

Public Sector Readiness for and Public Engagement in Carbon Responsible Transport Strategies for the North East of Scotland.

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Executive Summary

1. Robert Gordon University, as part of the EC CARE North project have been modelling the impacts of transport initiatives in the NE of Scotland and examining the importance of the urban realm in efforts to reduce carbon emissions from transport. Despite the involvement of Aberdeen City Council in the project, there has been a slow rate of progress. This study set out to establish the reasons for this lack of progress, examining how effectively national policies are translated at local level; the extent to which local public sector bodies engage with citizens on this agenda; and the extent to which progress is hindered by a perceived local pro-car culture.
2. There is a good level of understanding of the political, environmental and socio-economic drivers for adoption of low carbon transport policies at national level.
3. In general, however, there was a lack of detailed knowledge about local transport initiatives.
4. In addition to reducing greenhouse gas emissions and reducing the impact of CO₂ on the environment, the need to reduce air pollution within the city for health reasons was identified as a major driver, as were the positive benefits of walking and cycling on health and wellbeing.
5. Scottish Government climate change targets, while seen as ambitious, were welcomed, in spite of being seen as unachievable.
6. Views were also split on the extent to which central government climate change targets should be more or less prescriptive, with some stating that modal shift would not be brought about by incentivisation alone and favouring specific targets for transport, cycling and walking.
7. Aberdeen City Council's preference is for incentivisation and a greater emphasis on sustainable city planning systems.
8. Greater integration between national policy and local delivery is needed, particularly in relation to the mismatch between the government's challenging timeframes for delivery and local government's capacity to deliver within these.
9. There are conflicting views as to how effectively the public sector is implementing low carbon transport policy locally. The City is seen as 'green' but available resources tend to be targeted on environmental measures that will have a financial and/or economic gain.
10. Transport systems are seen as an important part of the delivery of a sustainable economic future for the region.
11. While the need to balance economic and environmental sustainability was recognised by all, there was a distinct polarisation between those with primarily economic or environmental perspectives. In particular, the Aberdeen Western Periphery Route (AWPR) was seen by some as essential for economic growth and part of the solution to local transport issues, while others see it as part of the problem.

12. New technologies offer potential environmental benefits in longer term. More immediate, short-term measures aimed at reducing carbon emissions from transport are overlooked.
13. The accessibility of and high costs of public transport in Aberdeen City are seen as a major barrier to the uptake of public transport in the city. It was suggested that a greater level of public sector control over public transport is needed to bring about an increase in public transport use.
14. Most interviewees suggested that more investment in low carbon transport is needed locally.
15. Partnership working is seen as key to local delivery but public sector bodies and officials are often seen as risk-averse.
16. A major challenge in Aberdeen and the wider city region is seen as the perceived strong pro-car culture. Local politicians are seen as pro-car – supporting the concept of sustainable transport but are unwilling to adopt and implement policies that could be seen as anti-car.
17. Reasons for the pro-car culture were given as the large number of high earners in the area leading to high car ownership and second cars; planning over the last decade that has led to significant growth in housing in satellite towns which are not well served by public transport; there has been little investment in roads over this period; where money is available it has been ‘ring-fenced’ for bus lane and park and ride initiatives. There is not, however, any firm evidence to support the perception of a pro-car in Aberdeen.
18. There is a common view that local politicians need to provide transformational leadership, taking courageous decisions focussed on the delivery of longer term outcomes rather than short-term political gains.
19. No ‘anti-car’ measures have been introduced locally. In contrast, between 2007 and 2011 the number of public car parking spaces in Aberdeen City Centre increased by 10%.
20. Overall, engagement of the public sector with local citizens on the low carbon agenda has been ineffective and insufficiently resourced to have had a major impact. People get mixed messages depending on the source of the communication, with the business sector focussing on economic growth and environmental lobbyists focussing on reducing emissions and mitigation of climate change. The debate around the AWPR was cited as an example of ineffective communication, with citizens unclear about the relative benefits and disadvantages.
21. The ‘Getabout’ Initiative was consistently cited as the main and perhaps only route of engagement on public transport in Aberdeen City and Shire but is not considered to have been particularly effective or to have yet reached its full potential.
22. Communication, dialogue and champions are seen as particularly important in bringing about transport-related behaviour change locally.

23. Local empowerment of officials, funding and the freedom to develop and implement local policies are seen as fundamental to delivery of the low carbon agenda. The successes of other cities such as Malmo, Bremen and London were attributed, at least in part, to these cities having elected mayors with greater powers devolved to local level.
24. There was a strong view that Aberdeen City Council should look to successes in cycling initiatives elsewhere, particularly in relation to the 'tipping point' in transport-related behaviour. Cambridge, Oxford and Edinburgh were all given as examples of where cycling initiatives have been successfully implemented.
25. A range of risks and barriers to local progress were identified, including: lack of funding; lack of commitment by the public sector; ineffective communication with the public; lack of sharing or learning from best practice elsewhere; a lack of local champions; a local focus on growing the economy at the expense of environmental sustainability; a pro-car, anti-cycling lobby locally; high cost and inaccessibility of local public transport and poor route choices; and the local press was consistently identified as negative on sustainability and environmental issues.
26. There are, however, opportunities for change. People are aware of climate change and are willing to change their behaviour.

Purpose of the Study

As part of the EC CARE North project, the research team at RGU have been doing research in Aberdeen city, modelling the potential impacts of transport initiatives in the North East and examining the importance of improving the urban realm in efforts to reduce carbon from transport. Despite involvement of Aberdeen City Council as a partner in the project, the researchers have been struck by the slow rate of progress in this area and have attributed this to the perceived pro-car, controversy-averse views of local stakeholders, which are often at odds with the sustainability agenda.

This study set out to establish how effectively national policies are translated and implemented at local level, including an assessment of the institutional readiness of public sector bodies to engage with and empower stakeholders and communities to bring about behaviour change in areas like low carbon transport. The report considers:

- Governance and the extent to which the public sector in Scotland can cope with and react to the low carbon agenda, in terms of implementing radical transport and public realm solutions; the extent to which the public sector at local government level is culturally ready and/or empowered to take difficult decisions locally; barriers to progress; and whether further policy instruments, including legislation, are required to bring about the delivery of carbon reductions.
- Public engagement and community empowerment in the low carbon transport agenda and the extent to which the public sector has effectively engaged with and empowered the public and other stakeholders at local level.
- Best practice locally and from elsewhere, including European partners and elements of best practice that can be implemented in Scotland.

The study was primarily desk-based and focused on the Aberdeen city region, drawing on the experiences and evidence acquired from a number of semi-structured interviews with representatives of national (Scottish Government) and local government (Aberdeen City Council), local business community representatives (ACSEF), local transport initiatives (NESTRANS) and environmental stakeholders (Scottish Green Party).

Partners in the CARE North project from Malmo and Bremen were also consulted to assess and draw comparisons with best practice elsewhere and how some of these might translate into more effective policy implementation in the UK.

Approach Used

The semi-structured interviews were conducted between August 2011 and January 2012. The aim was to gather responses from a cross-section of primarily local stakeholders (a Scottish Government transport official was also interviewed to provide the national policy context) to the same four

themes/questions plus an opportunity for each interviewee to share final reflections and views.

The themes/questions examined were:

- **What are the political, environmental and social drivers for adoption of low carbon transport policies?**
- **To what extent does public sector culture support the development and implementation of low carbon transport policy and bring about changes in behaviour?**
- **What level of engagement does the public sector have with the public and other local stakeholders in the low carbon agenda and how effective is this engagement?**
- **What are the risks and barriers to progress at local and national level?**

All responses to these questions are summarised in the Study Findings.

During the course of the study, interviewees referred to a number of experiences and best practice examples both locally and elsewhere. These have been included in the report at Annex A.

Policy Context

Before examining the findings of the interviews, it is worth considering the policy context at EU, Scottish and local government level to provide background and context for the study.

Transport emissions, including international aviation and shipping, make up just over a quarter of Scotland's total emissions, and more than two thirds of these emissions come from road transport¹. There is therefore enormous potential to contribute to an overall reduction in carbon emissions through a reduction in those from road transport.

Although some transport policy is devolved to the Scottish Parliament, EU and UK Government policies have a significant impact on emissions reductions in Scotland. The European Commission White Paper on Transport², published in 2011, adopts a roadmap of 40 initiatives for the next decade which aim to build a competitive transport system that will increase mobility and remove major barriers in key areas including fuel growth and employment. At the same time, it is envisaged that these initiatives will reduce Europe's dependence on imported oil and cut carbon emissions in transport by 60% by 2050. Key goals include:

- No more conventionally fuelled cars in cities;
- 40% use of sustainable low carbon fuels in aviation; at least 40% cut in shipping emissions;
- A 50% shift of medium distance intercity passenger and freight journeys from road to rail and waterborne transport;

- All of which will contribute to a 60% reduction in transport emissions by 2050.

Initiative 2.3 - Integrated Urban Mobility proposes a range of measures aimed at achieving clean urban transport and commuting, including:

- The establishment of procedures and funding for urban mobility audits, urban mobility plans and to set up a European urban mobility scorecard based on common targets. The Commission will examine the possibility of a mandatory approach for cities of a certain size, according to national standards based on EU guidelines.
- Linking regional development and cohesion funds to cities and regions that have submitted a current, and independently validated, urban mobility and sustainability audit certificate.
- An EU framework for urban road user charging;
- A strategy for near 'zero-emission' urban logistics 2030, bringing together aspects of land planning, rail and river access, business practices and information, charging and vehicle technology standards, promotion of joint public procurement for low-emission vehicles in commercial vehicles.

In Scotland, the Scottish Government has committed, through the Climate Change Act 2009³, to reduce emissions by 42% by 2020 and at least 80% in 2050. Current devolved policies focus on encouraging people to switch to more sustainable forms of transport; making fuel efficient driver training and advice available to drivers; preparing for the long term shift to low carbon vehicles (LCVs); improving rail transport; using planning policy to make development more accessible; and encouraging increased levels of cycling and walking. The Scottish Government is trying to demonstrate that through the adoption of new modes of transport, people can save money, be healthier, reduce transport emissions and develop more cohesive communities. To test if these outcomes are delivered in practice at local level is the **Smarter Choices, Smarter Places (SCSP)**⁴ programme, a partnership of the Scottish Government, some local authorities (not Aberdeen City or Shire) and Regional Transport Initiatives, with a budget of £15m. The programme started in 2009 and was evaluated during 2011⁵ to provide early feedback to the SCSP local authorities. A final evaluation of the programme will be produced in 2012.

Baseline research was conducted in 2009, to provide data against which change could be assessed. The programme started from a position where a substantial proportion of the population in the 15 participating local authority areas saw no need to change their behaviour and, in particular, the proposition that there should be less car travel was not accepted by the majority. Most people liked travelling by car but nearly 40% were willing to reduce their car use. Cycling was more likely to be perceived as safe and healthy as not and the majority of people would like to walk more to keep fit. Environmental factors were important to all people in all areas. Concern about congestion was greatest among those who might be expected to be least affected, while those on the lowest incomes were most likely to believe that

bus fares were about right. However, awareness of initiatives of past SCSP type initiatives was low in most areas. The research indicated that the keys to success would be:

- Accelerating change where travel behaviour is already changing.
- Targeting people who are both willing and able to reduce car use.
- Building support incrementally with sensitive and responsive delivery.
- Working with broader lifestyle changes.
- Influencing the local culture.
- Altering perceptions of the costs of travel.
- Cycling could play a much greater role.
- Low aspirations for bus use lead to misleadingly positive attitudes.
- Negative perceptions of safety are a barrier.

Interim findings⁵ during the course of 2011 showed that 53% of total expenditure occurred early in the programme, dominated by spend on infrastructure measures such as changes to bus services and construction of cycling and walking routes, with emphasis in later years shifting towards marketing and publicity measures. The limited data available at this stage in the programme presents a complex picture. While there is some evidence of SCSP interventions having made an impact, there are conflicting data which will need to be validated by local data.

Improved awareness was often seen as the first stage in moving towards behaviour change. There was significantly higher awareness of measures to promote walking, cycling and bus in target towns, while awareness of publicity about using cars did not unambiguously lead to people stating that they have used cars less. In contrast, awareness-raising about walking, cycling and bus use did appear to be associated with people stating that they use these modes more.

The study suggests that there would be practical benefits to local authorities from better monitoring of delivery to support the marketing interventions, particularly in relation to publicity about which walking routes are being better used. A better understanding of the wider benefits of improved footfall in town centres would be important in persuading local businesses and other public agencies to become more interested in and committed to the delivery of SCSP initiatives.

More robust findings are expected to be drawn from the final evaluation in 2012.

In addition to SCSP, the Scottish Government has promoted a range of other initiatives including the **Cycling Action Plan for Scotland**⁶, published in June 2010, which set the framework for a tenfold increase in the proportion of road journeys made by bicycle and making a total of £17.3m available in 2010-2011 for promotion.

Transport Scotland committed £4.3m to support the procurement of low carbon vehicles and their supportive infrastructure in 2010-11 through the

provision of grants to community planning partnerships taking part in the **Low Carbon Vehicle Procurement Scheme**⁷, to assist the uptake of a range of low carbon technologies in the public sector fleet. Community Planning Partnerships in Aberdeen City and Shire are participating in this scheme.

Locally, the regional statutory transport partnership Nestrans published a **Regional Transport Strategy for Aberdeen City and Shire**⁸ in 2007, looking ahead to 2021. The strategy sets out the problems and issues affecting transport in the region and sets clear objectives for improving transport over the 15 year period. Specifically in relation to reducing emissions from transport the strategy commits to:

- Reduce emissions of greenhouse gases and pollutants.
- Improving safety and security to promote use of public transport, walking and cycling.
- Increasing public transport usage, including the development of demand-responsive transport to fill gaps in the network.
- Changing travel behaviour through development and promotion of sustainable transport choices to contribute to traffic reduction.

The Aberdeen City Council Community Planning Partnership also makes a number of transport-related commitments through the Single Outcome Agreement (2008-2011)⁹ with the Scottish Government:

- Deliver a fully integrated transport network.
- Transport and Connections - improve sustainable travel options.
- Overall, declining and ageing populations will result in the need for inward migration strategies and the tailoring of housing, health and transportation policies to take account of the changing requirements.
- Deliver both the Local and Regional Transport Strategy commitments on Rail, Road, Bus, Sea, Air, Port, Freight, Transport Interchange, Walking, Cycling, Active Travel, Safety and Change Choice Through Incentives to improve the choice, efficiency and reliability of transport (people and goods) to/from and within the north east as the transport system influences the competitiveness and perceived quality of life and hence attractiveness of an area.
- Improve Aberdeen's transport infrastructure – including delivering the 3rd Don Crossing and addressing other pinch points in the City's road network.
- Lobby the Scottish Executive to urgently address congestion issues on trunk roads in Aberdeen, including specifically the Haudagain and Bridge of Dee.
- Enhance the existing support for non-economic bus services by introducing a Bus Route Development Fund with a budget of £100,000 in year one.
- Work to improve public transport in and to the city, including supporting Aberdeen Crossrail and the introduction of appropriate bus priority measures.
- Minimise the environmental impact of transport on the community and the wider world (Local Transport Strategy).

- Delivery of both the Local and Regional Transport Strategy commitments to Bus, Walking and Cycling, Active Travel, Enforcement, Rail, DRT, Transport Interchange, Powered 2-wheelers and Travel Plans to reduce the need for travel, developing sustainable travel solutions and supporting emission reductions.

Transport infrastructure is identified within the SOA as being essential to the economy from both a commercial perspective and as part of the "well being" agenda making it easy to move around the area. The need for an integrated transport structure linking the North East of Scotland to the rest of the UK and beyond was considered to be vital to the economy, with the Western Peripheral Route (AWPR) and improved road and rail links between Aberdeen, the North East and the rest of Scotland seen as the key strategic issues.

Study Findings: Responses from Key Stakeholders

1. What are the political, environmental and social drivers for adoption of low carbon transport policies?

Overall, **interviewees had a good understanding of the political, environmental and social drivers for adoption of low carbon transport policies.** These were identified as:

- The need to reduce greenhouse gas emissions as set out in national (UK and Scottish Government) and EU transport policy;
- The impact of CO₂ on the environment; and
- Links to improving health through reduction of air pollution and increased exercise through cycling and walking.

While interviewees had a reasonable knowledge of the climate change agenda, **fewer had a detailed knowledge of the local transport initiatives.** The Climate Change Scotland Act 2009³ was identified as the key legislative framework locally, with recognition that the Act is mute on transport, including urban.

The Scottish Government's Smarter Choices Smarter Places⁴ Initiative was identified as a key policy framework. However, outwith this programme the Scottish Government:

- Are not necessarily aware of local initiatives, except where the local authority has set transport, walking or cycling targets in the Single Outcome Agreement (SOA).
- Does not hold local authorities to account for non-delivery of SOA targets.
- Is seen as having setting high standards and targets in relation to climate change and their ambition was welcomed, even if these targets are seen as unachievable.

- Is perceived locally as ‘talking the talk’ but not ‘walking the walk’, with a lack of funds to support policies.

The accessibility of and high costs of public transport in Aberdeen City are seen as a major barrier to the uptake of public transport in the city and it was suggested that a greater level of public sector control over public transport is needed to bring about an increase in public transport use. Aberdeen City Council is keen to be seen as a demonstration area and to capitalise on funding opportunities at all levels, particularly in relation to hydrogen or other low emitting buses. Alternative forms of transport are seen as being fundamentally important as the cost of fuel goes up. The City Vision is to reduce the number of cars through the incentivisation of public transport and make it more attractive. **The political leadership of the council expressed a preference to use ‘carrots not sticks’.** The high number of vehicles in the city makes cycling unsafe. Delivery of better infrastructure, for example the third bridge over the River Don, improvements to the Haudagain roundabout and the AWPR, will facilitate the delivery of environmental measures within the city centre, including the provision of a wider range of transport options. However, the current layout of the city centre, with a long main street (Union Street) with many side arteries, will make rationalisation of city centre transport more challenging.

The main drivers for change in Aberdeen City were identified as:

- Make the city as competitive as possible.
- Development of new technologies.
- Improve the quality of life.
- Make Aberdeen a more attractive city to live in.
- Reduce car dependency.

There would need to be a greater focus in future on sustainable city planning systems, in line with the aspirations of the Scottish Government’s Scottish Sustainable Communities Initiative¹⁰.

Three main policies/plans were identified as important for the sustainable growth of the North East – the Structure Plan¹¹, the Economic Action Plan¹² and the Nestrans Regional Transport Plan⁸, together providing a framework for delivery and involving an increase in bus and train journeys. Demographic change, including an increasingly ageing population in the area was raised as a factor in considering future local transport needs.

Aberdeen City and Shire Economic Forum (ACSEF), a voluntary local partnership representing Chief Executive Officers of 50 local companies, has signed up to the delivery of a ‘fully integrated transport system’ as part of the Economic Action Plan¹², which is seen as a step-wise initiative. The first five years will be committed to the development of infrastructure, including the AWPR. The Energetica¹³ initiative is a low carbon initiative and represents an ambitious programme with £750m investment over 10 years. ACSEF leads on behalf of Aberdeen City Council. The stated aim is

to 'maintain the prosperity of the NE economy' which has the highest gross value added outside London. 30% of the funding has been secured and will be targeted on the development of a 30 mile energy corridor, with sustainable housing (zero carbon), bespoke business units and campuses, and a range of renewable and carbon-capture initiatives, including energy efficiency and green energy along the corridor. There will be a European Offshore Wind Deployment Centre, testing 11 different types of turbine, applying different technologies. There are ambitions for Scotland's first 'hydrogen corridor' running hydrogen driven buses along that corridor. The intention is to have more public transport, including an airport bus and more park and ride centres. AWPR is seen as crucial to some of the Energetica developments, to reduce congestion and there is potential for more public transport along the AWPR. **Transport systems are seen as an important part of the delivery of a sustainable economic future for the region.**

The statutory transport partnerships, established under the Transport Act 2005, are seen as influential in the adoption of low carbon transport at local level. They are intended to be apolitical/non-political, providing a single local voice to the Scottish Government on transport issues. Locally, Nestrans, the transport partnership for Aberdeen City and Shire recognises that there are real difficulties in implementation of a low C agenda locally. Air quality is, however, a major issue, hence Nestrans' involvement in the CARE North project. Pedestrianisation has not progressed as quickly or widely as possible, **politicians are perceived as being reluctant to implement policies due to the impact on car users.** Local authority officers need evidence to support decisions, including modelling.

While **all those interviewed recognised the need to balance economic and environmental sustainability, there was a distinct polarisation between those with primarily economic and those with environmental interests.** An emerging theme, to which interviewees constantly returned, relates to delivery of the Aberdeen Western Periphery Route (AWPR). **The AWPR is seen as both part of the solution and part of the problem,** with some controversy over the extent to which the AWPR would reduce city centre congestion, with impact cited as anywhere between 2-20%. Views ranged from:

AWPR is seen as part of the solution:

- To congestion in Aberdeen city centre and is essential for local economic growth.
- Associated developments - two park-and-ride initiatives, a third river Don crossing, dualling of the main Balmedie to Ellon road and improvements to transport to the airport, are seen as essential in the creation of more jobs and growing the local economy.
- Coupled to changes in frequency of trains on some routes (e.g. Aberdeen to Inverurie and Inverness), the AWPR would reduce congestion in the City Centre, freeing up bus routes, improving punctuality and accessibility.

- Would potentially present an opportunity for further pedestrianisation and allow a focus on walking and cycling routes in the city centre.

To:

AWPR is seen as part of the problem:

- Aberdeen and the North East of Scotland are anti-cycling and influenced heavily by the oil industry and an affluent 'car culture'.
- A commitment both nationally and locally to populism and economic growth was suggested to be at odds with a low carbon culture.
- Congestion reduction would be route dependent, even with the AWPR, HGVs prefer Anderson Drive, with the harbour as a major destination and weigh station for large vehicles.
- £400m spent on the AWPR would have a major impact on delivery of the low carbon agenda if it were spent on other transport initiatives e.g. improvements to Anderson Drive and city centre cycling routes.

2. To what extent does public sector culture support the development and implementation of low carbon transport policy and bring about changes in behaviour?

The Scottish Government has made a commitment to delivery of the climate change agenda, including through the establishment of the 2020 Climate Group¹⁴, comprising senior business leaders in Scotland, committed to a low carbon economic agenda, with a relatively active transport sub-group.

Greater integration between national policy and local delivery is needed. There is often a mis-match between the timeframe for delivery of national government policy and the capacity of local public sector partners to deliver within that timeframe. The Scottish Government could and should do more to support local implementation of national initiatives, local organisations sometimes need government support to get local initiatives off the ground.

While all interviewed supported the setting by government of stringent high-level targets, some interviewees said that it is right that they should be non-prescriptive, while others felt that they did not go far enough, with more specific targets for transport, walking, and cycling. Meeting the national targets was considered to be challenging.

National policies are required to control emissions from cars. Central government passes the burden of delivering the legislation to local government but provides little support for implementation e.g. electric car (LCV) legislation. For example, through Community Planning Partnerships, public sector partners agreed to share mail delivery facilities under the

Low Carbon Vehicle Procurement Scheme in 2010 but there were supply chain issues and local infrastructure to support their use was not available.

There are conflicting views as to how the public sector is developing and implementing a low carbon transport policy locally. Climate change is high up Aberdeen City council's agenda. Politically there is no real negativity to the green agenda and politicians locally are generally supportive. **While Aberdeen City Council was described as a 'green council', much of the activity and resource is being focussed on the renewable energy agenda and on environmental measures that will yield financial and/or economic benefits.** Five years ago the council piloted electric cars but there were reliability and cost issues, plus the silent running of vehicles was seen as a hazard. The city now has more bus lanes than in the past and the council now has the technology to monitor their usage by other vehicles for enforcement purposes.

One challenge is that the transport infrastructure consists of radial routes and many people are not serviced by trains and buses. **More investment is needed.** Buses are commercially run, with little or no local government funding, who therefore have little control over routes, frequency or accessibility. Decisions tend to be made on profitability rather than on customer needs.

A number of those interviewed said that **council leaders need to provide leadership, take courageous decisions and transformational action** but need to avoid driving the economy, both retail and other businesses, out of the city. **Many agreed that greater local control is needed,** with local authorities empowered and resourced to develop and implement carbon reduction and low carbon transport policies that are fit for purpose locally. This could include the removal of ring-fencing of local authority budgets and introduction of the ability to raise finance, for example, through local tax raising, borrowing, bonds. **Empowerment of council officials would lead to enhanced performance and the ability to develop and implement new approaches more quickly.** The City of London model was cited by some as an example of what could be achieved with greater local autonomy, strong leadership and transformational action.

Public transport is a necessary public good and an effective relationship between local and national government is required to deliver sustainable transport solutions which meet economic and environmental needs.

There is a Carbon Management Plan¹⁵ for Aberdeen City Council. The group charged with delivery are all committed to its delivery but are under-resourced, the city council's contribution is staff time with no additional funding. There is no senior champion within the council. It was suggested that there may be a generational dimension to level of commitment, with younger officers more committed to the environment.

Partnership working at all levels is seen as key to delivery of the low carbon agenda. There is an increased willingness among local partners to work together. The recession and cutbacks are not helping but could act as a catalyst for change. For example, the recent Audit Scotland report¹⁶ on transport in social care, encouraged care providers (NHS, local authority,) to rationalise and share transport for care recipients.

The work of Nestrans was well received by most interviewees, with all the partners working together and pulling in the same direction, providing a single voice to the Scottish Government on transport issues. While Nestrans brings people together, however, the success of initiatives often comes down to the willingness and empowerment of individuals to take, what can often be, difficult decisions. There are high levels of commitment in some cases but resistance in others. There is often a fear of change in large organisations and there is a need for culture change in the public sector, with a greater level of willingness to take 'a leap of faith' in the delivery and implementation of low carbon transport initiatives, against the perceived pro-car culture. **Public sector bodies have a tendency to be risk-averse** and often find it difficult to 'let go' and allow other organisations to deliver on their behalf e.g. NHS and the two local authorities ambulance booking service; both local authorities have public transport units which could merge but this would present difficulties in terms of who should who lead the merged service.

A major challenge in Aberdeen and the wider city region is the dependence on the oil industry and the strong pro-car culture whereby car use is often seen as a right. The pro-car culture was cited by a number of interviewees as detrimental to the delivery of green transport policy in Aberdeen and it was suggested that the car culture in Aberdeen and perhaps across the UK, is biased towards US rather than EU culture. A large proportion of companies have, however, implemented and incentivised cycling to work and car share schemes and see this as part of their corporate social responsibility.

Reasons for the pro-car culture were given as the large number of high earners in the area leading to high car ownership and second cars; planning over the last decade has led to significant growth in housing in satellite towns which are not well served by public transport; there has been little investment in roads over this period; where money is available it has been 'ring-fenced' for bus lane and park and ride initiatives. This has led to a public perception of a lack of investment in infrastructure and the current infrastructure being unable to cope. The perception of lack of investment is exacerbated by significant investment in transport elsewhere in Scotland (£1.4bn for the Forth crossing; £0.75b for trams in Edinburgh; £0.5bn for the M74 extension; £1.5bn for the Edinburgh to Glasgow rail upgrade). Consequently, there is strong local support for the AWPR which adds to the perception of a strong local car culture.

From a purely economic perspective, servicing the market requires faster, more efficient connectivity – IT and transport. A sustainable NE Scotland

needs to have energy/food and drink/life sciences/tourism and digital connectivity and effective transport systems will be an integral part of delivery.

Interviewees identified that there are opportunities for change but politicians do not want to be seen as anti-car. While they support the promotion of more sustainable transport, they have no appetite for 'big sticks'. There is a perception that the public see initiatives such as bus lanes as being anti-car but it is not clear if there is local evidence to support this. **In the absence of evidence to confirm or refute such perceptions, politicians may lack the courage to adopt policies which are perceived as being unpopular with the local electorate.**

Policy is seen to be developed in silos with little analysis of unintended consequences elsewhere. One example given was of the removal by the SNP government of charging at NHS car parks which has resulted in major congestion, lack of parking and increased car use on journeys to hospital.

Most consider that it is inevitable that initiatives will be impacted by public sector cuts.

There were differing degrees of support for the use of legislation to bring about transport behaviour change. Legislation is there if the government want to use it but congestion charging is seen as a step too far. The Council leadership are not 'ideologically opposed' to congestion charging but are unconvinced by its value in Aberdeen. However, some interviewees believe that modal shift will not be achieved through incentivisation alone. **No 'anti-car' measures have been introduced locally but there is a need to get the balance right.** The national cycling target is 10% on all journeys but the figure in Aberdeen is 2 - 3.5%. While this is the third highest in Scotland, it is still much lower than in other European cities. There has been some early success with Park and Ride schemes in Aberdeen and the city region but this has not been built on, with more car parking in the city centre. **More than 90% of commuters have free parking in the city¹⁷ and between 2007 and 2011, the number of public car parking spaces in Aberdeen City centre increased by 10%¹⁷.** Aberdeen is also the second most expensive city in the UK for public transport.

3. What level of engagement does the public sector have with the public and other local stakeholders in the low carbon agenda and how effective is this engagement?

Interviewees had a good level of awareness of Scottish Government and local government engagement with the public on the low carbon agenda but overall there was a view that the **engagement has been relatively low key and insufficiently resourced to have had a major impact.**

The Scottish Government has engaged with local authorities and the public through Smarter Choices Smarter Places⁴ and on a project-specific basis e.g. Cycling Action Plan⁶ and the Low Carbon Vehicle scheme⁷.

The climate change agenda has been communicated at all levels. However, people get mixed messages depending on whether communication comes from the business sector and their representatives or from environmental lobbyists. The AWPR is a case in point, with some seeing it as a facilitator for improving transport routes and reducing inner city congestion, while others see it as adding to the environmental problem. **There is evidence that the public are aware of climate change and their impact on the environment and want to change their behaviour e.g. waste recycling and the increased use of trains.**

The Getabout Initiative²¹ was consistently cited as the main and perhaps only route of engagement on public transport in Aberdeen and Shire. Public engagement has been via radio adverts, billboards and advertisements on buses to try to raise the profile of the initiative. There is also a campaign to increase the use of the railway locally and to dispel the perception that rail transport is just for longer distances. Getabout has had limited success, with the Citizens' Panel showing that 14% of citizens are aware of the initiative.

Getabout is not yet seen as having reached its full potential, with there being a further need for engagement. One issue raised was the scale of funding for promotion of different environmental measures with £1.2m committed to Waste Aware Grampian compared to £70k committed to Getabout.

Nestrans established a NE Transport Consultative Forum in 2003 with 100 stakeholders across four sectors – environment, economic, social, operators - and has been used as a sounding board at least annually for six years in the development of the regional transport strategy. It has been effective to a degree. There has not been much public engagement but there is a travel planning strategy with 10% of the budget going into walking/cycling promotion.

While the AWPR is seen by some as fundamental to delivery of the Structure Plan and Economic Plan for the City and Shire, there is recognition that due to a lack of effective communication, there is a low level of understanding among the wider public of the potential benefits and risks.

The Active Travel Peterhead²² cycling initiative was cited as a local success. Previous initiatives in Aberdeen include 'Stepchange Cults and Cove'²³ which had limited success with Scottish Government funding and there was little follow up at the end of the scheme. Aberdeen City Council employees have responded well by changing their transport behaviour but the public have not engaged.

The public were described as ‘apathetic’ and ‘unwilling to respond’. Their lack of interest in voting during elections is seen as indicative of a wider lack of engagement. They have become disillusioned and **politicians need to communicate a vision of what they want to achieve to re-engage with the public** and deliver some ‘quick wins’ to begin to rebuild trust and confidence.

Incentivisation, legislation and communication are seen as being necessary to effect change. Dialogue and champions are important, particularly in the business sector. **Aberdeen City Council should look to the success of cycling initiatives in other cities** such as Cambridge, Oxford, Edinburgh and elsewhere in Europe and in particular, examine what was the ‘tipping point’ for behaviour change. There is a role for local organisations such as the Chamber of Commerce and at a national level, Transport Scotland and Friends of the Earth. Localisation of the economy and goods would have an impact, with the Transition Towns Movement and the Totnes Pound being cited as initiatives worth replicating locally.

4. What are the risks and barriers to progress at local and national level?

Interviewees identified the following as barriers to progress:

- Lack of funding and strain on other resources;
- Lack of commitment;
- Fear of failure/loss of power;
- Central government needs to take a greater role;
- Greater communication needed at all levels;
- Insufficient monitoring and evaluation of success of initiatives and sharing of best practice.
- There are no local ‘champions’ for the green agenda, especially at local level, as there are in other EU countries.
- High costs of local public transport, inaccessibility and poor route choices.
- There are differences between Aberdeen and the rest of UK, with good examples of adoption of low carbon transport in other cities, such as Cambridge and Edinburgh.
- There is a poor perception of/aggression towards cyclists in Aberdeen, reinforced by the negative image portrayed by local press.
- Within local authority, there is resistance to environmental measures from officials with conflicting policy objectives.
- The general public is seen to be pro-car and anti-cycling.
- Politicians show insufficient leadership and lack the courage to implement environmentally sustainable policies that could be seen as anti-car.
- The Aberdeen economy is successful, this represents both a threat and an opportunity to the low-C agenda.

- Oil and gas are focused on cost reduction, not necessarily pollution prevention.
- There are no costs associated with pollution to the polluters – ‘polluter pays’ legislation could provide a solution.
- Fragile areas and less profitable businesses (e.g. abattoirs) may need support to implement.
- Ineffective communication with the public.
- Lack of engagement by, disillusionment of and lack of trust by the public.
- The perceived mismatch between economic growth and environmental sustainability is a major barrier to progress.
- The local Press was consistently identified as a barrier to progress. What they say is perceived as biased, with environmental measures portrayed as restricting people’s rights. Positive environmental stories in Press releases are rarely picked up. Politicians worry too much about what the press say.
- Environmental issues are not taken seriously.

4. Key findings.

There is a high level of awareness of EU and national policies on climate change and low carbon transport and the political and socio-economic drivers for adoption.

While the Scottish Government has set ambitious climate change targets, national legislation is mute on transport policy with no specific transport-related targets. Local opinions are split, however, on the extent to which such targets should be more or less explicit, with some stating that significant modal shift is unlikely to be achieved through incentivisation alone. There is no apparent appetite, however, for the local adoption of fiscal or other measures to encourage transport behaviour change, with the Council leadership favouring ‘carrots rather than sticks’ and while ‘not ideologically opposed’ to measures such as congestion charging, does not see their value in Aberdeen City.

Greater integration between national and local policies is needed with a stronger ‘push’ required from central government. Funding for sustainable transport systems is limited and becoming more so in light of the public sector cuts, although these could act as a catalyst for change, where the drive to make financial savings can also result in reduced environmental impact. Overall, however, the public sector is seen as risk averse and uncommitted to reducing emissions from transport.

Local rhetoric is focused on delivery of economic growth. This current political drive at national and local level to grow the economy is seen as both an opportunity and a threat to sustainable transport. Those with a focus on the economy see the development of new roads, including the AWPR, as key in continuing the growth in Aberdeen’s economy, including in relation to the development of renewable energy technology businesses

in the region. The environmental sustainability 'spin-offs' from this approach are seen as being the potential of the AWPR as a facilitator for the adoption of low carbon transport policies in Aberdeen city centre, through freeing up capacity on city centre roads, allowing greater opportunity and capacity for improvements to public transport routes and the adoption of pedestrianisation and cycling schemes. The local development of renewable technologies, is also seen as having the potential to deliver novel and more environmentally sustainable transport solutions.

However, a better balance needs to be struck between the drive to grow the local economy and sustainable transport. In relation to sustainable transport, the current emphasis is often on new and/or untried technologies which may, or may not, deliver reduced emissions in the longer term. Other, more immediate measures such as improving local public transport systems, improving cycling routes and pedestrianisation, coupled to an effective public communication programme to encourage less car use and greater use of more sustainable transport, are largely being overlooked.

While Aberdeen City Council has made progress on reducing its environmental impact as an organisation, there has been less success city-wide. The Council was the first in Scotland to develop a Climate Change Policy and Action Plan¹⁵. In 2002, the Council committed to deliver a 23% CO₂ emissions reduction by 2015. It also has the potential to save £2m. The Council Travel Plan (2006) sits within the Regional Transport Strategy⁸ and aims to reduce the environmental impacts of Council transport, including staff, councillors and service delivery. While there has been some success in this internal initiative, little has been done to communicate similar aims to the wider public.

Funding targeted by the Council on climate change or environmental activities is primarily focused on those with a financial or economic incentive such as the development and adoption of renewable energy or waste reduction. Aberdeen City is not one of the local authorities participating in the Scottish Government's Smarter Choices Smarter Places Initiative⁴. The interim findings⁵ of the study are encouraging and the final report in March 2012 may point to some 'quick wins' if implemented in Aberdeen.

The level of public engagement to encourage the use of public transport and/or reduce car use in Aberdeen and the city region has been relatively low key with only one initiative identified - 'Getabout'²¹. This is recognised as having had relatively low impact and not having reached its full potential. Additional resource should be targeted at this or similar public engagement activities if transport behaviour change is to be achieved within the City.

There is an acceptance that local culture tends to be pro-car. Reasons given for this included local dependence on the oil industry; the relative

affluence of the area; high levels of car ownership; the high price of public transport and its relative inaccessibility – with linear routes making it difficult to get around the city. Furthermore, a view shared by a small minority of interviewees is that the local culture is also anti-cycling, including a negative image in the press.

There does not appear, however, to be any hard evidence to support either of these views. In the absence of such evidence to confirm or refute them, local politicians will lack the courage to implement policies that may be seen as anti-car by the public.

Interim findings⁵ from the Smarter Choices Smarter Places initiative, indicate that while the proposition that there should be less car travel was not accepted by the majority, nearly 40% of people were willing to reduce their car use. Similarly, the report on Public Attitudes towards Climate Change and the Impact of Transport: 2010 (January 2011 report)¹⁹, shows that almost half (46%) of respondents were willing to reduce their overall level of car use, and those who were more concerned about climate change were also more likely to be willing to reduce their car use. 64% of those who were 'very concerned' about climate change were also willing to reduce their car use, while only 24% of those who had little or no concern were likely to do so.

This study also showed that nearly half (47%) of respondents stated that they were willing to use public transport more often instead of travelling by car, with 27% willing to switch to cycling more often and 58% willing to switch to walking more often.

Such opinions need to be tested locally, in order to develop an effective programme of public engagement.

Malmo and Bremen, two of the European partner cities in the CARE North programme, have seen greater levels of success and a modal shift to cycling, walking and public transport. Reasons for success were given as the relatively greater influence of Green Party politics since the 1970s and their involvement in coalition governments both nationally and locally, thereby facilitating a more rapid shift towards more environmentally sustainable policies.

The importance of local champions and the readiness of local politicians to make courageous decisions, sometimes going against public opinion, to bring about longer term environmental objectives was also identified as important to the successful implementation of low carbon transport policies. The short term nature of political cycles was also given as one reason for the failure to deliver effective sustainable transport solutions.

The direct popular election of Mayors rather than the appointment of local council chief executives by councils have been widely introduced across Europe. In the case of Malmo and Bremen, the role of city mayors was identified as an important factor in the successful implementation of low carbon transport policies. Particularly in the case of Malmo, the personal

popularity of the city mayor kept him in post and has provided political stability to the city since the 1980s, allowing the development and implementation of a strong local vision for the city, building on the already strong cycling and public transport cultures of the city.

The Greater London Authority Act, 1999, resulted in the the UK's first elected mayor in Greater London. The Local Government Act 2000, extended this opportunity to all local authorities in England and Wales.

The Mayor of London has wider powers¹⁸ than other elected mayors, including a general power to do anything that will promote the economic and social development and environmental improvement in London. In his time as Mayor of London, Ken Livingstone's decision to introduce a range of transport measures in post-devolution London is an example of what could be achieved by such leadership and transformational action. The introduction of congestion charging and reducing the number of parking spaces is seen as having brought about significant changes in transport behaviours in London. This is considered to have been made possible in part because of the specific geographical and transport characteristics already in place but mainly because of the 'very substantial strategic capacity' – the leadership, finance, powers and technocracy – developed after devolution of powers to enable effective movement from policy formulation to implementation (Docherty and Shaw, 2011)²⁰.

The importance of such local empowerment in effective policy delivery was also highlighted by the political leadership of Aberdeen City Council, coupled to the importance of having a clear and coherent vision for citizens and the freedom and funding to develop and implement local policies.

Conclusions

This research set out to establish how effectively national and EU low carbon transport policies are implemented locally; the extent to which the public sector engages with citizens; the effectiveness of engagement; and to shed some light on the reasons for the apparent lack or slow rate of progress in the adoption of transport initiatives aimed at reducing carbon emissions in Aberdeen City region.

There is a failure to implement national low carbon transport policies locally.

There is a clear national framework in Scotland aimed at reducing emissions from transport as evidenced by legislation³ a number of Scottish Government initiatives^{4,6,7} but there is little evidence of translation of these into action at local level. The public sector is seen as risk averse with local politicians unlikely to adopt policies that are seen as anti-car.

Local emphasis is on economic growth.

Local rhetoric is focused on the economic growth of the region, with major players focused on business development. The development of new infrastructure such as the AWPR, is seen as key to the delivery of economic growth. While the AWPR may free up capacity in the city centre for improvements to bus routes, cycling and walking, the potential environmental benefits will not be realised for some years to come.

New technologies offer potential environmental benefits in longer term. More immediate, short-term measures are overlooked.

In relation to sustainable transport, the current emphasis is on new and/or untried technologies such as renewable energy and hydrogen-powered vehicles which may or may not deliver environmental benefits in the future. In the meantime, measures such as improving local public transport timetabling and routes, improving cycle routes, coupled to an effective public communication programme aimed to reduce car use which could lead to more immediate effects, are being overlooked. Such measures are being examined in other local authorities across Scotland as part of the Smarter Choices Smarter Places programme. The final results of the programme due in May 2012 may identify best practice and 'quick wins' for local adoption.

There is a common local perception of a pro-car culture but no evidence to support this.

While there is a common local perception of a pro-car culture in Aberdeen, there is no firm evidence to support this. Indeed, other studies^{5,19} indicate that nearly half of people are willing to reduce their car use and consider other forms of transport such as public transport, cycling and walking.

Overall, public engagement on low carbon transport has been low key and ineffective.

This level of public engagement on low carbon transport does not appear to have happened in Aberdeen and the city region. Such opinions need to be tested locally in order to develop acceptable policies and an effective programme of public engagement for the city.

There are lessons to be learned.

Lessons can be learned from initiatives in other UK and EU cities. In particular, from those such as Malmo, Bremen and the City of London with greater local devolution of power and where there has significant success in sustainable transport measures post-devolution.

Annex 1 – Best practice examples and experiences elsewhere

Smarter Choices Smarter Places⁴

Smarter Choices, Smarter Places (SCSP) is a £15 million Scotland-wide initiative to encourage Scots to reduce their car use in favour of more sustainable alternatives such as walking, cycling and public transport. Organised by the Scottish Government with the support of COSLA, local authorities and regional transport partnerships, SCSP will see £10 million of Scottish Government funding being invested in a variety of initiatives across Scotland between 2009 and 2011. A further £5 million of match funding is also available from councils, public transport operators and developers. The money is being spent on improving local facilities for walking, cycling and public transport alongside promotion and information campaigns. This co-ordinated approach is being tested in a range of different locations throughout Scotland, from rural towns to city centres. Over the three years SCSP is funding seven areas in Scotland to explore ways of encouraging local people to drive their cars less and try alternative ways of getting about. These areas were selected in August 2008 after 27 of Scotland's 32 local authorities submitted applications for funding. The seven successful projects cover a wide range of different communities, from rural towns such as Dumfries and Kirkwall to inner city areas in Glasgow and Dundee, and Central Scotland communities in Barrhead, Kirkintilloch / Lenzie and Stenhousemuir / Larbert. Each area has a detailed programme of activity that was launched in May 2009 and continued until March 2011. There was an interim evaluation⁵ in 2011 with the final project evaluation due in March 2012.

Low Carbon Vehicle Scheme⁷

Transport Scotland committed £4.3 million to support the procurement of low carbon vehicles and their supportive infrastructure in 2010-11. The **Low Carbon Vehicle Procurement Support Scheme⁷** is providing grant funding to Community Planning Partnerships to assist the uptake of a range of low carbon vehicle technologies in the public sector fleet. This funding subsidises the difference in cost between a low carbon vehicle and its petrol or diesel equivalent, and can also be used for the purchase and installation of associated infrastructure. Aberdeen City and Shire community planning partnerships have secured funding from the scheme to run a joint mail service using a low carbon vehicle between local public sector partners.

Scottish Sustainable Communities Initiative (SSCI)¹⁰

Established in 2008, the initiative aims to encourage projects that demonstrate ambition and vision in the creation of new places and in the regeneration of existing places, with an emphasis on the facilitation, incentivisation and promotion of more sustainable forms of transport.

Active Transport Peterhead.²²

In 2008, Peterhead was chosen to be Aberdeenshire's first pilot Cycle Demonstration Town (CDT). Since then Aberdeenshire Council has been

working to provide new walking and cycling infrastructure and improve existing routes and paths in an around Peterhead. With improved opportunities for walking and cycling, backed up with a series of proportional events and activities, the aim is to increase levels of walking and cycling in the area.

Getabout Initiative²¹.

Launched in 2009, Getabout is a joint project featuring several organisations who want to create a better transport system and greater transport choices in Aberdeen City and Shire. It is co-ordinated by the Getabout campaign group which includes the regional transport partnership Nestrans, Aberdeen City Council, Aberdeenshire Council, Robert Gordon University, the University of Aberdeen, Aberdeen College, NHS Grampian, the Energy Savings Trust and Dyce Transportation Management Organisation. Working in partnership, these organisations want to promote a healthy and sustainable transport choice for everybody travelling within the region and beyond. All have made a commitment to make active and sustainable forms of transport more accessible for their staff and everybody in the north-east. The initiative brought all public sector transport communication and promotion activities into one place.

The Transition Town Programme and the Totnes Pound^{24,25}

The Totnes Pound was launched as an initiative of Transition Town Totnes [Economics and Livelihoods group](#) in March 2007. Economic localisation is considered to be a key aspect of the transition process, and local currency systems provide the opportunity to strengthen the local economy whilst preventing money from leaking out.

The benefits of the Totnes Pound are seen to be:

- To build resilience in the local economy by keeping money circulating in the community and building new relationships
- To get people thinking and talking about how they spend their money
- To encourage more local trade and thus reduce food and trade miles
- To encourage tourists to use local businesses

Additional benefits could include supporting the start up of new social, ethical and environmental businesses.

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