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Achieving Car Use Reduction in Scotland: Island Communities Impact Assessment

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Name of Policy	Achieving Car Use Reduction in Scotland: A Renewed Policy Statement
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Step One – Develop a clear understanding of your objectives

Scotland's [Climate Change Plan update](#), published December 2020, included a target to reduce car distance travelled in Scotland. In 2022, we subsequently developed and consulted on a [draft route map to achieve a 20 per cent reduction in car kilometres by 2030](#) and draft impact assessments. The route map was aimed predominantly at national, regional, and local stakeholders to facilitate a collaborative approach to meeting the target, and intended to raise awareness of the need for change and empower people to switch to more sustainable travel modes in Scotland.

This renewed policy statement, published jointly by the Scottish Government and COSLA, restates our shared commitment to reduce car use in Scotland. It sets out four key next steps to continue to develop the policy:

- Revising the existing car use reduction target, informed by the advice of the Climate Change Committee and other relevant evidence, to develop a new, longer-term target which will support our 2045 net zero target.
- Undertaking a regulatory check of existing Transport (Scotland) Act 2001 powers for discretionary local road user charging schemes to allow local authorities and/or regional transport partnerships the option to implement these.
- Working with key stakeholders at national, regional, and local level to develop place-based and experience- specific delivery plans to support reduced car use and alternative transport options.
- Driving a national communication and engagement campaign and set out a positive vision around how reducing car use can deliver outcomes for public health, air quality, and the environment.

The renewed policy statement on car use reduction has been developed with Transport Scotland's four priorities of taking climate action; reducing inequalities; helping deliver inclusive economic growth and improving health and wellbeing at its core. Impacts on those living in island communities have therefore been considered

throughout the development of the document, and as part of our commitment to a just transition to net zero greenhouse gas emissions.

A key commitment made in the policy statement is to undertake a regulatory check of existing road user charging powers for local authorities. The Transport (Scotland) Act 2001 grants councils a discretionary power to introduce local road user charging scheme within their boundaries. Given the passage of time since the legislation was brought into statute by a previous parliament, and the need for new regulations which were not progressed at the time, a full regulatory check is required. This process will consider the impacts which proposals may have on those from island communities, it is unlikely to directly affect them negatively, however, as these are more likely to be implemented in high density urban areas.

Our commitment to car use reduction is not specific to particular groups, businesses, or geographies but is designed to provide options to empower everyone to contribute to the national commitment. It does, however, recognise that there will be some groups of people, including some of those in some island communities, where car use reduction may be more challenging, particularly in the short-term. It is for this reason that any target will be a national one rather than a target for all regions of Scotland or indeed all individuals within Scotland to achieve the same percentage reduction in car use. This is also why we have committed to ensure that any delivery plan(s) are place-based and experience-specific.

Step Two – Gather your data and identify your stakeholders

Engagement with island communities was initially undertaken as part of the development of National Transport Strategy (NTS2), shortly prior to the initial development of the car use reduction route map. The engagement as part of NTS2 identified the following unique transport challenges relevant to island communities:

- Centralisation of public transport and limited provision in peripheral areas
- Poor journey connections, lack of seamlessness and lack of ticket integration
- Car dependencies due to poor public transport links
- Insufficient active travel infrastructure on islands
- Limited evening and weekend public transport services, resulting in difficulties accessing services and participating in social/community activities
- Incoherent, inconsistent and confusing public transport timetables across all modes
- The ability of public transport to meet the needs and expectations of tourists and visitors, especially to Scotland's islands

- Higher costs of accessibility on islands and in rural areas
- Imbalance of service provision and demand to meet concessionary transport needs
- Call for more flexible and pro-active support needed for the berthing of cruise ships at ports.

Further details are reported in the NTS2 Delivery Plan Island Communities Impact Assessment (ICIA)¹.

Qualitative evidence from consultation feedback

Additional information was gathered through the statutory consultation on the draft route map and impact assessments. It was noted that many of the responses [to the question 'do you think that the proposals set out in this plan could have a particular impact (positive or negative) on island communities] relate to concerns about the impact of potential policy changes hindering car travel in rural areas, rather than to the actual proposals in the route map, which are designed to support alternative travel behaviours and do not seek to prevent those who need to use cars from doing so.

Positive impacts cited in the consultation responses included benefits from improved active travel infrastructures and improvements to support multi-modal travel, including interchange with ferries and improved local facilities and amenities resulting from investment in 20 minute neighbourhoods. Benefits from reducing the level of car use by visitors, thereby preserving limited space on ferries and local roads for cars belonging to island residents were also cited. The benefit of improved quality of life on the islands, from better internet connectivity and sustainable transport options were identified as things that could reduce population losses or encourage people to relocate to the islands. Finally, the importance of tackling climate change, in the context of the vulnerability of island communities to the adverse impacts of climate change, such as sea level rises, was also acknowledged.

Negative impacts cited in the consultation response included the fact that any future car use disincentives could have a negative impact on island communities if alternatives were not in place, including potential impacts of increased isolation and reduced tourism to the islands. It was mentioned that there could be a particular impact amongst those living in island communities who were also disabled, elderly, or living on low incomes. There was also some concern about the potential environmental impacts of increasing public transport services on islands.

¹ NTS2 Delivery Plan – Island Communities Impact Assessment Screening Report, 2021.

Mitigations proposed in the consultation included improvements in public transport, shared transport and active travel infrastructure, particularly in relation to improved timetabling to allow more efficient multi-modal interchange. There was suggestion that any alternative transport provision, including public transport and micro-mobility, should consist of electric vehicles, and a suggestion that local renewable energy sources could potentially be used to power electric transport locally. Responses suggested addressing the use of cars and other vehicles by tourists, including through a potential tourist tax or incentivisation of car-free travel to the islands. Other proposed mitigations included improvements in local services, digital connectivity and deliveries, to reduce the need for islanders to travel to the mainland.

Step Three – Consultation

As indicated previously, extensive consultation has been carried out. The initial setting of the target was accompanied by consultation through the Climate Change Plan Update. Engagement with island communities was initially undertaken as part of the development of National Transport Strategy (NTS2), shortly prior to the initial development of the car use reduction route map. Subsequently, a consultation was carried out on the draft route map, which was published in 2022.

Step Four – Assessment

The renewed policy statement is a national policy commitment and therefore not designed to necessarily address the unique transport challenges relevant to island communities. It does, however, recognise the importance of ensuring that the local benefits of car use reduction, including the health, social and economic benefits of reduced air and noise pollution; reduced road danger; increased opportunities for active travel; decreased community severance; and reduced congestion; are extended to those living in island communities as well as those on the mainland. Four key transport behaviours have been identified to support individuals to reduce their car use by:

- **Reducing the need to travel**, using online services where appropriate
- **Living well locally**, accessing goods and services locally where possible
- **Switching mode**, to active travel or public transport where possible
- **Combining or sharing trips**, to reduce the total distance travelled by car

It is recognised that in island communities, interventions to support a reduced need to travel and more local living, as well as those to facilitate combined or shared trips may be more relevant than interventions to support switching of modes.

Do you feel as though a full Islands Impact Assessment is required for your policy?

The policy seeks to achieve a national-level reduction in car use and not a uniform reduction in car use across all geographical areas, it is not anticipated to impact on island communities in a significantly different way than on other communities across Scotland. The commitment to produce place-based, experience-specific delivery plans provides further opportunities to engage directly with island communities and ensure that any plans for delivery within the islands are reflective of their circumstances and specific requirements.

A full Islands Community Impact Assessment is NOT required.

In preparing the ICIA, I have formed an opinion that our policy, strategy or service is NOT likely to have an effect on an island community which is significantly different from its effect on other communities (including other island communities). The reason for this is detailed below

This ICIA has considered impacts at the level of the policy statement itself and acknowledges that individual ICIA's should be conducted on all policies to achieve car use reduction, as and when appropriate. This will enable individual policy interventions to be adapted to best meet the needs of island communities, in line with the National Transport Strategy (NTS2) policy to *minimise the connectivity and cost disadvantages faced by island communities and those in remote rural and rural areas, including safeguarding of lifeline services*.

The renewed policy statement sets out our commitment to support people to make more sustainable travel choices wherever possible, but does not require all individuals or geographical areas to make the same percentage reduction in car use. This means that the policy is not likely to have an effect on an island community which is significantly different from its effect on other communities. Similarly, our commitment to producing delivery plans indicates that we will ensure that these will be place-based and experience-specific, and we will ensure island communities are engaged as a part of this.

The range of sustainable travel behaviours have been deliberately chosen to be inclusive of people living in different geographical locations, so that those in places such as island communities, where there may be fewer opportunities to 'switch mode' can still contribute to and benefit from car use reduction through one of the alternative sustainable travel behaviours of: reducing travel by making use of online alternatives where appropriate; choosing local destinations where possible; and combining trips or sharing car journeys where car remains the only feasible option.

ICIA authorised by (<i>DD level or above</i>)	Fiona Brown
Position	Interim Director of Transport Strategy and Analysis
Signature and Date	Fiona Brown 11 June 2025



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