



# Sustainable Travel Programme

## Agenda Item 7

### National Park Authority Board Meeting

11 September 2023

Paper for information

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#### 1. Purpose

1.1. To provide a summary overview and update of progress on the emerging sustainable travel work which we has developed in recent years.

#### 2. Recommendation(s)

2.1. Board Members are asked to **note** the contents of this report for information.

#### 3. Contribution to National Park Partnership Plan and/or Our 5-year Plan

3.1. The programme of work supports the National Park Partnership Plan outcomes under:

- Priority 5.3 Active Travel
- Priority 6.2 Water Bus Network
- Priority 8.2 Public Transport

3.2. The programme also supports the following outcomes within Our 5-year Plan:

- Priority 2 Visitor Infrastructure
- Priority 4 Attractive, Healthy and Accessible Destinations
- Priority 5 Place Making and Sustainable Communities

#### **4. Sustainable Travel Programme overview**

4.1. This programme of activity which emerged through the Covid19 Pandemic developed from some existing and new projects across multiple teams into a more strategic conversation about how to achieve a more significant impact on existing traffic congestion issues and resultant climate emissions. This included aspects such as data collection, policy development, pilot service development through to communication campaigns. At this time the Programme includes: Tactran Journey Planner App; Shuttle Bus Pilot; Sustainable Travel Options Appraisal and Modal Shift Study; Datalab Data Analyst Placement focused on journey demand; and National discussions through Visitor Management Sustainable Transport Working Group.

4.2. The aim of the programme is that the National Park Authority is able to share insights and support partners to develop a system and multiple services so that everyone living in and visiting the National Park has less car dependency, benefiting from a reliable and comprehensive sustainable transport network that serves multiple needs and delivers significant modal shift. The economics of such a network will be dependent upon the large visitor volumes who would use such services however community journey demand and transport poverty will be considered throughout as the programme develops.

#### **5. Futures Group role and legacy**

5.1. The Futures Group was formed in December 2020. Its purpose is to provide the opportunity for Board members to contribute early thinking on strategic topics or significant projects prior to further development by officers and subsequent Board decision-making.

5.2. On the 15 of August the Futures Group met to discuss Sustainable Travel for a third time to further digest the systemic challenges and opportunities around modal shift and car dependency for journeys into and within the National Park.

5.3. This session developed the discussions which had emerged through previous Future Group sessions on 28th April 2021 and 27th October 2021. At that time the Group shared a closing statement which was:

5.3.1. *“Embedding sustainable transport solutions for visitors to our National Park is a complex and multi-faceted issue requiring true partnership working between local, regional and national stakeholders.*

*Futures Group members and the wider board have become far more informed of this complexity through exploratory sessions with officers. We have also gained a better understanding of the fundamental importance of the issue to address climate, environmental and capacity pressures within the Park area and more widely given the opportunity for the progress we make to support and facilitate changes elsewhere.*

*We fully endorse this being a priority for the organisation and look forward to further insights and plans being brought forward in due course. It is hoped that officers will draw confidence from our deliberations, be empowered to pursue agreement with partners that modal shift is essential and agreement that existing barriers in both policy and funding frameworks are addressed as a priority.*

*Furthermore, it is clear that sustainable transport requires a ‘whole system’ approach and ensures that any implementation of plans whether by the park or partners, including the private sector, is inclusive and accessible for all.*

*The Futures group also fully endorse and support the pivotal role that the designated Board Champion will play in supporting this work.”*

5.4. This most recent Futures Group session included valuable contributions from Transport Scotland, the National Park Youth Committee and a speaker from Catalonia sharing their experiences and perspectives.

5.5. The next steps are that the Chair of the Futures Group will draft a statement of intent. However there was general consensus at the meeting that: the National Park Authority ‘should be the lead authority’; a Sustainable Travel Programme should deliver against outcomes which are broader than economics; doing nothing is the riskiest option / is not an option; key enablers and next steps could focus on political will and securing resource to build a partnership team to take this work forward; a vision and entrepreneurial mindset is required.

## **6. Sustainable Travel Options Appraisal & Modal Shift Report**

6.1. We are delighted to share the Option Appraisal and Modal Shift Report which emerged as a key action through the 2021 Futures Group discussions. Appendix 1 includes the full report from Ansons Consulting who had won the competitive tender to deliver this piece of work through 2022 and 2023. This comprehensive Report is also accompanied by a 151 page Background Research Report which collates all of the data and stakeholder engagement and insights which have fed into the final report. The Report was funded in partnership with Strathclyde Passenger Transport (SPT) and Transport Scotland through the Smarter Choices Smarter Places which is administered by Paths for All. The full value of the work was £70k. The National Park Authority provided match funding and led a project steering group which included SPT and Tactran as two key Regional Transport Partnerships.

6.2. It should be noted by members that this Report does not constitute a set of agreed actions and responsibilities. The Report provides an independent, well considered, well informed and robust springboard to develop and deliver initiatives which could reduce car dependency across the area. Finalised formally adopted policies and delivery plans across all partners will need to go through the normal governance scrutiny processes as required.

6.3. The headline reflections shared within the Report are:

- Compelling case for change/issue to be addressed;
- Step change is required;
- Multiple interventions (including car disincentives) need to land at same time;
- There is an economic case for sustainable £9m service;
- Strategy should initially be taken forward as a project.

6.4. The key recommendations which Ansons outline within the report are:

- Gateways and hubs (Strategic capital investment already started through Rural Tourism Infrastructure Fund work);
- Public transport (investment in coverage, connectivity and capacity);
- Taxi role;
- Active travel and recreation;
- Water transport opportunities;

- Parking & traffic management (Revenue generation and behaviour change);
- Visitor communications and promotion (including integrated ticketing);
- All managed through a new governance model that ensures strategic whole system approach which manages and targets revenues;
- Initial focus on South and South-east of National Park (including Callander).

6.5. The suggested phased delivery plan focuses on the development of improved partnership and governance arrangements which can create a system with the potential to deliver modal shift and reduce car dominance and dependency. The Report states:

*"In order to deliver the recommended strategy there is a need to develop new governance and finance arrangements, because:*

- *It requires co-ordination throughout the National Park area, across local authority boundaries and across different modes of transport;*
- *It requires a different approach to financing and investment for physical infrastructure, service provision and ongoing management;*
- *The ambition requires changes to the economic model in which services are delivered: whilst operating the enhanced services can realise additional revenues and capture more spend locally, the strategy will require pooling of costs and revenues across geographic boundaries and across different transport services, as well as securing new revenue streams."*

6.6. Officers believe that the Ansons recommendations largely align with the National Park Authority Place Programme and the policies highlighted within the Draft National Park Partnership Plan. The Executive and Officers will continue to discuss the recommendations and opportunities with key partners and stakeholders to agree key next steps and resource requirements.

## **7. Shuttle Bus Pilot Initiatives**

7.1. The Board are aware that a shuttle bus service was trialled within the Trossachs area of the National Park for the 2022 season. Despite a physical service not being implemented, there were significant project findings and the difficulties across the sector were highlighted. A strong working relationship was also developed with Stirling Council.

7.2. The shuttle bus project was continued for the 2023 season. Increased funding was made available from SCSP and matched via support from BMW. Developing on from the good working relationships developed

during the previous project cycle, a Service Level Agreement was adopted between the NP and Stirling Council, formalising their role as specialist advisors to the project.

- 7.3. Efforts were initially focussed along the Trossachs route, but the tendering exercise was unsuccessful. A secondary tendering exercise was undertaken for a route operating within the Arrochar and Tarbet area, modelled on a service proposed by the local Community Destination Group. This route would link several popular destinations with a local train station, holiday villages, pier (used for loch cruises), and would also supplement an existing local service that had an infrequent timetable and didn't operate on a Sunday.
- 7.4. An operator was identified who was interested in running the route, but staff losses during the tendering window meant that the service could not be taken forwards. No other operators were available to take on the route. Driver availability and lack of capacity within the sector overall remain significant barriers.
- 7.5. The Project team are currently discussing whether to re-tender for a 2024 service which builds on the learnings from 2022 and 2023. Both funders, BMW and Smarter Choices Smarter Places have indicated that they would support a further project and the latter has confirmed that they would welcome a bid in September 2023 so that any tender to market can be advertised in December 2023 for a summer 2024 service to address one of the timeline barriers previously raised by potential operators.
- 7.6. It is also worth noting that Smarter Choices Smarter Places are supportive of 2023 Shuttle Bus Pilot funding being reallocated to subsidising and promoting free transport on existing services in March 2024, similar to a Christmas programme delivered by Perth & Kinross Council last year. Officers are investigating the value and viability of such an initiative.

## **8. National Park Journey Planning App**

- 8.1. This digital application is part of a Tactran led Mobility as a Service (MaaS) pilot programme called ENABLE. MaaS is a "service that enables users to plan, book, and pay for multiple types of mobility services through a joint digital channel." Transport Scotland are the substantive funder for the programme through the MaaS Investment Fund.
- 8.2. Through 2022 usage for the National Park Journey Planner App dwarfed parallel ENABLE pilots in health and education sectors. Usage of over

7500 users planning 10,000 journeys also dwarfed other MaaS pilot projects across the country.

- 8.3. Tactran and partners were able to secure funding to extend the National Park Journey Planner through 2023 to provide more time for public awareness and pilot learning.
- 8.4. Survey feedback from the National Park Journey Planner App has indicated that 52% of users in 2022 said using the app had made it more likely that they would use public transport, walk or cycle instead of driving. It is therefore crucial to retain this positive response and further drive the message that sustainable travel is a viable option for journeys into and around the National Park for visitors.
- 8.5. At this time Officers are supporting Tactran to ensure that monitoring and promotion of the service remains of a high quality. Officers are also supporting discussions around pilot legacy and long-term funding with Tactran, Transport Scotland and partners.
- 8.6. The pilot has faced challenges around ticket sales, account creation and income generation which can be addressed within any legacy project. There is no doubt however that the pilot has further evidenced public appetite for sustainable journey planning information, the popularity of the National Park area, and provide very valuable data on where people are coming from and where they want to go. This data in turn fed into the Ansons Consultancy Modal Shift Report.

## **9. Data gathering**

- 9.1. A key learning from partner discussions over the last couple of years was that more data gathering and presentational work was required to make a compelling case for change for sustainable transport interventions around popular outdoor recreation destinations was not fully understood. There is a building consensus that addressing car dependency and preference for long distance leisure journeys to these destinations has to be part of Scotland's ambition of a 20% reduction in car kilometres by 2030.
- 9.2. The Ansons Consultancy Report goes some way to addressing the "case for change" however, through the National Visitor Management Sustainable Transport Working Group, Officers have secured Transport Scotland funding and support to host a short-term data analyst post through Datalab which will build a clearer picture around journey demand and transport corridors. The results of this placement will be shared later in the year.

9.3. Parallel visitor management data collection is linked to this work so that we and other high volume outdoor recreation destinations can clearly show trends and numbers who are visiting and enjoying our iconic hills, lochs and villages.

## **10. Partnership, Governance and Resourcing**

10.1. An additional outcome of the Ansons stakeholder engagement and workshops in developing their Report is that we have a base of key stakeholders to build governance and partnership discussions from. One Governance focused meeting has been hosted since the Ansons Report was finalised and there is an intention to develop this work as a matter of priority.

10.2. To date no key partners across Local Authorities, Regional Transport Partnerships, Transport Scotland, Forestry and Land Scotland and VisitScotland have indicated a reluctance to explore governance and partnership arrangements which could create efficiencies and support transition in this area of work.

10.3. At this time the Sustainable Travel Programme is delivered across multiple roles across National Park Authority Teams with no dedicated staff. Smarter Choices Smarter Places funding has secured a 0.5 Project Support post over the past 18 months and further discussions within the National Park Authority and across the emerging partnership would seek to develop a multi-agency team with a wide skill set to help develop and deliver a governance model and programme that can deliver tangible change.

## **11. Appendices**

11.1. Appendix 1: Sustainable Travel Options Appraisal & Modal Shift Report (Ansons Consultancy)

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