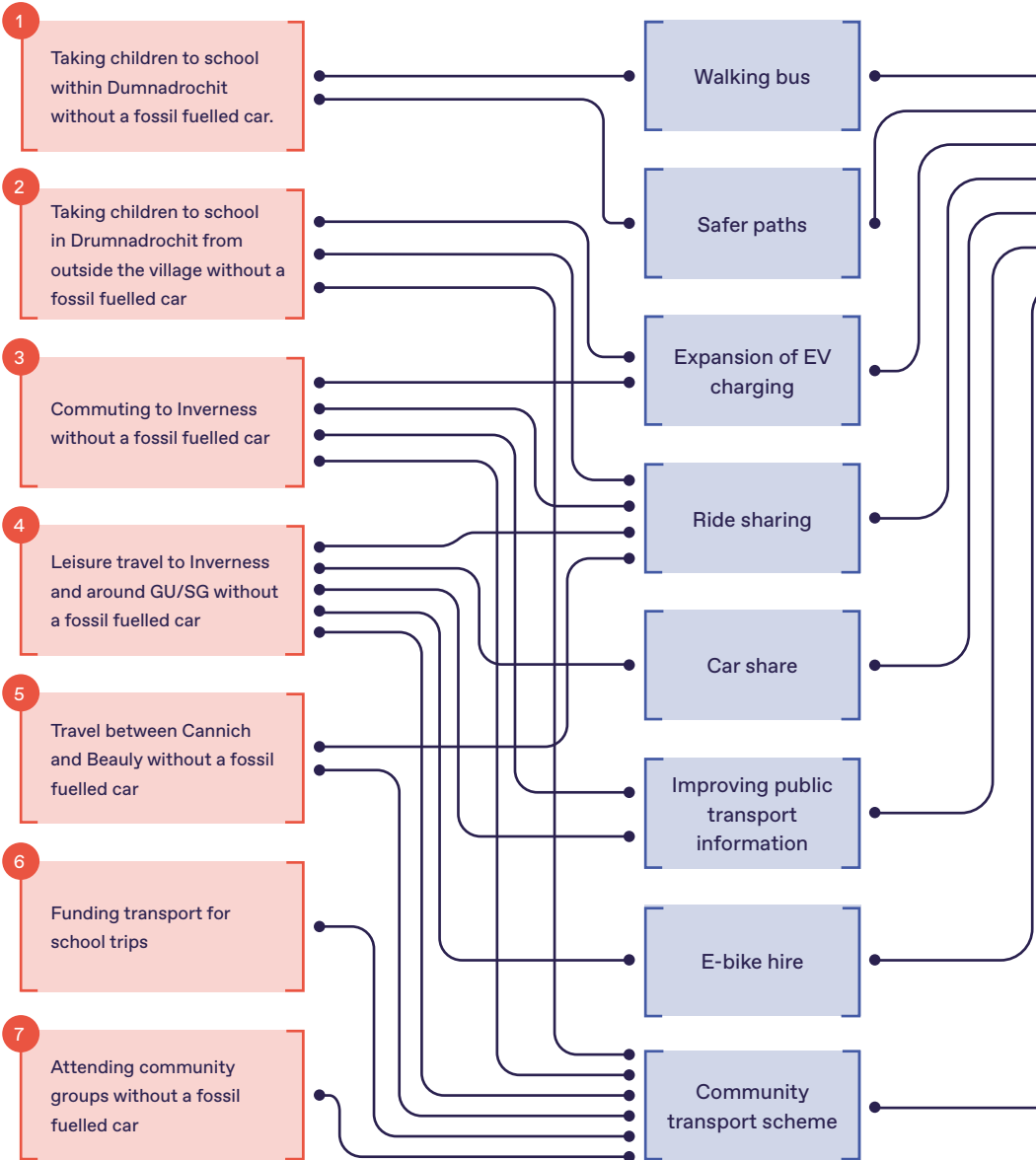
Key transport challenges for residents and visitors to the area were identified. This stakeholder engagement aimed to capture the views of the different demographics and community groups active in the area as well as representing the population spread across the two Glens.

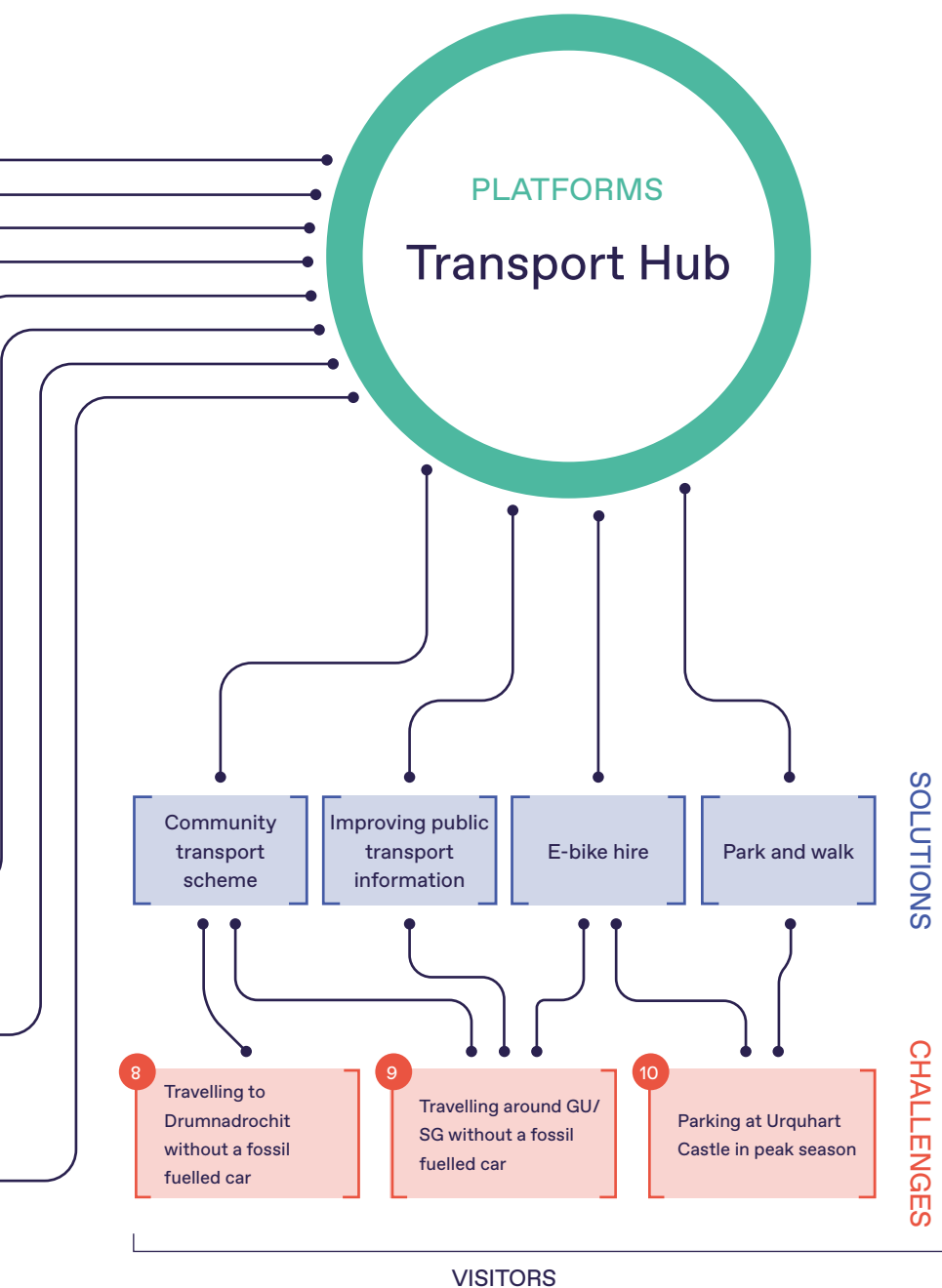
In total over 20 interviews were carried out across different community groups, different areas of the Glen and different demographics. For the survey there were 154 respondents to the adult resident's survey, 156 for the youth resident survey and 49 for the visitor survey.

RESIDENTS

CHALLENGES

SOLUTIONS





Challenges

The challenges identified illustrate the main concerns of residents and visitors to the area across different age groups, geographic spread occupations.

Challenges for residents

The topics raised here illustrate how everyone in the Glen Urquhart and Strathglass region interacts with the local transport system. Long-term resilience can support economic growth in the area, allowing locals and visitors to access opportunities without the necessity of a fossil-fuel car.

The key challenges for residents were identified as:

1. Taking children to school within Drumnadrochit without a fossil fuelled car,
2. Taking children to school in Drumnadrochit from outside the village without a fossil fuelled car,
3. Commuting to Inverness without a fossil fuelled car,
4. Leisure travel to Inverness and around Glen Urquhart and Strathglass without a fossil fuelled car,
5. Travel between Cannich and Beaully without a fossil fuelled car,
6. Funding transport for school trips,
7. Attending community groups without a fossil fuelled car.



Challenges for visitors

Visitor numbers to the area are increasing year on year. This is partly due to the growing interest in the area and Urquhart Castle. This increase is having an impact on the transport infrastructure in the area. Tourism is a key revenue stream for the area: Glen Affric was recently voted one of the most beautiful glens in Scotland, and the attractions surrounding Loch Ness attract hundreds of thousands of visitors annually. As tourism in the Highlands grows, the resulting impact on amenities and transport infrastructure needs to be sustainably managed.

The main challenges for visitors were identified as:

8. Travelling to Drumnadrochit without a fossil fuelled car,
9. Travelling around Glen Urquhart and Strathglass without a fossil fuelled car,
10. Parking at Urquhart Castle in peak season.

Solutions

The Options Appraisal aims to address the challenges identified from the stakeholder engagement. Providing an overview of the benefits, dependencies, costs, timeline of implementation and best practice examples for these transport options. These transport options aim to improve mobility in the regions of Glen Urquhart and Strathglass whilst reducing car dependency and taking steps towards decarbonisation of the local transport system.

The proposed solutions that are explored include:

1. A walking bus within Drumnadrochit to encourage active travel for the primary school
2. Developing safer paths in Drumnadrochit, Balnain, and Cannich to allow for active travel and safer routes to school
3. Expansion of the EV charging network in Glen Urquhart and Strathglass
4. Increase Ride Sharing provision - formalising and expand
5. Car share scheme
6. Improving the public transport information availability
7. Introducing e-bike hire to Glen Urquhart and Strathglass
8. Introduce a Community Transport Scheme including a park and walk for Urquhart Castle
9. Establishing a Transport Hub



Photo: Julia Hodges

The vision would be to create a rural transport hub to provide information and co-ordinate transport services for the community and visitors to the area.

The hub would be a place from which a range of transport services can be managed. It is also a key node in the provision of those services and communicates information about transport services.

Many of the services described in the options appraisal could operate as stand-alone measures, but the introduction of a hub can tie all these strands together supporting the roll out of these different options in the long term. A transport hub has both physical (e.g. vehicle hire) and digital (e.g. website) aspects.

Next Steps

The immediate next step following the finalisation of this report would be for the community to review the options presented here and decide collectively if and how they would like to pursue each one. A detailed delivery programme could then be worked up as a framework for moving forward.

