



A96 Corridor Review
Initial Appraisal: Case for Change
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A96 Corridor Review

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Table of Acronyms

Abbreviation	
AADT	Annual Average Daily Traffic
APR	Annual Progress Report
AQMA	Air Quality Management Areas
AQO	Air Quality Objective
AWPR	Aberdeen Western Peripheral Route
BRES	Business Register and Employment Survey
CNMA	Candidate Noise Management Area
CO ₂	Carbon Dioxide
CQA	Candidate Quiet Area
CSR	Capital Spending Review
CT	Community Transport
dB	Decibels
DEFRA	Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
DRT	Demand Responsive Transport
EV	Electric Vehicle
GP	General Practitioner
GVA	Gross Value Added
HGV	Heavy Goods Vehicle
HITRANS	Highlands and Islands Transport Partnership
IIP	Infrastructure Investment Plan
KSI	Killed or Seriously Injured
kt	Kiloton
LA	Local Authority
LNR	Local Nature Reserve
MaaS	Mobility as a Service
MOI	Management of Incidents
NAP	Noise Action Plan
NaPTAT	National Public Transport Accessibility Tool
NCN	National Cycle Network
Nestrans	North East of Scotland Transport Partnership

NMA	Noise Management Area
NO ₂	Nitrogen Dioxide
NO _x	Nitrogen Oxides
NPF4	The Fourth National Planning Framework
NRS	National Records of Scotland
NTS2	The Second National Transport Strategy
OAC	Output Area Classification
ONS	Office for National Statistics
PCM	Pollution Climate Mapping
PfG	Programme for Government
PIA	Personal Injury Accident
PM	Particulate Matter
PPM	Public Performance Measure
QA	Quiet Area
RET	Road Equivalent Tariff
RSPB	Royal Society for the Protection of Birds
RTC	Road Traffic Collision
RTS	Regional Transport Strategy
SABI	Scottish Access to Bus Indicator
SAC	Special Area of Conservation
SEPA	Scottish Environmental Protection Agency
SHS	Scottish Household Survey
SIMD	Scottish Indicator of Multiple Deprivation
SPA	Special Protection Area
SSI	Sites of Special Scientific Interest
STAG	Scottish Transport Appraisal Guide
STPR2	The Second Strategic Transport Projects Review
TPO	Transport Planning Objective
UK	United Kingdom
ULEV	Ultra Low Emission Vehicle
WFD	Water Framework Directive

1. Introduction

1.1. Background

In August 2021, the Scottish Government and Scottish Green Party Parliamentary Group agreed a Cooperation Agreement and a shared policy programme. As part of this shared policy programme, various agreed principles regarding investment in the transport network were set out. In relation to the A96, the Scottish Government committed to take forward a transport enhancements programme on the A96 corridor that will improve connectivity between surrounding towns, tackle congestion and address safety and environmental issues. This will include:

- Dualling from Inverness to Nairn.
- Bypassing of Nairn, Keith, Elgin and Inverurie accompanied by measures to remove through traffic from the by-passed town centres.
- Targeted road safety improvements where needed, for example between Fochabers and Huntly and Inverurie to Aberdeen.
- The development of an A96 “Electric Highway”.

The Cooperation Agreement noted the current plan is to fully dual the A96 route between Inverness and Aberdeen. The Cooperation Agreement also confirmed there would be a transparent, evidence-based review to include a climate compatibility assessment to assess direct and indirect impacts on the climate and the environment. The Cooperation Agreement noted that the review will report by the end of 2022.

The A96 Corridor Review is being carried out in accordance with the Scottish Transport Appraisal Guidance (STAG). STAG is the best practice, objective-led approach to transport appraisal. The STAG appraisal shall consider all relevant transport modes within the A96 corridor, including roads-based transport, rail, public transport and active travel modes. Adopting STAG also brings the review in line with the same methodology as set out in the recently published second Strategic Transport Projects Review (STPR2).

The A96 Corridor Review is being carried out by design consultants Jacobs AECOM acting on behalf of Transport Scotland. Jacobs AECOM currently support Transport Scotland undertaking STPR2. The review considers transport problems and opportunities within the A96 corridor. It also looks at the changing policy context and other key considerations, such as development and growth aims for the corridor and surrounding area. Additionally, it considers the impact of the global climate emergency and the COVID-19 pandemic on how people work and travel within the corridor.

1.2. Report Purpose

The transport appraisal for the A96 Corridor Review is being carried out in accordance with the STAG¹ which is an objective-led, evidence-based transport appraisal process. The four key phases of STAG are illustrated in Figure 1.

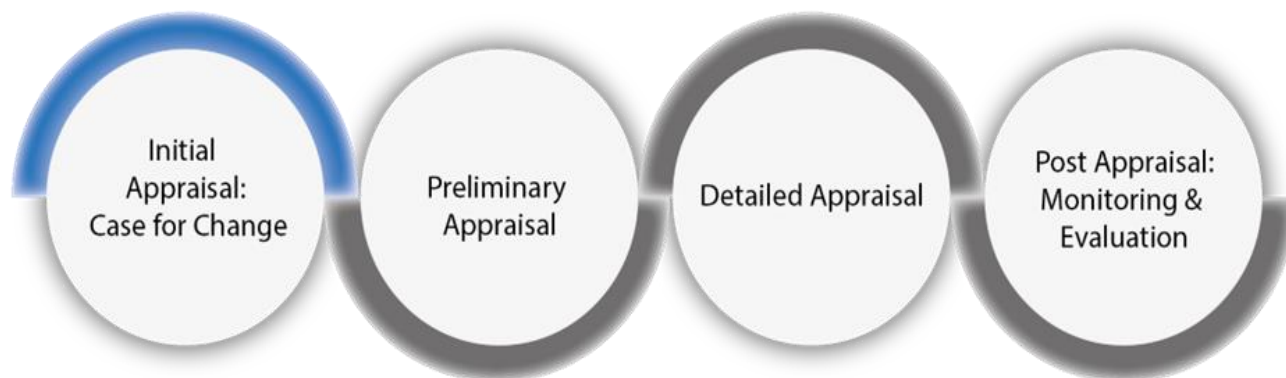


Figure 1: The four Key Phases to the Scottish Transport Appraisal Guidance (STAG)

This report sets out the Initial Appraisal: Case for Change for the A96 Corridor Review and constitutes the first phase of STAG. The Case for Change sets out the evidence base for problems and opportunities linked to the transport network for all modes within the study area and draws upon relevant data analysis, policy review and stakeholder engagement. The report sets out a robust method aligned with the principles of the Scotland's National Transport Strategy (NTS2) to generate, 'clean' and sift options; ensuring that a broad range of options across all modes that address the problems and opportunities in the transport corridor are considered.

In the context of the A96 Corridor Review, the transport network is defined as being all transport infrastructure and services owned, operated and funded directly by Transport Scotland, along with the inter-urban bus and active travel network and principal routes within the defined study area.

This Case for Change report also presents a set of Transport Planning Objectives (TPOs) and sub-objectives that align closely with STPR2 objectives, and have been developed from the specific evidence-based problems and opportunities identified in the transport corridor. The TPOs represent the positive outcomes sought for the corridor and provide the basis for the appraisal of alternative options and, during post-appraisal, will be central to monitoring and evaluation.

Subsequent phases of the STAG process, the preliminary and detailed appraisal phases, involve more detailed appraisal work, considering the feasibility and performance of options to tackle the identified transport related problems and opportunities and will be developed as the process moves forward.

¹Transport Scotland, Scottish Transport Appraisal Guidance (STAG), 2008, www.transport.gov.scot/media/41507/j9760.pdf

The following chapter sets out the Geographical, Policy, Socio-Economic, Environmental and Transport Context for the A96 corridor.

2. Context

2.1. Geographical Context

The A96 Corridor Review covers the transport corridor from Raigmore Interchange at Inverness at the western extent, to the Aberdeen Western Peripheral Route (AWPR) Craibstone Junction at Aberdeen at the eastern extent. The transport corridor connects several communities including Nairn, Forres, Elgin, Fochabers, Keith, Huntly, Inverurie and Kintore.

Figure 2 shows the geographic context of the transport appraisal aspect of the A96 Corridor Review (a larger version of Figure 2 can be found in Appendix A where more accessible versions of the report figures can be found). This includes its position within Scotland, the A96 route itself and the settlements within the A96 Corridor Review transport appraisal study area.

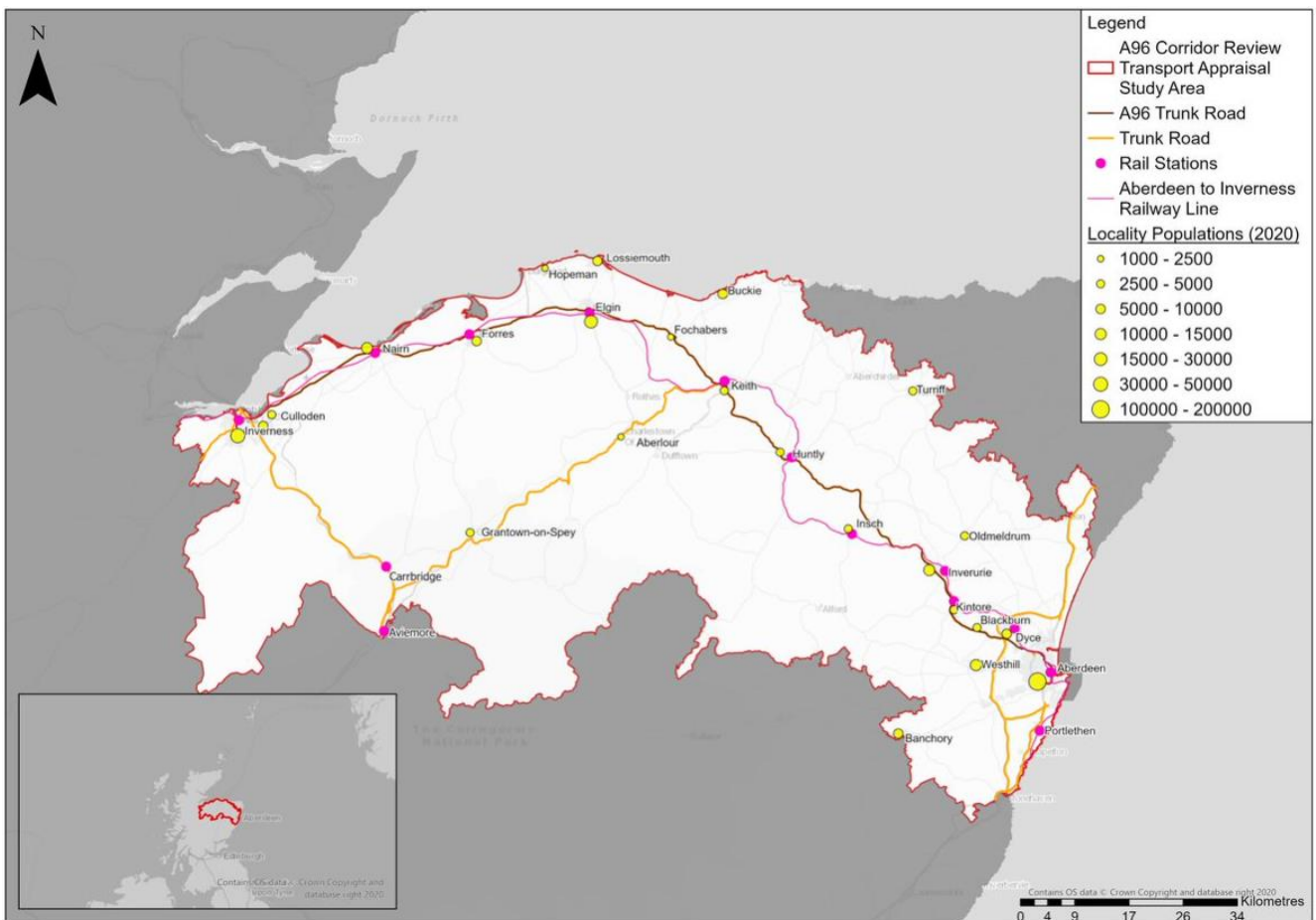


Figure 2: A96 Corridor Review Transport Appraisal Study Area

(Click image to enlarge figure)

The transport appraisal study area encompasses sections of the four Local Authority (LA) areas of The Highland Council, Moray Council, Aberdeenshire Council and Aberdeen City Council. The cities of Inverness and Aberdeen are situated at either end of the transport appraisal study area.

The boundary of the transport appraisal study area is defined by the Scottish Neighbourhood Statistics Data Zones. Data zones are the most localised output area for most national datasets and provide the greatest detailed breakdown of statistics by geography. Data zones are defined by population size, and each contains between approximately 500 and 1,000 people and are therefore varying sizes across Scotland, and cover larger areas in rural locations compared to the more densely populated urban areas. The transport appraisal study area contains just under 10% of the total number of data zones in Scotland.

The north-eastern tip of Scotland, including the towns of Banff, Fraserburgh and Peterhead, is not included within the transport appraisal study area, as analysis of travel to work patterns² indicated little interaction between trips from this area and the A96 corridor. Furthermore, it has been assumed that the majority of freight movements from this area, and the ports therein, are travelling towards Aberdeen, Central Belt and beyond, and would therefore utilise the A90 rather than the A96 Corridor.

Figure 3 shows the Urban Rural 2016 6-fold classification³ inside the transport appraisal study area and the surrounding region. The 6-fold classification is broken down into the following categories, with the percentage of the corridor by land mass shown in brackets:

- Large Urban Areas (2%)
- Other Urban Areas (2%)
- Accessible Small Towns (2%)
- Remote Small Towns (2%)
- Accessible Rural (54%)
- Remote Rural (38%)

² NRS, 2011 Census (Scotland), 2011, <https://www.scotlandscensus.gov.uk/>

³ Scottish Government, 6-fold Urban Rural Classification, 2016, <https://www2.gov.scot/Topics/Statistics/About/Methodology/UrbanRuralClassification>

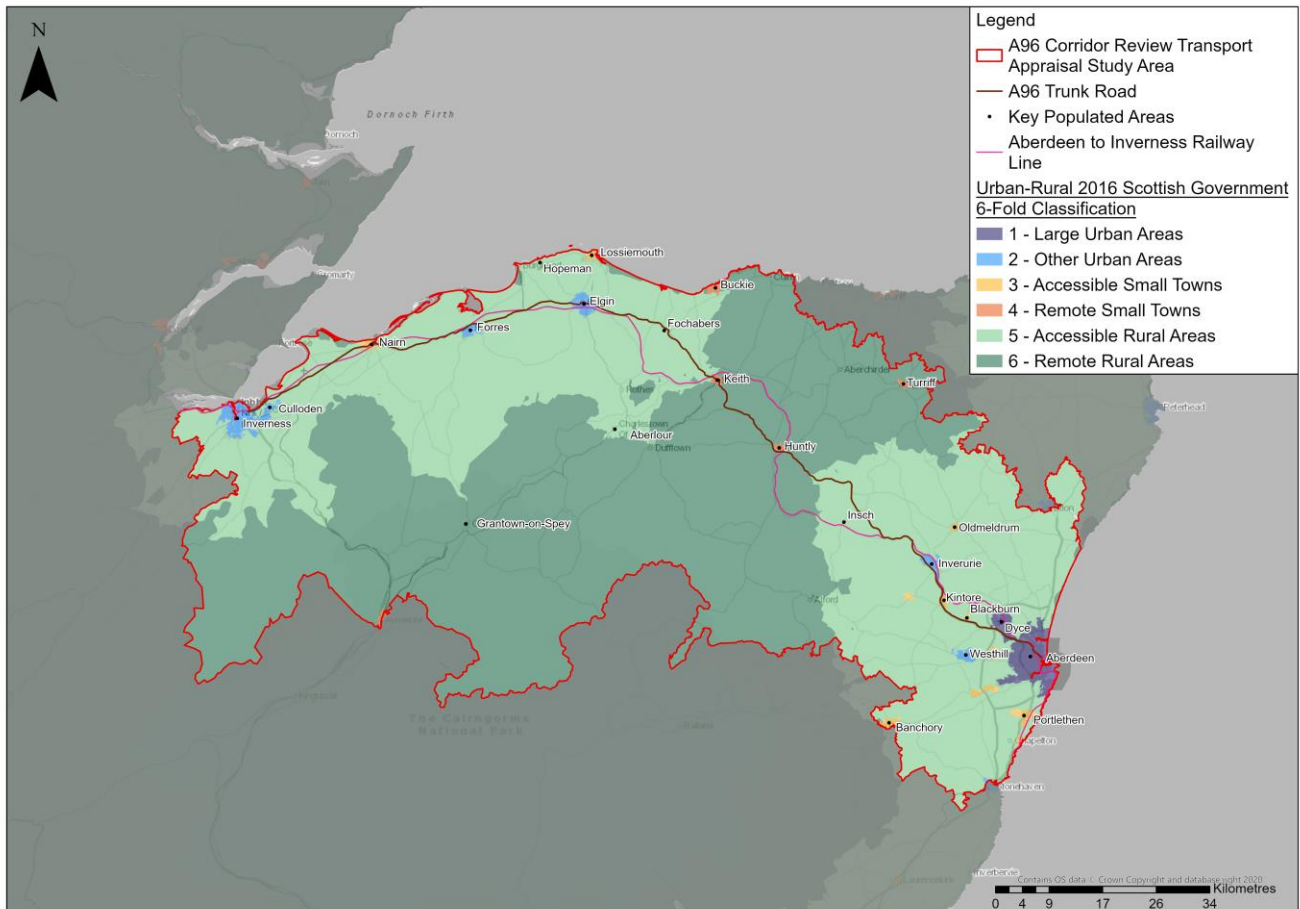


Figure 3: Urban-Rural 2016 Scottish Government 6-Fold Classification

(Click image to enlarge figure)

Whilst the majority of the population within the transport appraisal study area reside in data zones classified as either large or other urban areas (over 60%), these only make up 4% of the transport appraisal study area by land mass. Inverness (classified as Other Urban Area) and Aberdeen (classified as a Large Urban Area) are located at either end of the corridor, with Forres, Elgin, Inverurie and Westhill (Aberdeenshire) identified as Other Urban Areas within the transport appraisal study area. Between urban areas, a combination of Accessible Rural Areas and Remote Rural Areas make up 92% of the data zones within the transport appraisal study area, indicating the rural nature of the region. Nairn, Lossiemouth, Oldmeldrum, Kintore, Blackburn and Portlethen are defined as Accessible Small Towns, based on their geographic locality and transport accessibility to urban areas. Buckie, Keith, Huntly and Turriff are noted as Remote Small Towns within the wider rural landscape.

2.2. Policy Context

Figure 4 provides an overview of the strategies and policies reviewed, with a summary of the key documents presented in the following paragraphs. At the national, regional and local levels the relevant transport, land-use planning and economic strategies and policies have

been reviewed to provide the background context against which this Case for Change has been developed.



Figure 4: Overview of Policy, Strategy and Legislation Context

(Click image to enlarge figure)

National Policies

The National Transport Strategy 2 (NTS2)⁴ sets the vision for the country’s transport system over the next 20 years to achieve a more sustainable, inclusive, safe and accessible transport system which helps to deliver a healthier, fairer and more prosperous Scotland for communities, businesses and visitors. It sets out key priorities to support that vision:

- reduces inequalities;
- takes climate action;

⁴ National Transport Strategy (NTS2), Transport Scotland, 2020, www.transport.gov.scot/media/47052/national-transport-strategy.pdf

- helps deliver inclusive economic growth; and
- improves our health and wellbeing.

Each priority is underpinned by three outcomes. At the heart of the Strategy is the recognition that we need to deliver a step-change in behaviour and provision of attractive, affordable, accessible, and sustainable travel options. Embedded within the Strategy is the Sustainable Travel Hierarchy in decision making which promotes walking, wheeling, cycling, public transport and shared transport options in preference to single occupancy private car use, as well as a Sustainable Investment Hierarchy which prioritises future transport investment aimed at reducing inequalities and the need to travel unsustainably and prioritising maintaining and safely operating existing assets ahead of new infrastructure investment.

The actions to take forward NTS2 are outlined in the 2020-2022 Delivery Plan⁵, published in December 2020. The Delivery Plan sets out a range of actions being taken forward by the Scottish Government to deliver on its vision and priorities to the end of March 2022. This first Delivery Plan takes cognisance of the impact of COVID-19 on travel demand and behaviour, and its impact in terms of exacerbating existing inequalities, including around access to, and affordability of, transport, particularly for those already experiencing disadvantage.

In April 2019 the Scottish Government declared a Climate Emergency and set out targets to reduce Scotland's emissions of all greenhouse gases to net-zero by 2045 at the latest, with interim targets for reductions of at least 56% by 2020, 75% by 2030 and 90% by 2040. The targets are underpinned by the Climate Change (Emissions Reduction Targets) Act⁶ published by the Scottish Government in 2019 which amended the Climate Change Act 2009. In December 2020, the Scottish Government produced its Climate Change Plan 2018-2032 update⁷, which sets out the approach to delivering a green recovery, with a focus on the period up to 2032. The transport-related components of the Plan build upon NTS2, with a specific commitment to reduce car kilometres by 20% by 2030.

⁵ National Transport Strategy (NTS2) – Delivery Plan – 2020 to 2022, Transport Scotland, 2020, <https://www.transport.gov.scot/publication/national-transport-strategy-nts2-delivery-plan-2020-to-2022/>

⁶ Climate Change (Emissions Reduction Targets) (Scotland) Act, Scottish Government, 2019, <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/asp/2019/15/contents/enacted>

⁷ Securing a Green Recovery on a Path to Net Zero: Climate Change Plan 2018–2032 - update, Scottish Government, 2020 <https://www.gov.scot/publications/securing-green-recovery-path-net-zero-update-climate-change-plan-20182032/>

Reducing car use for a healthier, fairer and greener Scotland⁸, which was published in January 2022 for consultation, is the route map to achieve a 20% reduction in car kilometres by 2030. It sets out national interventions to:

- reduce the need to travel by using online options to access goods, services, amenities and social connections if these cannot be accessed locally in a sustainable way;
- help people live well locally, by choosing local destinations which can make it easier to switch to more sustainable modes and will reduce distances driven if a car is still used;
- help people switch modes to walk, wheel, cycle or public transport where feasible; and
- help people combine trips or share journeys with another person (in line with prevailing public health guidance) if car use remains the only feasible option.

A further element which details the wider response of the Scottish Government to its declared Climate Emergency is set out within its initial response to the final report of the Just Transition Commission in Just Transition – A Fairer, Greener Scotland⁹ which highlights a framework for how Scotland, by 2045, will deliver a fair and green transition for everyone as the country seeks to reach its Net Zero targets and legal obligations. At the heart of this framework is ensuring that the transition provides positive and long-lasting benefits through facilitating new educational and economic opportunities, transforming the built environment through the enhancement of existing assets and delivering infrastructure that will facilitate rapid decarbonisation whilst also ensuring that the associated cost of delivery is not borne by those who are least able to pay. From a transport infrastructure perspective, the framework highlights the ongoing development of 20-Minute Neighbourhoods and the aspiration to deliver sustainable communities through targeted improvements to active travel and public transport modes. Additionally, the framework details emerging technological solutions to facilitate this fair and green transition such as those relating to Connective and Autonomous Vehicles and Transport Scotland's planned roadmap.

In July 2021, the Scottish Government published Cleaner Air for Scotland 2: Towards A Better Place for Everyone¹⁰ and an associated Delivery Plan, setting out how the Scottish Government will deliver further air quality improvements over the next five years to secure the vision of Scotland having the best air quality in Europe – a quality of air that aims to protect and enhance health, wellbeing and the environment. It recognises the need for a

⁸ A route map to achieve a 20 per cent reduction in car kilometres by 2030, Transport Scotland, 2022, <https://www.transport.gov.scot/publication/a-route-map-to-achieve-a-20-per-cent-reduction-in-car-kilometres-by-2030/>

⁹ Just Transition – A Fairer, Greener Scotland, Scottish Government, 2021, [Just Transition - A Fairer, Greener Scotland: Scottish Government response - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](https://www.gov.scot/publications/just-transition-a-fairer-greener-scotland-scottish-government-response-gov.scot/)

¹⁰ Cleaner Air for Scotland 2: Towards A Better Place for Everyone, Scottish Government, 2021, <https://www.gov.scot/publications/cleaner-air-scotland-2-towards-better-place-everyone/>

reduction in the need to travel unsustainably, making the most of existing transport strategic systems and supporting strategic investments in sustainable, smart and cleaner transport options. The Programme for Government (PfG) 2022-23¹¹ sets out the actions that the Scottish Government will take over the next year and beyond, with a particular focus on addressing the cost crisis that is already impacting people, businesses, public services and the third sector across Scotland. Although the Scottish Government faces a significant degree of uncertainty and volatility for both the 2022 - 23 budget and funding available for future Programmes for Government, the Scottish Government has confirmed that ambitions set out in the 2021-2022 PfG remain in place. Key elements from the 2021-2022 PfG is the action for at least £320 million, or 10% of the total transport budget, is allocated towards Active Travel by 2024 - 25 to ensure green, cleaner and better-connected communities. Also of note is the Shared Policy Programme¹², which outlines a commitment to undertake a transport enhancements programme on the A96 corridor that improves connectivity between surrounding towns, tackles congestion and addresses safety and environmental issues, including dualling from Inverness to Nairn; bypassing Nairn, Keith, Elgin and Inverurie accompanied by measures to remove through traffic from the bypassed town centres; targeted road safety improvements where needed, for example between Fochabers and Huntly and from Inverurie to Aberdeen; and the development of an A96 "Electric Highway". It reaffirms that current plans are to fully dual the A96 from Inverness to Aberdeen; however, acknowledges that a transparent, evidence-based review will be undertaken, including a climate compatibility assessment to assess direct and indirect impacts on the climate and the environment, reporting by the end of 2022.

The Infrastructure Investment Plan (IIP)¹³ for Scotland 2021 to 2026 was published on 4 February 2021, following consultation on the Draft Plan in September 2020 and building on the previous IIP published in 2015, drawing on inputs from the work of the Infrastructure Commission for Scotland. The vision of the IIP is that "our infrastructure supports Scotland's resilience and enables inclusive, net zero, and sustainable growth." It provides additional detail to support the commitments made within the PfG and sets the context of future investment in transport to deliver an effective response to the COVID-19 pandemic and to the key longer-term trends of climate change, technological developments and demographic change. The IIP identifies delivery under three themes: enabling the transition to net zero emissions and environmental sustainability; driving inclusive economic growth; and building resilient and sustainable places. These themes directly link to Scotland's National Performance Framework and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals¹⁴. Under Theme 1, the IIP aims to deliver decarbonisation of transport and support active travel by

¹¹ A stronger and more resilient Scotland: the programme for Government 2022 to 2023, Scottish Government, 2022, <https://www.gov.scot/publications/stronger-more-resilient-scotland-programme-government-2022-23/>

¹² Scottish Government and Scottish Green Party - Shared Policy Programme, Scottish Government, 2021, <https://www.gov.scot/publications/scottish-government-scottish-green-party-shared-policy-programme/>

¹³ Infrastructure Investment, Scottish Government, <https://www.gov.scot/policies/government-finance/infrastructure-investment/>

¹⁴ The Sustainable Development Goals, United Nations, 2015, <https://sdgs.un.org/goals>

reducing the need to travel unsustainably, investing in bus and rail decarbonisation and encouraging a shift to more sustainable modes of transport. Under Theme 2: driving inclusive economic growth, the IIP notes that through enhancing our transport infrastructure, focusing on a safe and resilient strategic transport network which also contributes to net zero and inclusive economic growth, we can boost Scotland's productivity and competitiveness, increase trade and inward investment. The plan also includes a commitment to develop an 'investment hierarchy' which prioritises enhancing and maintaining existing assets over building new infrastructure, the details of which form part of the consultation. The current IIP has identified the A96 Dualling Programme as a project which will contribute towards strengthening connectivity.

By aligning strategy, project and programme funding, the Capital Spending Review (CSR)¹⁵ sends a strong signal on the future need to adjust the balance of investment in favour of renewing and extending the life of existing infrastructure, both on environmental and value-for-money grounds.

The draft National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4)¹⁶, developed alongside the IIP, was laid to Parliament on 10 November 2021. NPF4 sets out a need to "embrace and deliver radical change to tackle and adapt to climate change, restore biodiversity loss, improve health and wellbeing, build a wellbeing economy and create great places." In this context, NPF4 recognises the need to plan our places in a way that reduces the need to travel. To support the spatial strategy a number of policy changes are set out within NPF4, such as embedding the NTS2 Sustainable Travel Hierarchy and Sustainable Investment Hierarchy into the appraisal and assessment of development proposals. The new spatial strategy also sets out an approach whereby future places, homes and neighbourhoods will be better, healthier and more vibrant places to live, by reducing the overall volume of travel by building quality places that work for everyone through the concept of 20-minute neighbourhoods. NPF4 advocates the infrastructure-first approach in planning for future development to provide communities with the opportunity to travel in a sustainable manner from the outset. In parallel to this, there will be a need to adapt key routes due to the impacts of climate change including improvements to the A96 to enhance safety, strengthen resilience, decarbonise connectivity and create a strong network of charging points.

In 2018, the Scottish Government published an updated National Performance Framework¹⁷ which sets out the Scottish Government's Purpose to:

- create a more successful country

¹⁵ Investing for jobs: capital spending review framework 2021-2022 to 2025-2026, Scottish Government, 2020, <https://www.gov.scot/publications/investing-jobs-capital-spending-review-framework-2021-22-2025-26/>

¹⁶ Scotland 2045: Our Fourth National Planning Framework (Draft), Scottish Government, November 2021, <https://www.gov.scot/publications/scotland-2045-fourth-national-planning-framework-draft/>

¹⁷ National Performance Framework, Scottish Government, <https://nationalperformance.gov.scot/>

- give opportunities to all people living in Scotland
- increase the wellbeing of people living in Scotland
- create sustainable and inclusive growth
- reduce inequalities and give equal importance to economic, environmental and social progress

In order to achieve this purpose, the framework sets out the following National Outcomes:

- children and young people grow up loved, safe and respected so that they realise their full potential
- communities are inclusive, empowered, resilient and safe
- we are creative and our vibrant and diverse cultures are expressed and enjoyed widely
- we have a globally competitive, entrepreneurial, inclusive and sustainable economy
- we are well educated, skilled and able to contribute to society
- we value, enjoy, protect and enhance our environment
- we have thriving and innovative businesses, with quality jobs and fair work for everyone
- we are healthy and active
- we respect, protect and fulfil human rights and live free from discrimination
- we are open, connected and make a positive contribution internationally
- we tackle poverty by sharing opportunities, wealth and power more equally

The National Performance Framework also sets out the National Indicators that will be used to measure Scotland's progress against the National Outcomes.

Scotland's Agenda for Cities¹⁸, published in 2016, is a refresh of Scotland's Cities: Delivering for Scotland. The Agenda looks to make Scotland's cities and their regions exemplars in digital and transport connectivity, low carbon approaches and affordable housing.

¹⁸ Scotland's Agenda for Cities, Scottish Government, 2016,
<https://www.gov.scot/publications/scotlands-agenda-cities/pages/3/>

Regional Policies

City Region and Growth Deals: The Scottish Government is committed to ensuring 100% coverage of Scotland with City Region and Growth Deals. The Scottish Government, the UK Government and regional partners have agreed funding for £315 million as part of the Inverness and Highland City-Region Deal¹⁹. Central to the Inverness and Highland City-Region Deal is improving access to and within communities to increase accessibility and connectivity, particularly for new developments along the A96 corridor. Major planned enhancements such as the A9 / A96 Inshes to Smithton scheme and the A9/A82 Longman Junction upgrade would contribute towards improving safety and journey times along key strategic trunk road routes. Over £100m of investment is expected by the Scottish and UK Government and other contributors towards the Moray Growth Deal²⁰ which was signed in December 2021 and will provide funding over 10 to 15 years. For Moray, Connectivity forms one of the four pillars of the deal which includes transport, particularly rural transport, with an aspiration to remove significant barriers to labour market access and education opportunities. The Scottish and UK Government are also committed to jointly investing up to £250 million as part of the Aberdeen City Region Deal²¹, with further funding from Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire Council, the private sector and other local economic partners bringing the total to over £826 million over the next ten years. All three agreements are seeking to improve accessibility and connectivity to increase the economic performance and address existing transport inequalities. The A96 plays a crucial role for the connectivity between Inverness and Aberdeen in the north and north-east of Scotland and the wider region. The Aberdeen City Deal also highlights that work to begin dualling the A96 between Aberdeen and Inverness is also being planned.

Highland and Islands Transport Partnership (HITRANS) Regional Transport Draft Strategy²²: the draft Regional Transport Strategy (RTS) published for consultation in May 2017 sets out the strategic transport vision for the Highlands and Islands region and also highlights that further action is required to support sustainable economic growth and to reduce barriers to participation in employment, learning, social, health and the wealth of cultural activities that the region has to offer. The draft RTS includes the A96 dualling between Inverness and Aberdeen in the list of commitments for delivery projects in the region. Moreover, it notes that HITRANS will work with Transport Scotland and other partners to ensure the project delivers a transport corridor and enhanced connectivity between and within the many large communities which will be impacted by the A96 dualling programme. A key facilitator to maintain and improve lifeline transport networks and services is promoting efficient business connectivity to improve the movement of goods, people and services and that there is good

¹⁹ Inverness and Highland City-Region Deal, HM Government, The Highland Council and the Scottish Government, 2017, <https://www.highland.gov.uk/cityregiondeal>

²⁰ Moray Growth Deal, HM Government, Moray Council and the Scottish Government, 2021, http://www.moray.gov.uk/moray_standard/page_114144.html

²¹ Aberdeen City Region Deal, HM Government, Aberdeenshire Council, Aberdeen City Council and the Scottish Government, 2016, <https://investaberdeen.co.uk/abz-deal>

²² HITRANS Regional Transport Strategy Draft, HITRANS, 2017, https://hitrans.org.uk/Strategy/Regional_Transport_Strategy

connectivity from local centres to the main Scottish gateways of Inverness, Aberdeen, Edinburgh and Glasgow.

The North East of Scotland Transport Partnership (Nestrans) Regional Transport Strategy²³: published in November 2021, is a long-term strategy for the areas of Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire, which sets the vision and direction for transport in the region up to the year 2040. The strategy recognises the need to build on the substantial investment in transport infrastructure in recent years and to shift towards consideration of how to best make use of existing infrastructure and to place a greater emphasis on reducing transport's share of greenhouse gas emissions, contributing to the region's energy and economic transition, embracing new technology, and addressing existing social and health concerns and inequalities. The RTS acknowledges the Scottish Government and Scottish Green Party Shared Policy Programme and includes "Improvements to the A96 corridor between Aberdeen and Inverness" in the list of committed projects in the pipeline, highlighting that A96 improvements would support the objectives of the Regional Economic Strategy. It also references the Cumulative Transport Appraisal of the Strategic Development Plan, which identified that dualling the A96 between the east of Huntly and Aberdeen will likely be required to facilitate anticipated levels of development in the future. Furthermore, the RTS notes Nestrans consideration that the A96 corridor between the AWPR and Inverurie requires to be upgraded to modern standards to address safety and congestion issues.

Strategic Development Plan for Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire²⁴: published in 2020 sets out the strategic framework for investment in jobs, homes and infrastructure across the north-east of Scotland. Covering a 20-year period up to 2040 the strategy has an overarching vision to improve the region's attractiveness whilst improving the resilience of communities and its environment. The SDP has identified a Strategic Growth Area along the road and rail corridor between Aberdeen and Blackburn for significant development to occur over the plan period. In particular, the plan highlights that development opportunities along the A96 will be hindered until appropriate road infrastructure is in place, particularly grade separated junctions and bypassing Inverurie.

²³ Nestrans Regional Transport Strategy, Nestrans, 2021,
<https://www.nestrans.org.uk/regional-transport-strategy/>

²⁴ Aberdeen City and Shire Strategic Development plan, Aberdeen City and Shire Strategic Development Planning Authority, 2020,
<http://publications.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/dataset/b5991364-41ff-4827-b5d4-06aa48c0616a/resource/27bcc9ff-8b5f-4dc3-b322-519f9800ac2c/download/abdnandshirestrategicdevplanfinal2020.pdf>

Local Policies

Moray Local Development Plan²⁵: the 2020 publication has put placemaking at the heart of the Council's Vision which aims to deliver well connected and distinctive places, deliver housing growth and deliver a framework for investment that support economic growth, with tourism being a notable growth sector. The Local Authority has identified the requirement to enhance and improve numerous local road junctions along the A96 corridor. A significant proportion of these improvements are identified as being necessary to allow development to come forward.

Highland-wide Local Development Plan²⁶: the region has been able to diversify its economy, with ports at Inverness and Invergordon supporting the growth in tourism and renewable energies significantly contributing to this. Additionally, there has been significant growth around Inverness and the A96 corridor within the area of the northern extent of the A9 which is highlighted through the council's A96 Corridor Strategy. The council is seeking to deliver the majority of the City's growth up to 2031 along the A96 between Inverness and Nairn. To maximise the potential of the Inner Moray Firth region, there is an identified need for the area to have resolved its infrastructure constraints with improvements to existing highway routes identified as a key priority. It is recognised that later phases of development along the A96 corridor will be heavily dependent upon major infrastructure investment, particularly transport.

Moray Local Transport Strategy²⁷: the Second Moray Local Transport Strategy was published in 2011 which detailed the LAs' vision for delivering high-quality connections and accessibility through the provision of a safe, reliable, affordable and integrated transport network. Moray's relatively low-population density in relation to the Scottish average, and higher number of rural primary industries, results in car dependency being higher than other regions. Travel times demonstrate that journeys to the Central Belt take longer from Moray than from either Inverness or Dingwall by both road and rail and as a result, businesses are at a considerable disadvantage in competing with wider UK and International markets. As the main trunk road in the local area, the A96 is identified as being congested within the settlements of Elgin, Keith and Fochabers (now bypassed as of 2012) with there being limited opportunities for overtaking along the route. Congestion is noted to be contributed to by slow-moving agricultural vehicles, tourist traffic and goods vehicles, whilst interaction with key junctions also a contributory factor. The strategy highlights that the section of the A96 trunk road through Elgin experiences congestion and that the council would seek to lobby the Scottish Government to upgrade the regional trunk road network which comprises of the A96 and A95.

²⁵ Moray Local Development plan, Moray Council, 2020,
http://www.moray.gov.uk/moray_standard/page_133431.html

²⁶ Highland-wide Local Development Plan, The Highland Council, 2012,
https://www.highland.gov.uk/info/178/local_and_statutory_development_plans/199/highland-wide_local_development_plan

²⁷ Second Moray Council Local Transport Strategy, Moray Council, 2017,
http://www.moray.gov.uk/moray_standard/page_75724.html

Elgin Transport Strategy²⁸: published in 2017, sets out the town's transport needs to keep it moving up to 2030. The strategy seeks to expand and increase the offering of its transport network whilst developing and implementing mechanisms and initiatives to encourage more active and sustainable travel behaviours across its communities. Located within Moray, Elgin experiences similar problems on the A96 to those shared at a council Area-level. Both the Moray and Elgin Transport Strategies seek to "Encourage the Scottish Government to upgrade the A96 and A95 Trunk Roads".

2.3. Socio Economic Context

Note that wherever possible the latest available datasets have been analysed to produce the statistics and results presented in this report. In some cases, however, the data used may not be fully up to date. This is typically because the latest data is not yet available, or because the data and/or the method of collection may have changed over time and can no longer be used in the same way. It is also recognised that the pandemic and the restrictions implemented have changed the way society works and travels. Given the uncertainty over what the potential lasting impacts of the pandemic may be, pre-COVID-19 datasets have been used to reflect the baseline situation where relevant.

2.3.1. Population

Also wherever possible, statistics and results are based on results at a data zone level, the greatest granularity available for national datasets available from Census or National Records of Scotland (NRS) datasets. Data zones represent areas of approximately 500 to 1,000 people, and so often represent a smaller geographic area in urban areas. Data zones have been identified through their Local Authority area and their urban-rural classification for comparison and benchmarking throughout this report, with settlement and locality data also used to reflect on particular patterns in towns throughout the transport appraisal study area. In some cases, data has been used at a LA level as more disaggregated data was not available. It should therefore be noted that a proportion of the populations in both Aberdeenshire and Highland reside outwith the transport appraisal study area. The transport appraisal study area contains approximately 49% of the population in Aberdeenshire LA and 38% of the Highland LA, based on 2011 Census population statistics²⁹.

Aberdeen and Inverness are cities within the transport appraisal study area, located at either end of the A96 trunk road. Several towns of varying size and population are situated within the transport appraisal study area including Nairn, Forres, Elgin, Fochabers, Keith, Huntly, Inverurie and Kintore along the A96 itself. Other localities within the transport appraisal study area include Hopeman, Lossiemouth and Buckie on the coast of the Moray Firth, Grantown-on-Spey to the south, and Turriff and Oldmeldrum in rural Aberdeenshire.

²⁸ Elgin Transport Strategy, Moray Council, 2017, http://www.moray.gov.uk/moray_standard/page_109352.html

²⁹ NRS, 2011 Census (Scotland), 2011, <https://www.scotlandscensus.gov.uk/>

Figure 5 indicates the population statistics for the transport appraisal study area, including the most populous cities and towns.

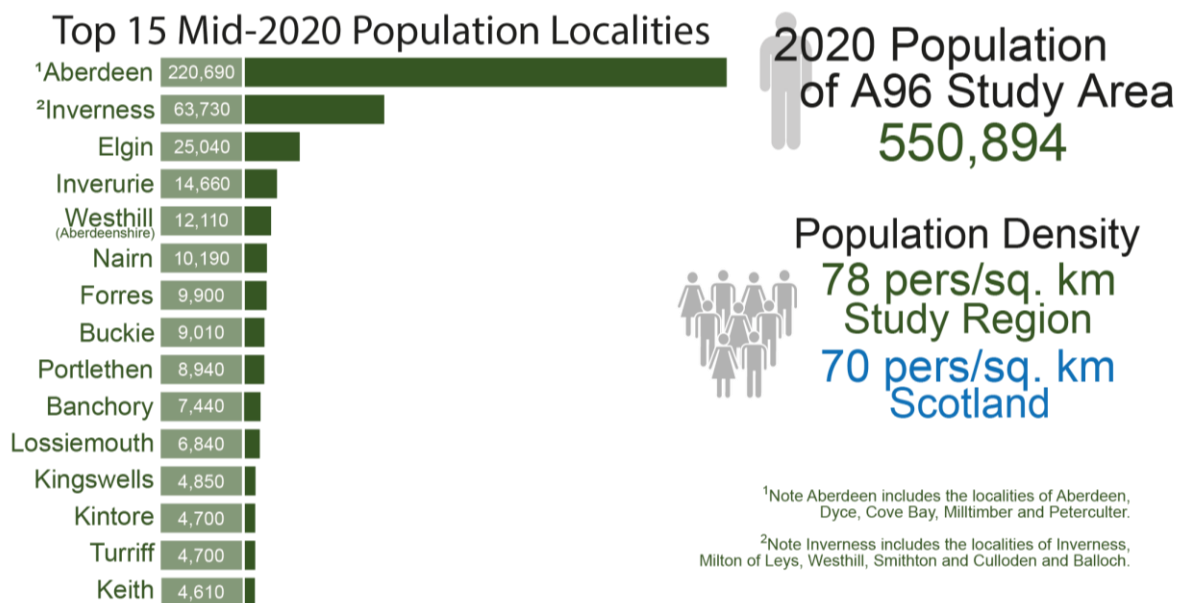


Figure 5: Transport Appraisal Study Area Largest Settlements by Population 2020, 2020 Population and Population Density

(Click image to enlarge figure)

The total population within the transport appraisal study area, as indicated by the 2020 NRS mid-year population estimate³⁰, is just under 551,000. Population density across the transport appraisal study area is slightly greater than Scotland, though this is only a result of the heavily dense population in Aberdeen, the third largest population area and city in Scotland, behind only Glasgow and Edinburgh. Considering the other three LA areas within the study boundary, the population density is 47 pers/sq. km, indicating a much sparser population and greater rurality than across Scotland as a whole.

Aberdeen had a total population of just under 221,000 in 2020³¹ (representing 40% of the total in the transport appraisal study area) with Inverness the second most populous settlement within the study area with a total population of just under 64,000 people in 2020 (representing approximately 12% of the total in the transport appraisal study area). Elgin was reported to have a population of just over 25,000 in 2020. These three areas make up over 56% of the total population in the transport appraisal study area in 2020.

³⁰ National Records of Scotland, 2021, Population Estimates Summary (Current Geographic Boundaries), <https://statistics.gov.scot/resource?uri=http%3A%2F%2Fstatistics.gov.scot%2Fdata%2Fpopulation-estimates-2011-datazone-linked-dataset>

³¹ National Records of Scotland, 2021, Population of Settlements and Localities 2020, <https://statistics.gov.scot/resource?uri=http%3A%2F%2Fstatistics.gov.scot%2Fdata%2Fpopulation-of-settlements-and-localities-2020>

Change in population, as indicated by the 2020 NRS, has seen increases within the transport appraisal study area for each of the LAs. Within the transport appraisal study area, Aberdeenshire population has increased by almost 6% between 2011 and 2020³². The areas of Highland within the transport appraisal study area have grown in population by 3.5%, whilst Aberdeen City has grown by 3%, and Moray by 2.4%.

On a more local level, evidence from the 2020 NRS mid-year population estimates suggest some individual settlements are growing at a greater rate than the wider LA area. Figure 6 shows NRS population projections for the period between 2012³³ and 2020³⁴ for the top 15 most populous settlements in the transport appraisal study area.

Top 15 Mid-2020 Population Localities – Change from 2012

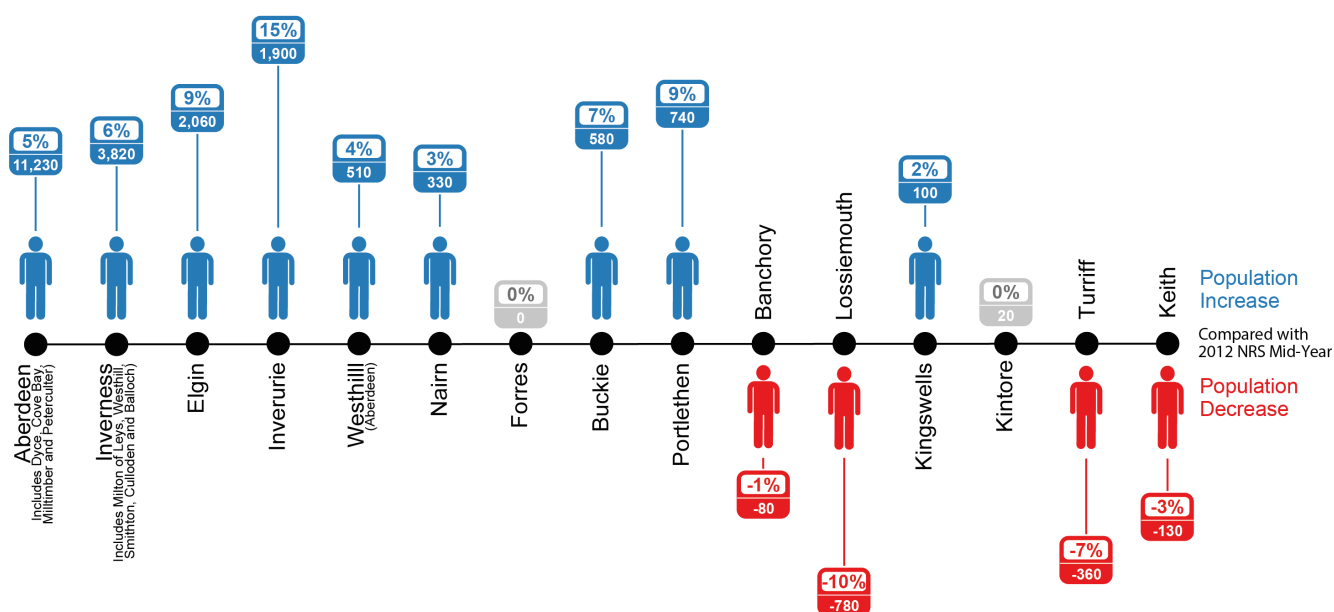


Figure 6: Top 15 Settlements Population Change

(Click image to enlarge figure)

³² National Records of Scotland, Time Series Data, 2021, <https://www.nrscotland.gov.uk/statistics-and-data/statistics/statistics-by-theme/population/population-estimates/small-area-population-estimates-2011-data-zone-based/time-series>

³³ National Records of Scotland, 2014, Mid-2012 Population Estimates for Settlements and Localities in Scotland, <https://webarchive.nrscotland.gov.uk/web/20210313211321/https://www.nrscotland.gov.uk/statistics-and-data/statistics/statistics-by-theme/population/population-estimates/special-area-population-estimates/settlements-and-localities/mid-2012>

³⁴ National Records of Scotland, 2021, Population Estimates Summary (Current Geographic Boundaries), <https://statistics.gov.scot/resource?uri=http%3A%2F%2Fstatistics.gov.scot%2Fdata%2Fpopulation-estimates-2011-datazone-linked-dataset>

Inverurie has shown the greatest proportional growth (15%), followed by Portlethen (9%) and Elgin (9%), whilst Aberdeen and Inverness (including Culloden) have seen population increases of 5% and 6% respectively. However, the population of Lossiemouth has reduced by 10%, Turriff by 7% and Keith by 3%. Other more rural settlements (not included in Figure 6) have also shown a population decrease from 2012 to 2020, Huntly (4%) and Oldmeldrum (3%). In general, the data above indicates that population reductions are most likely to occur in the smaller, more rural areas with subsequent increases in the larger urbanised areas of the transport appraisal study area.

Future growth, as predicted by NRS Population Projections³⁵, is anticipated to be varied by LA area. By 2043, population in Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire is anticipated to grow by approximately 2.5% from a 2018 baseline. However, Highland is predicted to decrease by approximately 1%, and Moray by over 2.5%. These percentages are for the whole LA area, therefore may not be representative of the growth in the transport appraisal study area for Aberdeenshire and Highland.

³⁵ National Records of Scotland, 2020, Population Projections for Scottish Areas (2018-based), <https://www.nrscotland.gov.uk/statistics-and-data/statistics/statistics-by-theme/population/population-projections/sub-national-population-projections/2018-based>

Figure 7 shows the proportion of the population who are under 16 (U16), of working age or are 65 and over within the transport appraisal study area, with the national average presented by way of comparison, as per the 2020 NRS mid- year population estimate³⁶.

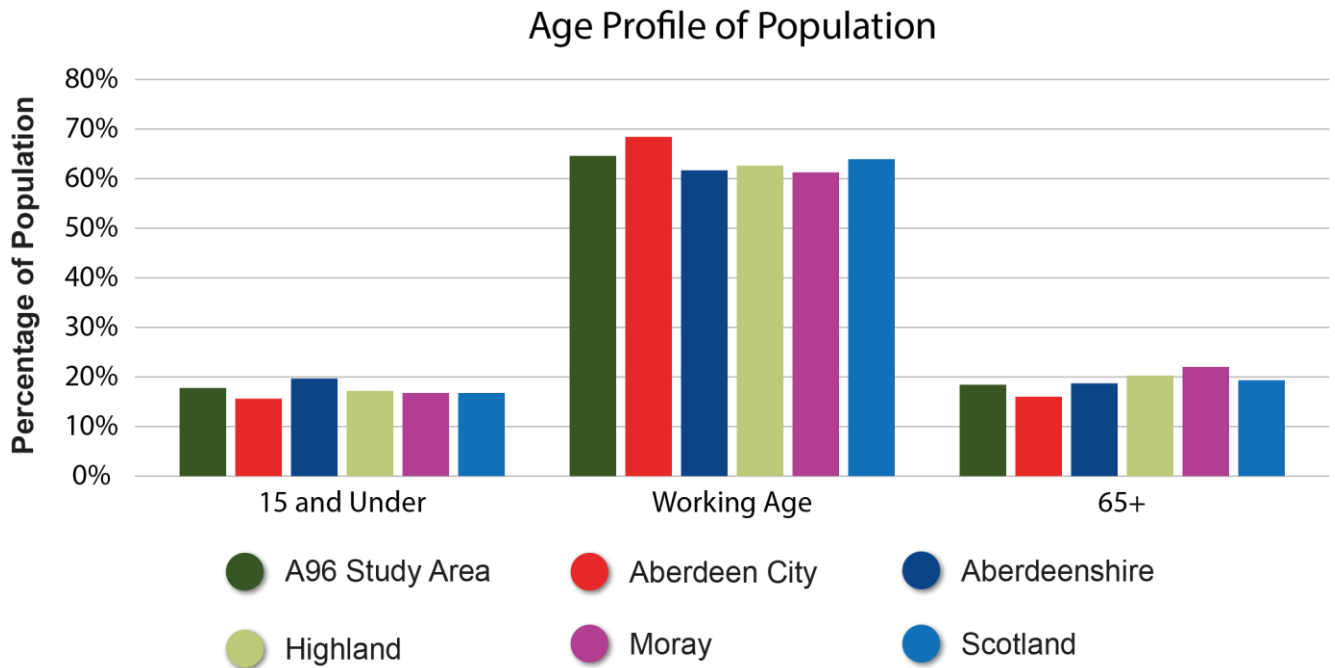


Figure 7: Age Profile of Transport Appraisal Study Area Population

Across the transport appraisal study area, there are more people of working age in urban areas, with Aberdeen City having the highest proportion of working age population (69%) in 2020, higher than the national average (64%), whilst Aberdeenshire, Moray and Highland are all below or similar to the national average at 61%, 63% and 64% respectively. Aberdeen City is however similar to the average for Large Urban Areas (68%). Inverness (64%), Elgin (62%) and Inverurie (62%) all have working age population similar to Other Urban Areas (63%) across Scotland and close to the overall national average, whilst more remote areas, including Turriff (58%), Keith (58%) and Huntly (57%), have a lower working age population compared to the national average.

Those 65 and over are more likely to live outside of urban areas, with Aberdeen (16%) and its surrounding areas such as Portlethen (14%) all having a much lower percentage of people aged 65 and over than smaller, more rural areas including Forres (26%), Nairn (26%), Turriff (26%), Keith (26%) and Huntly (28%). At a LA level, the percentage of population over 65 residing in Moray (22%) and Highland (20%) is higher than the national average (19%), Aberdeenshire being in line with the national average and Aberdeen City lower than the national average (16%).

³⁶ National Records of Scotland, Time Series Data (2020), 2021, <https://www.nrscotland.gov.uk/statistics-and-data/statistics/statistics-by-theme/population/population-estimates/small-area-population-estimates-2011-data-zone-based/time-series>

The proportion of residents under 16 is higher in Aberdeenshire (20%) compared to the national average (17%), with Aberdeen City (16%), Moray (17%) and Highland (17%) similar to the national average. Settlements including Portlethen (21%), Westhill (20%), Elgin (19%) and Inverness (18%), all defined as Other Urban Areas, have a greater proportion of under 16s than the national benchmark (17%).

In summary, population data shows that those of a working age, and under 16s within the transport appraisal study area tend to reside in the large urban areas such as Aberdeen, Inverness and Elgin, however this is similar to other areas across Scotland. Those over 65 are more likely to reside in more remote and rural areas, meaning LAs such as Aberdeenshire, Moray and Highland have an aging population.

Figure 8 demonstrates the population change by broad age group for data zones for the 10-year period from 2011 to 2020³⁷.

³⁷ National Records of Scotland, Time Series Data, 2021,
<https://www.nrscotland.gov.uk/statistics-and-data/statistics/statistics-by-theme/population/population-estimates/small-area-population-estimates-2011-data-zone-based/time-series>

Population Age Change from 2011 to 2020

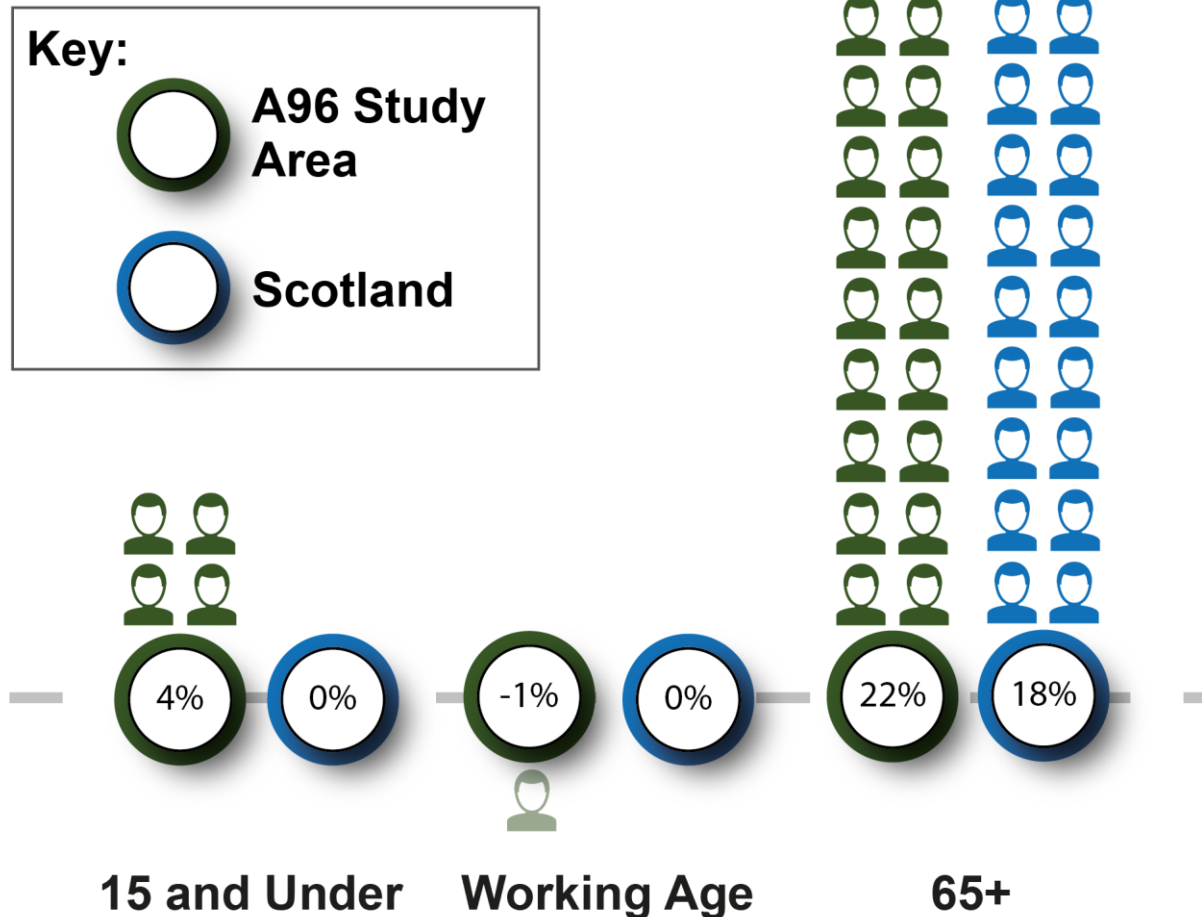


Figure 8: Population Age Structure Comparison – 2011 to 2020

Figure 8 demonstrates that the working age population (taken as those aged 16-64) has slightly decreased across the transport appraisal study area, dropping by 1% between 2011 and 2020, whereas the national average remained consistent in the same time period. Each of the LAs in the transport appraisal study area shows a similar decline of just under 1%. The population of under 16s has risen 4% whereas the national average has remained consistent. The most significant change is in the 65 and over age bracket, which has growth of 22% in the transport appraisal study area, four percentage points greater than the national average and 18 percentage points greater than the growth in under 16s, indicating an aging population in the area.

Data zones for Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire within the transport appraisal study show an increase in young people, with growth of 11% and 6% respectively between 2011 and 2020. However, Moray and Highland data zones within the transport appraisal study area both see a reduction in this category, reducing by 5% and 3% respectively.

Population increases in the 65 and over age group are notably high in Aberdeenshire (34%), Moray (21%) and Highland (26%), with the national average being 18%. However, growth in this age category is only 14% in Aberdeen City, four percentage points lower than the national average, providing further evidence of an aging population in the more rural areas of Aberdeenshire, Moray and Highland. The working age population fluctuations slightly by local authority, however changes are all within 1% of the 2011 values.

Considering the transport appraisal study area as a whole, there is a clear trend of an aging population, with far greater growth in over 65s from 2011 to 2020 than for under 16s. The trend in population growth by age groups backs the evidence presented above that the younger population is growing more in urban areas, particularly in Aberdeen. However, the number of children in more rural areas, including in Moray and Highland, is decreasing. Over 65s are growing across the entire transport appraisal study area, though Accessible Rural Areas (42%) and Small Towns (30%) show the greatest proportional increase. The substantial rise of 65 and over population in accessible areas suggests that older people are balancing a rural lifestyle whilst still retaining a reasonable access to the services offered in the urban areas, such as Aberdeen.

2.3.2. Travel to Work – Mode Share

Census 2011 data has been used to interrogate the travel to work³⁸ mode choice across the transport appraisal study area at the data zone level. Figure 9 presents this information graphically for the key settlements.

³⁸ NRS, 2011 Census (Scotland), 2011, <https://www.scotlandscensus.gov.uk/>

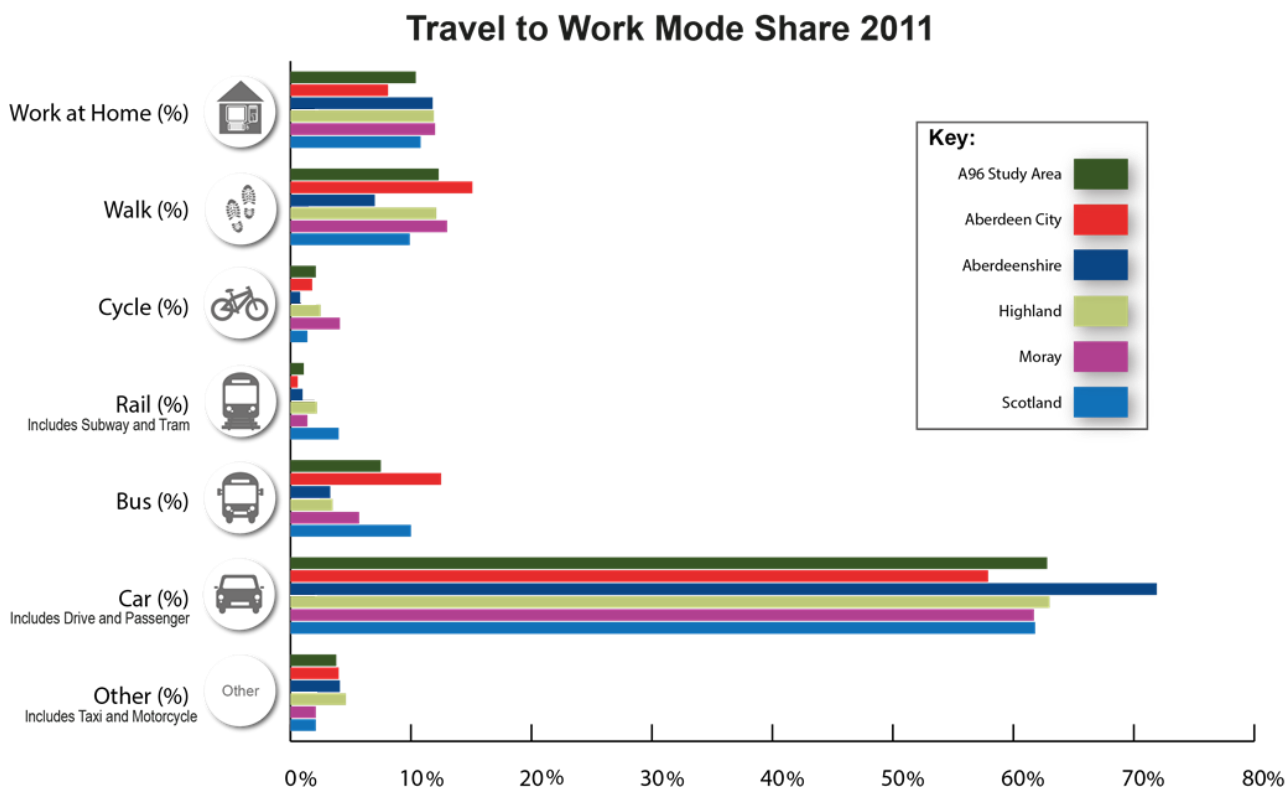


Figure 9: Travel to Work Mode Share

(Click image to enlarge figure)

Aberdeen City, the most urbanised of the LAs within the transport appraisal study area, has fewer people working from home (8%) than the national average (11%), whilst the other three LAs are slightly higher than the national average (12%). There generally being a higher proportion of working from home in more rural and remote areas, such as Granttown-on-Spey (17%) and Cullen (15%).

The use of bus for travel to work or study is 13% in Aberdeen City, three percentage points greater than the national average. For the other three LAs within the transport appraisal study area, the percentage of bus travel is much lower than the national average (10%); 3% in Aberdeenshire, 4% in Moray and 6% in Highland. The national average for rail usage as the main mode to travel to work is 4%, whereas in the four LAs in the transport appraisal study area the proportion is between below 1% (Aberdeen City) and 2% (Moray). This is perhaps a reflection on the lack of availability of rail lines in the corridor.

In terms of active travel, Aberdeen City (17%), Moray (15%) and Highland (17%) all display higher proportions of walking and cycling than the national average (11%), however Aberdeenshire is lower than the national average at 8%. Larger urban areas like Inverness (22%) and Elgin (21%) exhibit very high use of active modes, as do small rural towns such as Keith (20%), Turriff (21%) Granttown-on-Spey (25%) and Huntly (30%), as their remoteness to large urban centres means most residences work locally. Settlements within Aberdeenshire, such as Kintore (3%), Blackburn (4%), Oldmeldrum (7%) and Insch (8%), have a similar pattern to the LA, with lower than average active mode share.

The most significant mode used to travel to work within the transport appraisal study area is private car, which is consistent with Scotland as a whole. Only Aberdeen City is below the national average (62%) at 58%, with Moray and the section of Highland within the transport appraisal study area similar to the national average at 63% and 62% respectively, though there is a lot of variation with remote rural areas within these regions, for example Huntly (53%) and Grantown-on-Spey (56%) showing lower car usage, and Lhanbryde having a higher car usage (73%). However, in Aberdeenshire the proportion of trips to work made by car is significantly greater than the national average at 72%, which may be a result of a lack of alternatives or the distances travelled to work within the LA. Very high car use is observed at settlements in Aberdeenshire including Westhill (77%), Kintore (80%), Blackburn (79%), and Oldmeldrum (76%).

It is important to note that Census data was recorded in 2011 and many changes have occurred since, most notably, the COVID-19 pandemic which restricted travel throughout much of 2020 and 2021. Public consultation for the A96 Corridor Review has suggested a notable increase in people working from home during the pandemic, with respondents also suggesting they are more likely to do so in the future as well. People also report that they are more likely to drive and less likely to use public transport post-pandemic, with reasons including the cost of travel, reduction in services and fear of catching COVID-19 all noted reasons. This is likely to change travel habits moving forward.

Considering the propensity of people to drive to their place of work or study, Figure 10 indicates the car ownership statistics³⁹ across the transport appraisal study area.

³⁹ NRS, 2011 Census (Scotland), 2011, <https://www.scotlandscensus.gov.uk/>

Car or Van Availability per Household 2011

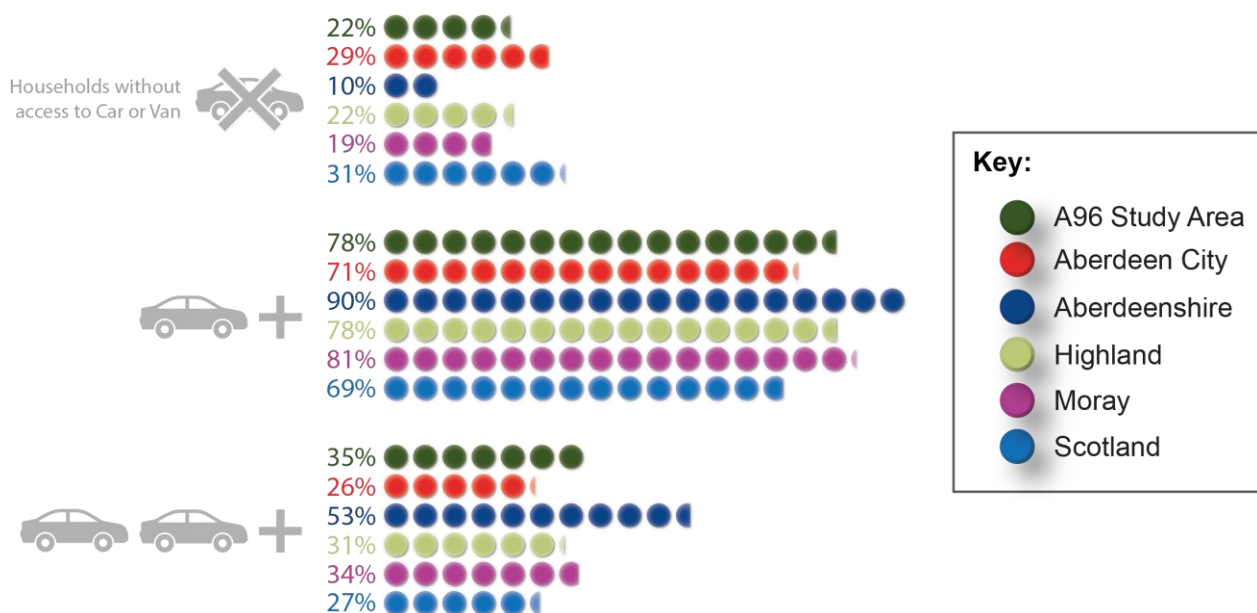


Figure 10: Vehicle Availability in Household

Access to car by household statistics from Census 2011⁴⁰ shows that within the transport appraisal study area, the proportion of households that have access to at least one car or van is higher in all LAs compared to the national average. Approximately 90% of households within Aberdeenshire have access to at least one car and whilst Moray (81%) and Highland (78%) are lower compared to Aberdeenshire, they are still notably higher than the national average (69%). Within Aberdeen City, 71% of households have access to at least one car which is more in line with the national average. This is however higher than the national benchmark of major cities in Scotland (Edinburgh, Aberdeen, Glasgow and Dundee) of 61%, indicating that car ownership is still higher than equivalent areas.

In terms of owning multiple vehicles, over half of households in Aberdeenshire (53%) have access to at least two vehicles, which is almost double the national average (27%). Moray (34%) and Highland (31%) are also higher than the national average. Aberdeen City is slightly above the benchmark for major cities in Scotland (20%) for access to at least two vehicles.

As such, it is clear that across the entire transport appraisal study area but particularly in Aberdeenshire, there is an abundance of privately owned vehicles. The rural nature of the transport appraisal study area, combined with a lack of public transport and active travel provision, drives the perceived need for cars, creating a much more significant availability of cars per household than other areas of Scotland.

⁴⁰ NRS, 2011 Census (Scotland), 2011, <https://www.scotlandscensus.gov.uk/>

2.3.3. Travel to Work – Distance Travelled

Figure 11 displays the Census 2011 data for distance travelled to work⁴¹ for data zones within the transport appraisal study area, defined by their LA area.

Distance Travelled to Work 2011

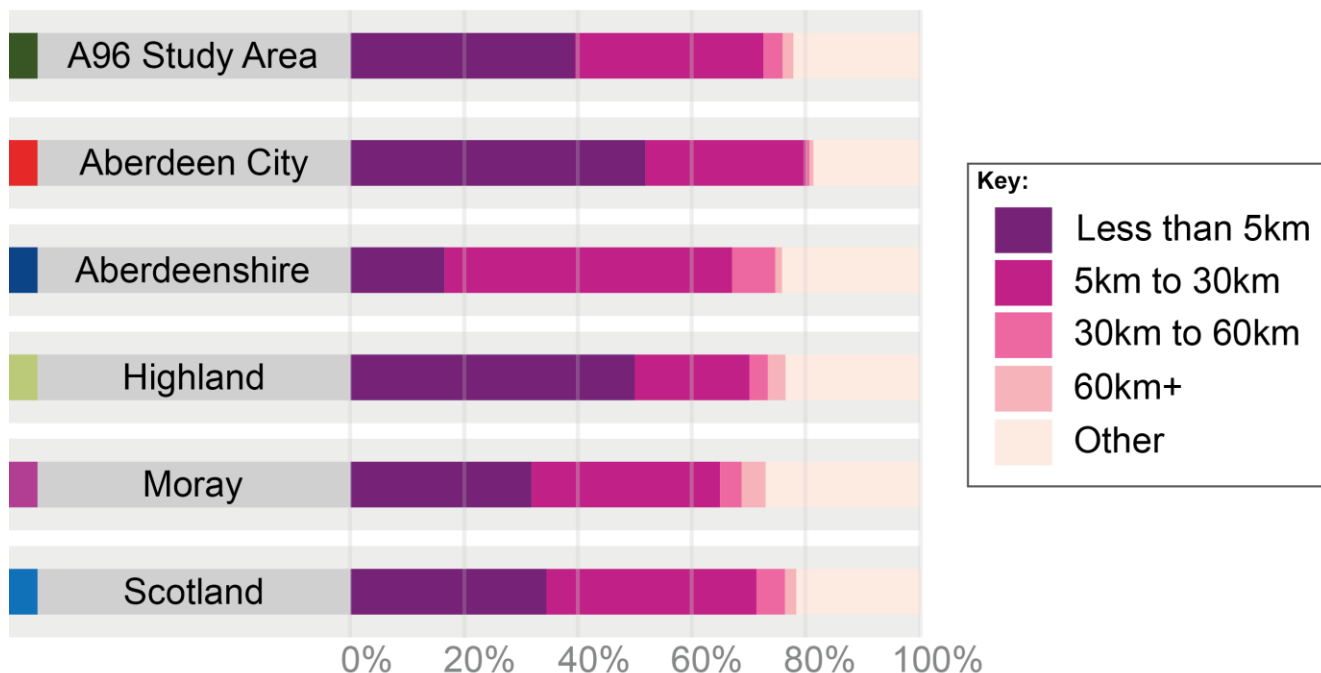


Figure 11: Distance Travelled to Work for Datasozes in the Transport Appraisal Study Area by Local Authority

In Aberdeenshire, 17% of people travel under 5km to work or study, compared to 34% across Scotland as a whole. Moray (32%) is only two percentage points lower than the national average and both Highland (50%) and Aberdeen City (52%) are notably higher than the national average, with approximately half of all people travelling under 5km to work. As well as Aberdeen, Inverness (60%) and Elgin (52%) both have a proportion of people travelling under 5km for work greater than the national average (35%).

Aberdeenshire is the only LA for data zones within the transport appraisal study area to have greater than the national average for trips in both the 5km to 30km range (50% compared to national average of 37%) and the 30km to 60km range (8% compared to national average of 5%). Moray (4%) and Highland (3%) have slightly greater proportions of trips over 60km, a reflection of their predominantly rural geography and accessibility of services in these LAs, even within the transport appraisal study area.

⁴¹ NRS, 2011 Census (Scotland), 2011, <https://www.scotlandscensus.gov.uk/>

Figure 12 indicates the difference for distance travelled to work⁴² between each Urban Rural Classification for data zones in the transport appraisal study area compared to their equivalent national benchmark, represented as 0% in the figure.

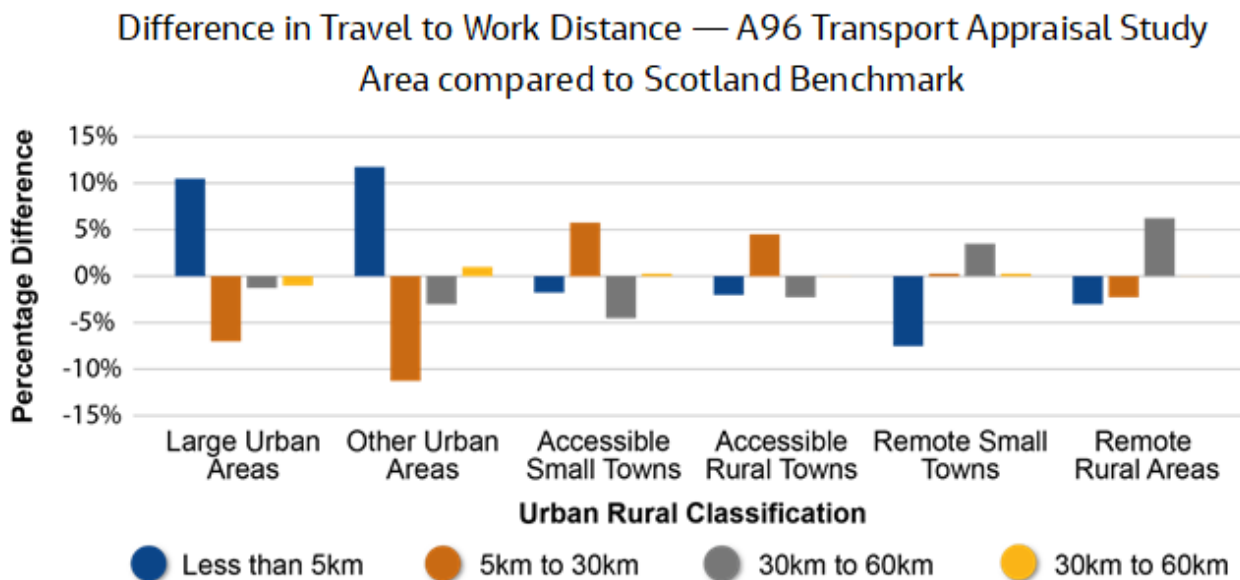


Figure 12: Percentage Difference for Distance Travelled to Work in the Transport Appraisal Study Area Compared with National Benchmarks

Urban areas have a much greater proportion of people traveling under 5km for work. The percentage for Large Urban Areas in the transport appraisal study area is 54% and for Other Urban Areas is 49%, much greater than the national average (34%) and also 10 percentage points and 12 percentage points higher than the equivalent national benchmarks for these classifications. This is likely due to the relatively small size of some urban settlements in the transport appraisal study area in relation to the national equivalent and the distance between them. For example, Aberdeen is notably smaller in size than both Edinburgh and Glasgow, and Other Urban Areas such as Elgin and Forres are smaller than the likes of Stirling and Livingston with greater distances between settlements which encourage more shorter trips within the settlement itself. In Other Urban Areas, this increase in short trips in the transport appraisal study area is offset by a much smaller proportion of people travelling 5-30km, just over 10 percentage points lower (25%) than the national benchmark (36%).

Remote Small Towns (37%) also have a high percentage for trips under 5km in the transport appraisal study area, following the logic of having smaller, more distinct communities with people working close to their employment, although this is eight percentage points lower than the national benchmark suggesting this is not as common as in other areas of Scotland.

Accessible Small Towns and Accessible Rural areas are more likely to travel between 5km to 30km, with over half of trips to work respectively from these areas being in this distance range; six percentage points and four percentage points greater respectively than their

⁴² NRS, 2011 Census (Scotland), 2011, <https://www.scotlandscensus.gov.uk/>

national benchmark. For distances between 30km and 60km, Remote Small Towns (11%) and Remote Rural Areas (15%) are greater than their equivalent benchmarks by three percentage points and six percentage points respectively, demonstrating the increased importance for long distance travel in the transport appraisal study area for employment.

There is a link between longer travel to work and the distance to the main economic centres for the region. Inverurie for example has a large proportion of people travelling between 10-20km (19%) and 20-30km (20%) for work, which is in line with the distance on the A96 to Aberdeen's industrial district and city centre. Similarly, 41% of people in Kintore travel 10-20km to work which would correspond with a trip to Aberdeen. This pattern is repeated to the west where Nairn shows over a quarter of all trips to work are between 20-30km (26%), the same distance as to Inverness city centre. More urban areas are below the national average for all distances greater than 5km as they are focused on short trips within the economic centres themselves.

This pattern is displayed in Figure 13, which indicates the distance travelled to work that was recorded by the highest proportion of the working age population within each data zone in the transport appraisal study area.

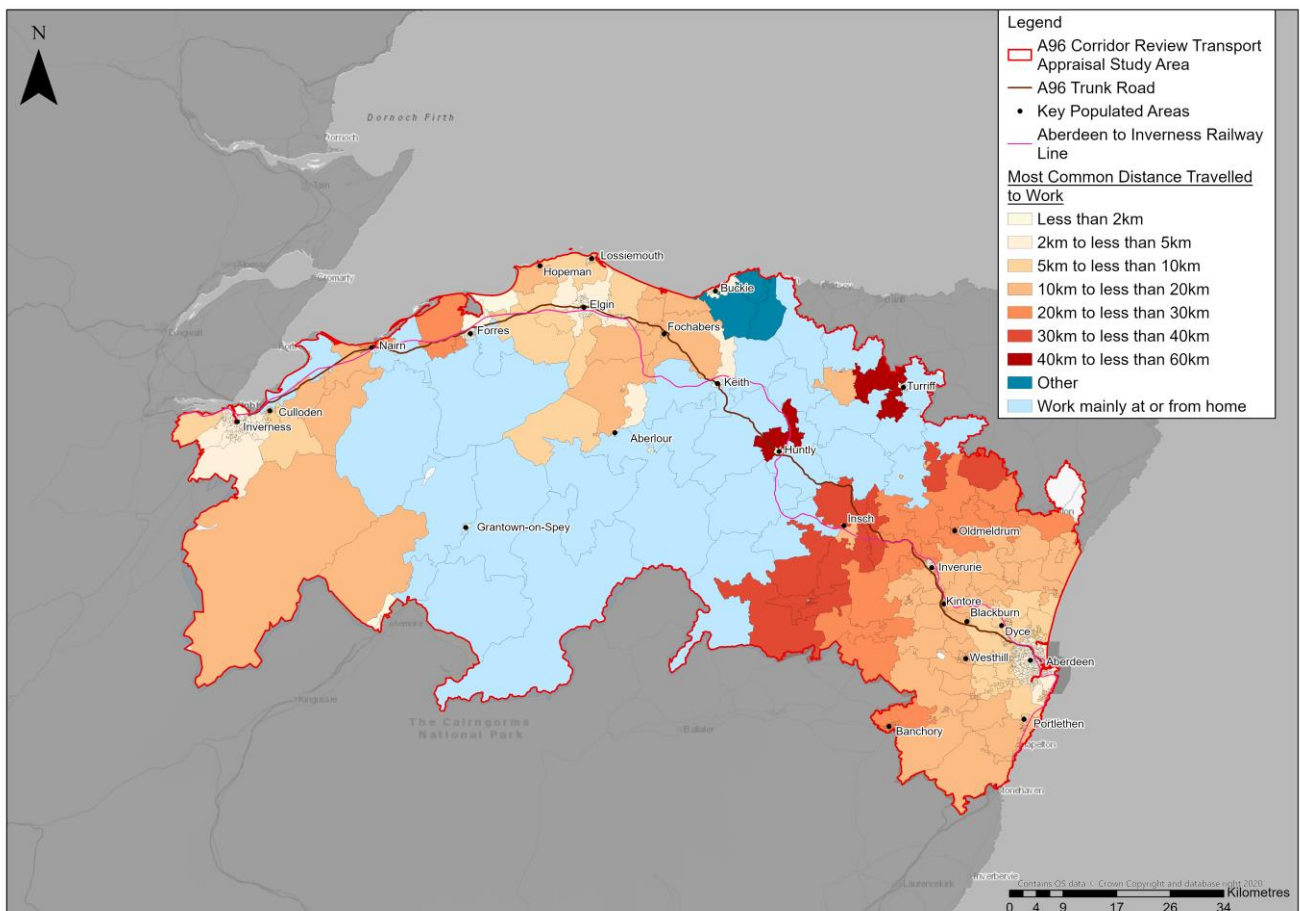


Figure 13: Most Popular Distance Travelled to Work for Data Zones in the Transport Appraisal Study Area

(Click image to enlarge figure)

Figure 13 demonstrates that the most likely travel to work distance is linked to the distance each data zone is from the closest of the three largest settlements in the transport appraisal study area; Aberdeen, Inverness and Elgin. Each of these settlements have an influence that extends across the transport appraisal study area, with travel distances increasing the further a data zone is from the centre of one these cities or towns. The remote areas lying between the settlements have a greater tendency to work from home rather than travel to a place of work.

There is also a slightly higher proportion of people in the transport appraisal study area who fall into the 'Other' category for distance travelled to work compared to the national average. This defines those with no fixed place of work or work off-shore or overseas.

It is important to note that Census data was recorded in 2011 and many changes have occurred since, most notably, the COVID-19 pandemic which restricted travel throughout much of 2020 and 2021. Public consultation for the A96 Corridor Review has suggested over 20% of people worked from home more during the pandemic, with respondents also suggesting they are more likely to do so in the future as well.

2.3.4. Access to Employment

Figure 14 indicates job density across the transport appraisal study area as provided by the Business Register and Employment Survey (BRES) for 2017⁴³.

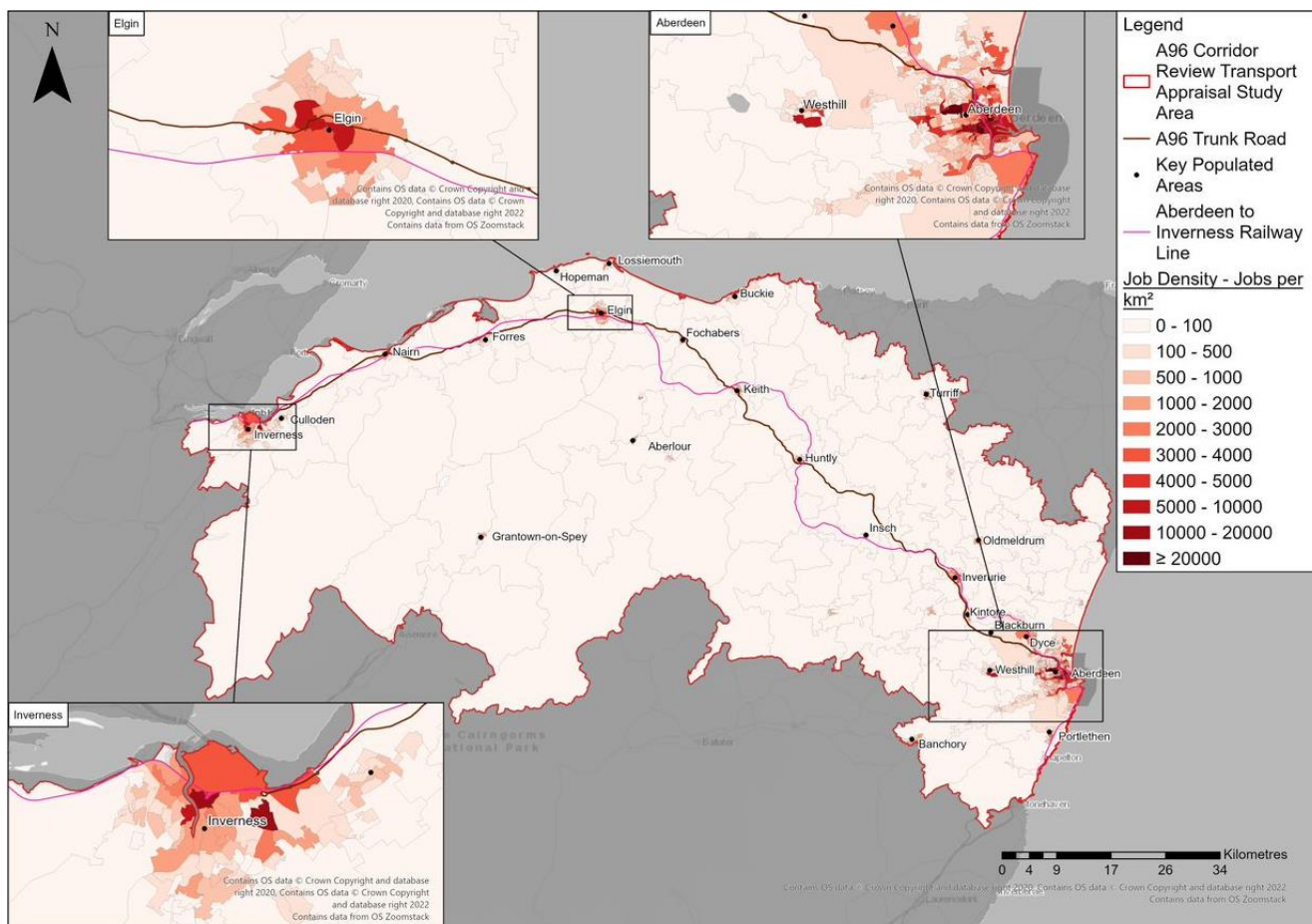


Figure 14: Job Density in the Transport Appraisal Study Area

(Click image to enlarge figure)

Employment opportunities throughout the transport appraisal study area are generally congregated around the three most populous areas. Aberdeen is the biggest attractor in terms of employment locations and had the greatest density of roles, followed by Inverness and Elgin with other settlements having a much smaller number of jobs available.

In a similar manner, 50% and 75% of all jobs within the transport appraisal study area are located in the data zones shown in Figure 15, again as provided by BRES⁴⁴.

⁴³ Business Register and Employment Survey, 2017, <https://www.ons.gov.uk/searchdata?q=BRES>

⁴⁴ Business Register and Employment Survey, 2017, <https://www.ons.gov.uk/searchdata?q=BRES>

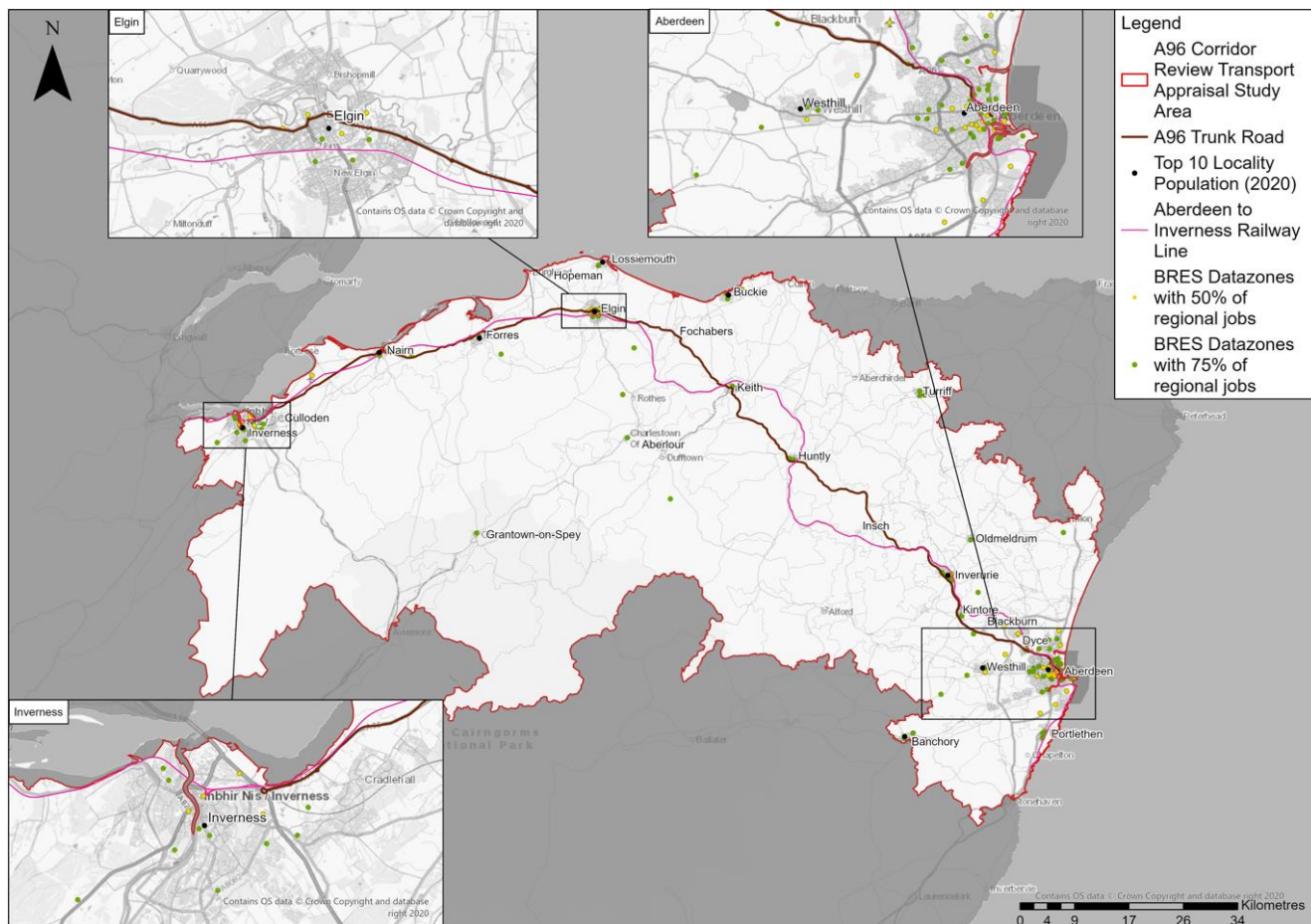


Figure 15: Regional Job Locations in the Transport Appraisal Study Area

(Click image to enlarge figure)

From Figure 15, the pattern of employment opportunities is very similar to that indicated by job density. The most frequent area for job availability is in Aberdeen and the surrounding area, including Dyce and Cove Bay. Inverness has a cluster of job availability and Elgin and Inverurie have a smaller but notable availability of employment in the top 75% category. Places such as Forres, Nairn, Huntly and Keith all display a smaller magnitude of local employment, but still sufficient enough to be considered a small employment attractor.

Figure 16 shows the public transport journey times to the nearest accessible employment centre from BRES, based on 2019 information from TRACC⁴⁵.

⁴⁵ TRACC – multimodal accessibility and journey time analysis tool

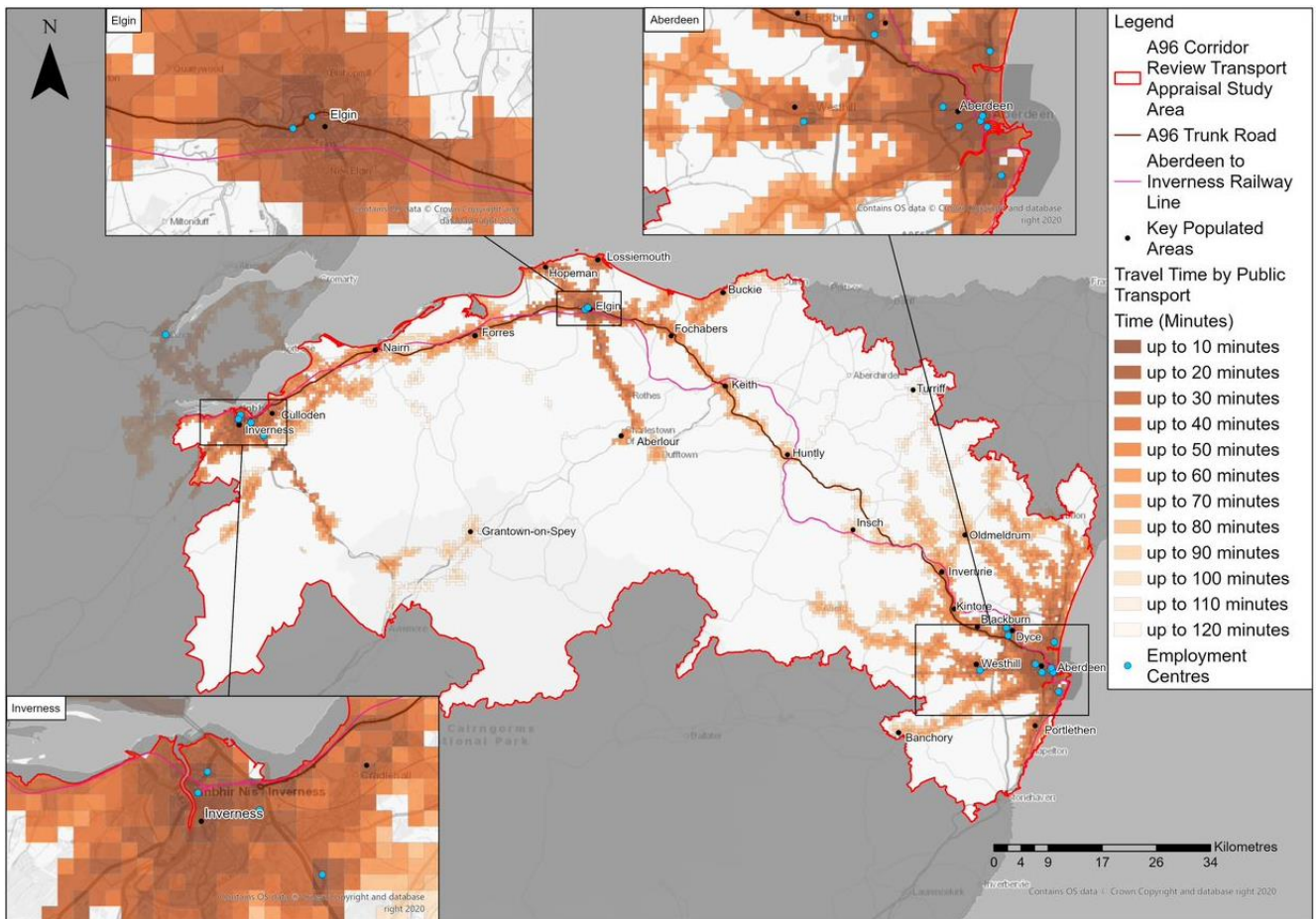


Figure 16: Access to Employment Centres by Public Transport in the Transport Appraisal Study Area

(Click image to enlarge figure)

The plot shows through the density of colour around the A96 that the route is central to employment accessibility by public transport, particularly between Elgin and Inverness. Aberdeen has a wide spread of accessibility to the surrounding areas, including Inverurie on the A96 corridor, though journey times by public transport increase to above an hour beyond Inverurie. There is good connectivity to Elgin both along the A96 and A941, however limited connectivity for residents who do not live close to one of these routes. Similarly, connectivity within Inverness is excellent, and there are a number of areas that can reach Inverness in a reasonable journey time by public transport, however only for those that reside close to the main routes into the city. Areas in the remote central section of the A96 around Keith and Huntly are poorly connected to all areas, suggesting public transport is not a viable option for travel to the main employment areas.

It should be noted that the information in Figure 16 is based on journey times, not service frequency or availability that was fed back through the public consultation for the A96 Corridor Review as a key problem throughout the transport appraisal study area.

2.3.5. Economic Performance and Activity

Figure 17 shows the economic activity⁴⁶ of people in the transport appraisal study area compared with the national average.

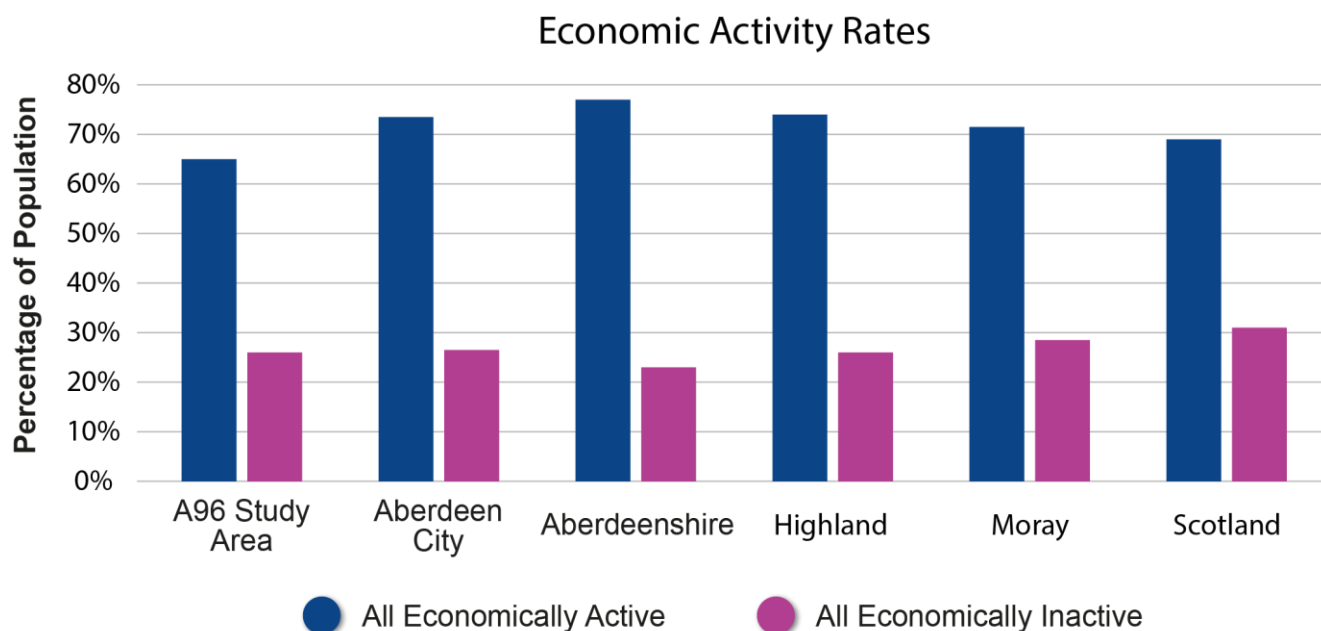


Figure 17: Economic Activity Rate Comparison between Scotland and A96 Transport Appraisal study area

Across the transport appraisal study area, just over one quarter (26%) of people are defined as economically inactive as per the Census 2011⁴⁷. This may include reasons such as retirement (13%), long term disability or sick (3%), student (5%) or homemakers (4%). This is less than the national average of 31% for economic inactivity.

Aberdeenshire demonstrates the greatest percentage of economically active people (77%), eight percentage points higher than the national average (69%). Highland and Aberdeen City are both 74%, and Moray is 71%, all above the national average.

The percentage of those economically active does however vary across the transport appraisal study area. Inverness and Elgin, the two major economic centres outside Aberdeen have economic activity rate in the region of 73-74%. Settlements such as Huntly (71%) and Keith (72%) demonstrate the general trend of a lower economically active percentage in rural areas, however are higher than the national average. The percentage of those economically active in Nairn, in Highland, however is 67%, well below the transport appraisal study area average and also lower than the national average (69%). Other accessible towns towards the east in Aberdeenshire however have a greater proportion of economically active people, including Kintore (79%), Oldmeldrum (78%) and Inverurie (77%). This demonstrates the

⁴⁶ NRS, 2011 Census (Scotland), 2011, <https://www.scotlandscensus.gov.uk/>

⁴⁷ NRS, 2011 Census (Scotland), 2011, <https://www.scotlandscensus.gov.uk/>

influence of Aberdeen in terms of the economy it provides and the importance of this to the surrounding towns and regions in Aberdeenshire.

Employment in the transport appraisal study area generally outperforms the rest of the country, with two thirds of people⁴⁸ (67%) economically active and employed, compared to the national average of 60%. Aberdeenshire (72%) has the greatest rate of employment, whereas Aberdeen City (64%) and Moray (65%) show the lowest employment, though still markedly greater than the national average.

For economic productivity across the transport appraisal study area, Gross Value Added (GVA) per region has been interrogated from the Office for National Statistics (ONS) for each LA for 1998 to 2018⁴⁹. This is shown in Figure 18. Note that there was a recalculation in how GVA was assessed in 2016 which affected long term trends and the graph considers the Chain Volume Measures based in 2016, effectively removing the impact of inflation from all preceding or subsequent values.

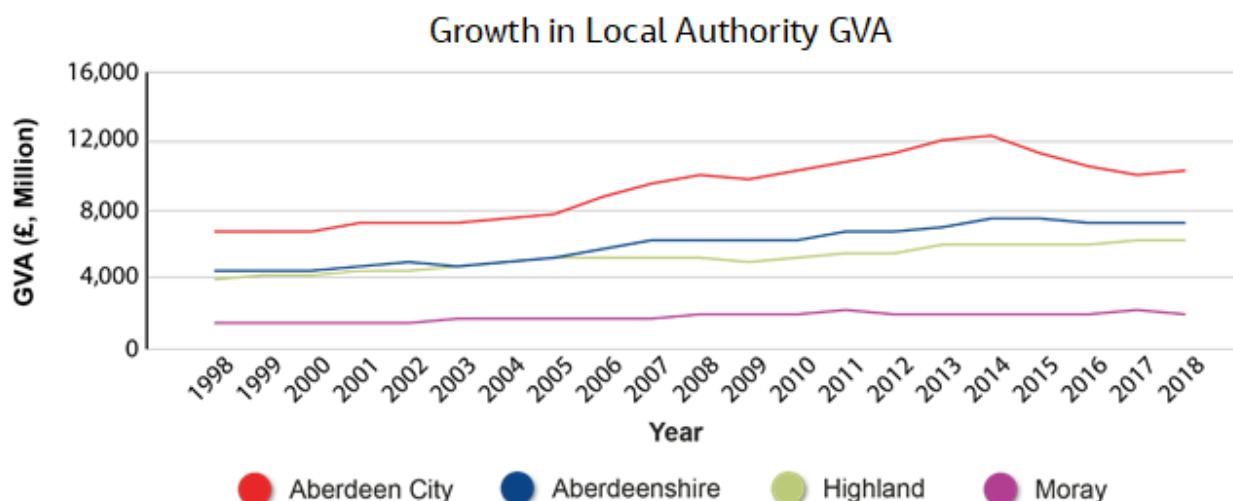


Figure 18: Local Authority GVA Output

Each LA area is displaying a higher GVA in 2018, and therefore economic productivity, than in 1998. Although Aberdeen City declined in 2014, by 2018, the GVA was beginning to increase once again, and it remains the largest economic contributor within the transport appraisal study area, with a GVA of over £10Bn. Aberdeenshire contributed over £7Bn to the economy in 2018, however this has been generally declining since 2014. The regional economy of the north-east experienced a downturn in 2014, with a fall in the price of oil of approximately

⁴⁸ NRS, 2011 Census (Scotland), 2011, <https://www.scotlandscensus.gov.uk/>

⁴⁹ ONS, Regional gross value added (balanced) by industry: local authorities by NUTS1 region, 2019, <https://www.ons.gov.uk/economy/grossvalueaddedgva/datasets/regionalgrossvalueaddedbalancedlocalauthoritiesbynuts1region>

70% between 2014 and 2016, having an impact on the overall GVA in the Aberdeenshire and Aberdeen City regions⁵⁰.

Highland produced approximately £6Bn and Moray just over £2Bn in 2018. Overall, the four LAs, including the areas outwith the transport appraisal study area, produced over £25Bn to the economy in 2018, and recorded a peak output of just under £27.8Bn in 2014.

Figure 19 shows the percentage of each industry sector for the regions according to BRES Data for 2020⁵¹. Note that this data represents entire Local Authorities and not just the section within the transport appraisal study area. As such, some results may not be fully representative of the transport appraisal study area, particularly for Highland.

⁵⁰ Aberdeen City Council, Aberdeen Economic Policy Panel Report – 2018, 2018, <https://investaberdeen.co.uk/images/uploads/Aberdeen%20Economic%20Policy%20Panel%20Report%202018.pdf>

⁵¹ ONS, Business Register and Employment Survey, 2020, <https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/query/construct/summary.asp?mode=construct&version=0&dataset=189>

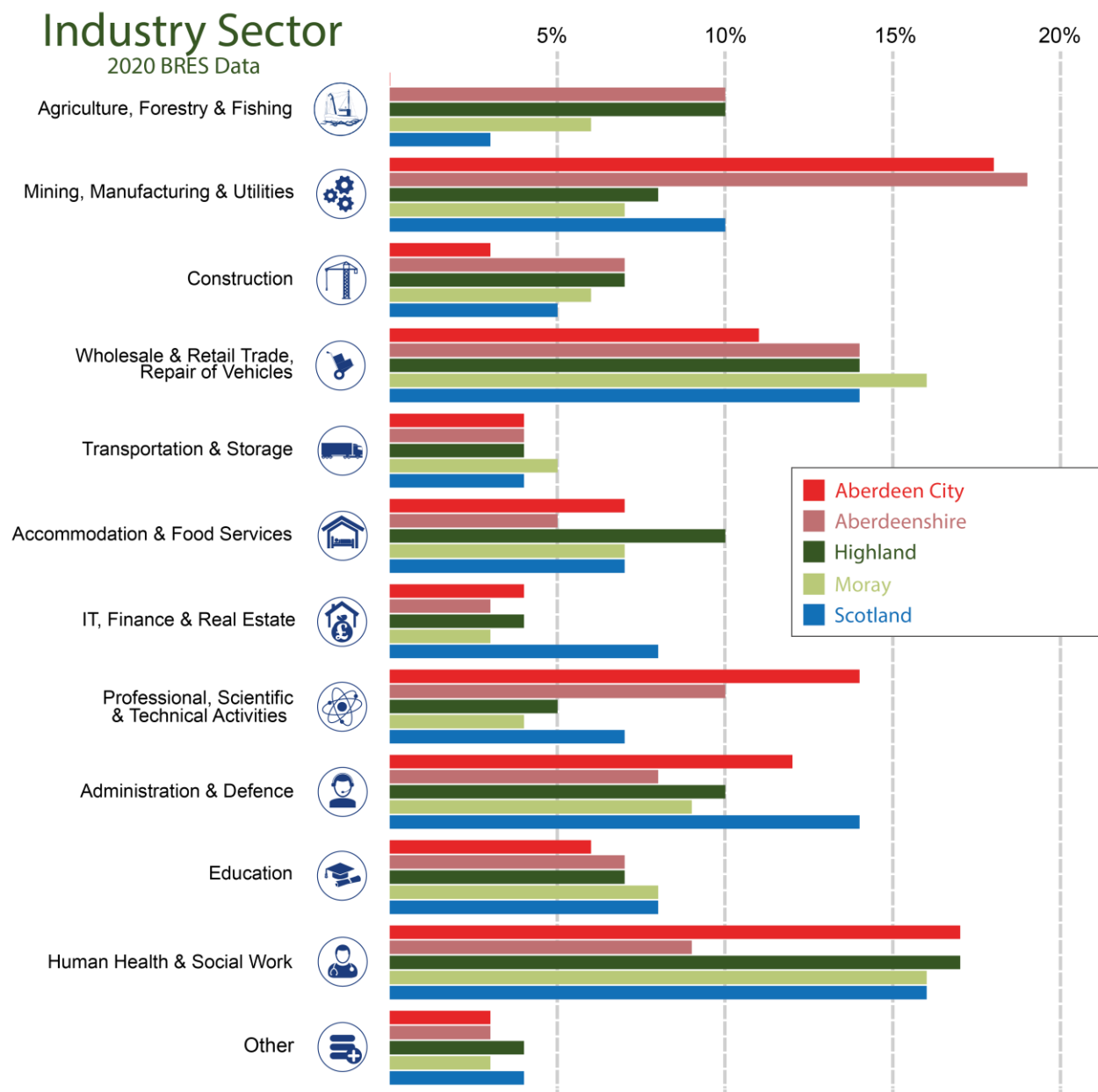


Figure 19: Industry Sectors Across the Transport Appraisal Study Area Local Authorities (2020)

The transport appraisal study area has a clear split between sectors for each LA. Both Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire demonstrate a significant proportion of Mining, Manufacturing and Utilities roles, representing almost one fifth of all jobs (18% and 19% respectively) in these LAs, significantly higher than the national average of 10%. This is likely due to the high number of oil and gas companies in the region. Both these LAs also show a higher than national average proportion of jobs in Professional, Scientific and Technical Activities. Aberdeen has 14% of jobs in this sector and Aberdeenshire 10% compared to the national average of 7%.

Aberdeen, Highland and Moray all rely more heavily on Human Health and Social Work roles than Aberdeenshire. They each have a proportion of roles in this industry between 16-17%, in line or just over the national average of 16%.

Aberdeenshire (10%), Moray (6%) and Highland (10%) all display a greater number of roles in Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing, than the national average (3%). Similarly, Construction is higher in these LAs at between 6-7% compared to the national average (5%).

A review of household income estimates for 2018⁵² indicates that Aberdeenshire has a significantly higher income than the other regions in the transport appraisal study area and the Scottish average. Figure 20 shows the average household income information at a data zone level across the transport appraisal study area.

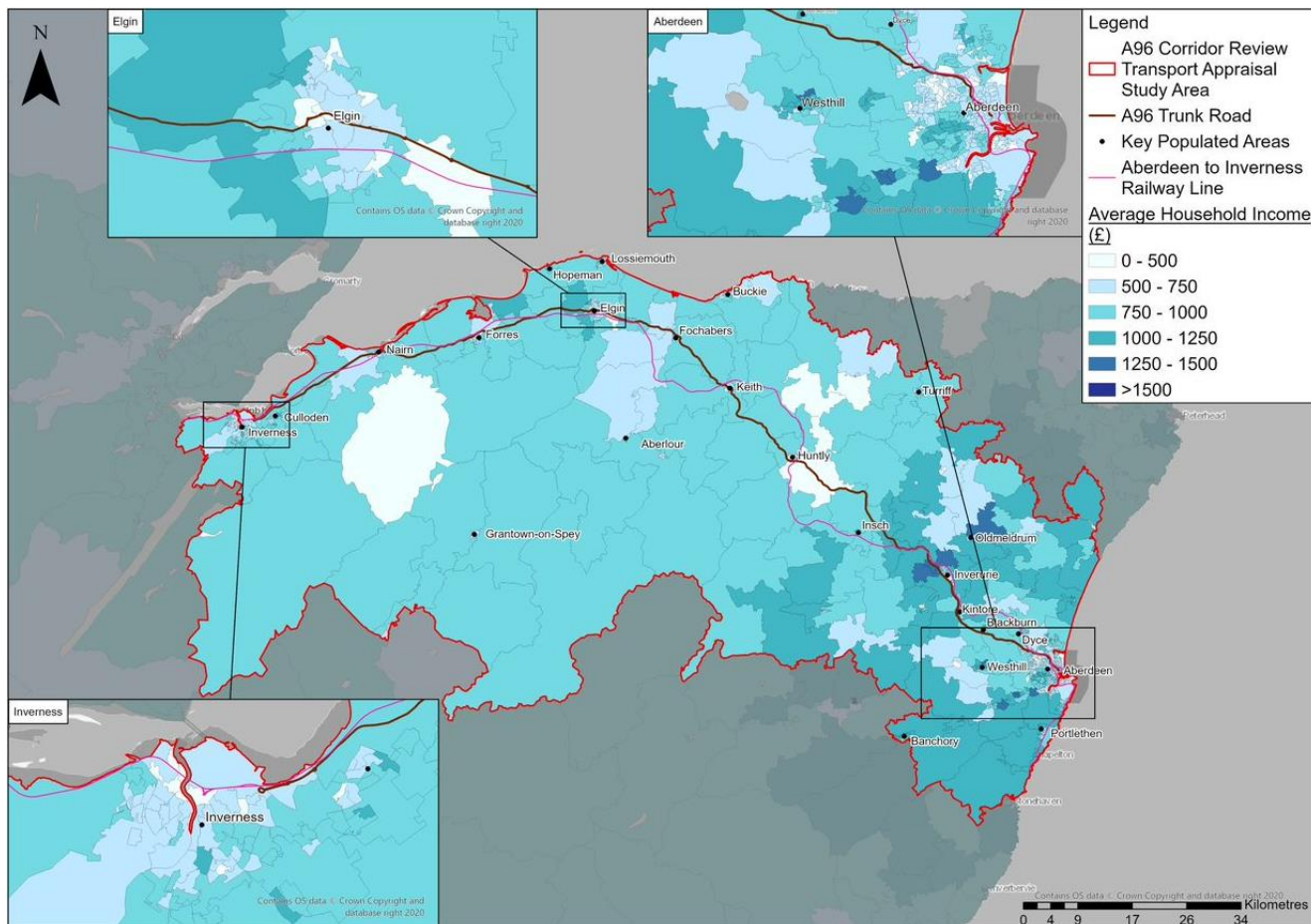


Figure 20: Average Household Income Estimates

(Click image to enlarge figure)

The average household income in Aberdeenshire is over £835 per week, whereas the other three local authority areas are between £708 and £715. The Scotland average is just under £705 per week so the average for each LA within the transport appraisal study area outperforms the national average. The relatively high average household income in Aberdeenshire, coupled with average travel distances to key services is likely a major contributory factor to the high car ownership and usage in this LA. The major towns and cities generally contain a higher proportion of lower income data zones than the rural areas along

⁵² Scottish Government, Local Level Household Income Estimates (2018), 2020, <https://www.gov.scot/collections/local-level-household-income-estimates/>

the A96. This includes Aberdeen, Inverness and Elgin. In general, income in the rural commuter belt around Aberdeen is highest.

ONS (2018) data for weekly household expenditure⁵³ has been used to determine the proportion of spend on transport across the transport appraisal study area. This is demonstrated in Figure 21.

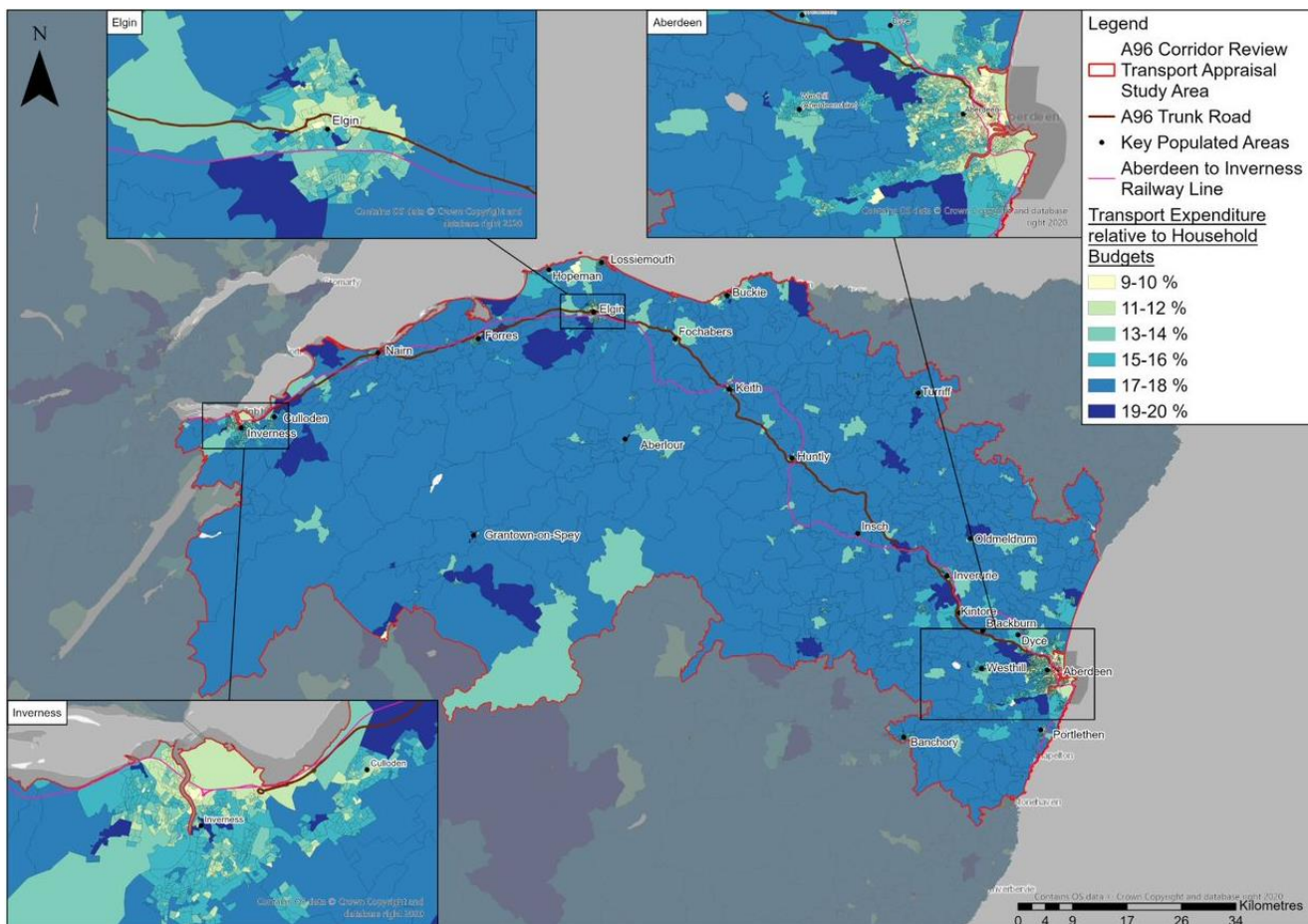


Figure 21: Transport Expenditure (%) relative to Household Budgets

(Click image to enlarge figure)

Most of the areas surrounding the A96 corridor spend a high proportion of their income on transport (approximately 15%). There are small clusters in some of the larger settlements within the transport appraisal study area, such as Inverness, Elgin, Inverurie and Aberdeen, that spend a lower proportion of their income on transport. This is likely due to households within larger settlements having access to local facilities by public transport or active modes.

⁵³ ONS, Average weekly household expenditure by Output Area Classification (OAC) group: Table A52 (2018), 2019, <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/personalandhouseholdfinances/expenditure/datasets/averageweeklyhouseholdexpenditurebyoutputareaclassificationoacr/oupuktablea52>

2.3.6. Education

Census 2011 data⁵⁴ for the highest level of qualification achieved within data zones across the transport appraisal study area is presented in Figure 22.

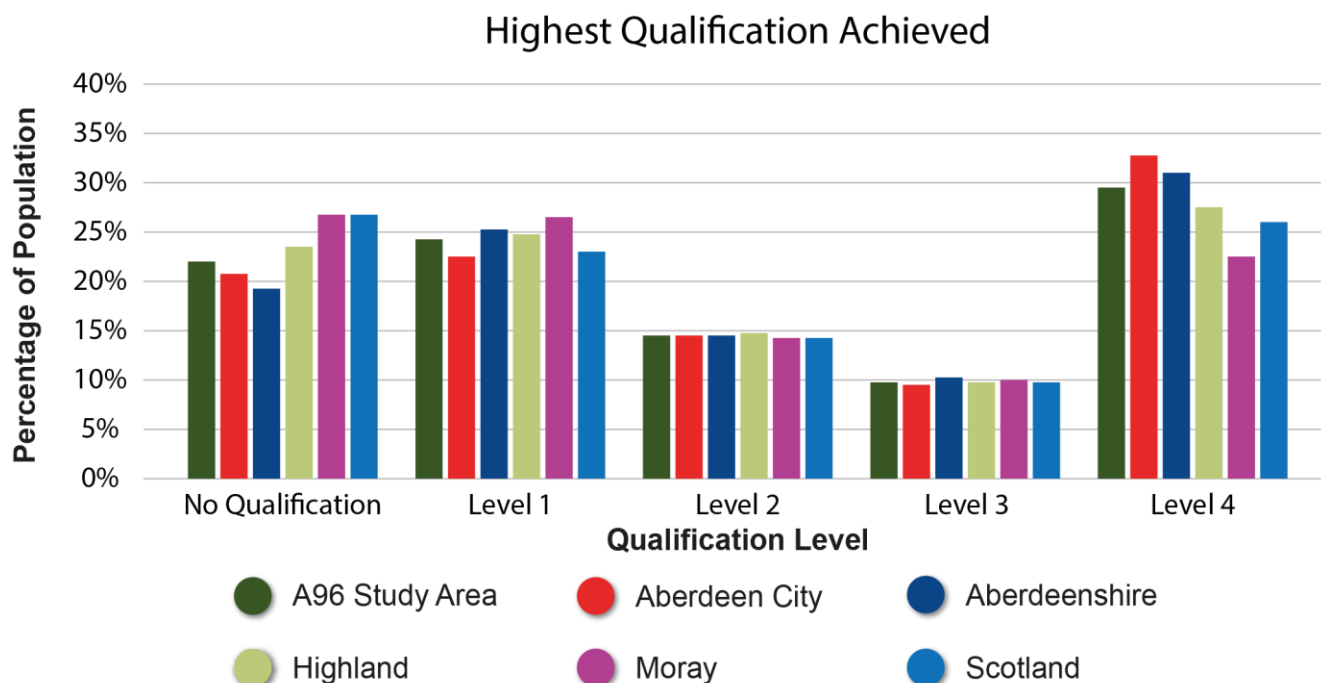


Figure 22: Highest Qualification Achieved

Figure 22 indicates that Aberdeenshire and Aberdeen City have higher attainment levels, with only 19% and 21% respectively of people aged 16 or over having no qualifications in comparison to the national average of 27%. Also, 33% of people over 16 have a level four and above education in Aberdeen City and 31% in Aberdeenshire, which is equivalent to at least a university degree. This is in the region of five to seven percentage points higher than the national average and far exceeding the other Local Authorities in the transport appraisal study area.

Moray has a higher proportion of people with no qualifications than the other LAs in the transport appraisal study area, matching the national average of 27%. However, only 23% of people have a degree level qualification, below the national average and 10% lower than in Aberdeen.

The Times newspaper ranking of all Scottish secondary schools has placed two schools from Aberdeen in the top 100 for 2022, with Cults Academy the top ranked school in the transport appraisal study area and 4th overall in Scotland. It is also the only school in the transport

⁵⁴ NRS, 2011 Census (Scotland), 2011, <https://www.scotlandscensus.gov.uk/>

appraisal study area in the national top 20 overall⁵⁵. Seven schools in Aberdeenshire are in the top 100 nationally, five from Highland, and none in Moray.

For further education and degree level qualifications, Aberdeen is home to two major universities, University of Aberdeen and Robert Gordon University. Aberdeen also contains a campus of Scotland's Rural College, which focuses on courses with skills more suited to rural lifestyles, including Agriculture, Animal Care and Environmental Management. The University of the Highlands and Islands has two larger campuses in the transport appraisal study area in Elgin and Inverness, with further localised learning centres in smaller locations including Keith and Nairn.

2.3.7. Deprivation

The Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD)⁵⁶ shows the socio-economic variation experienced across the transport appraisal study area. The SIMD demographic of an area is dependent on multiple factors, including its rank for income, employment, education, health, access, crime and housing. A combination of these features help define the final SIMD rank but each can be interrogated individually to determine specific domains of strength and weakness in an area. Figure 23 indicates the overall SIMD decile ranking of data zones with the transport appraisal study area.

⁵⁵ Scottish Daily Express, Scotland's secondary schools ranked from best to worst in 2022 league table, 2022, <https://www.scottishdailyexpress.co.uk/news/scottish-news/scotlands-secondary-schools-ranked-best-27299635>

⁵⁶ Scottish Government, Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation, 2020, <https://simd.scot/#/simd2020/BTTFTT/9/-4.0000/55.9000/>

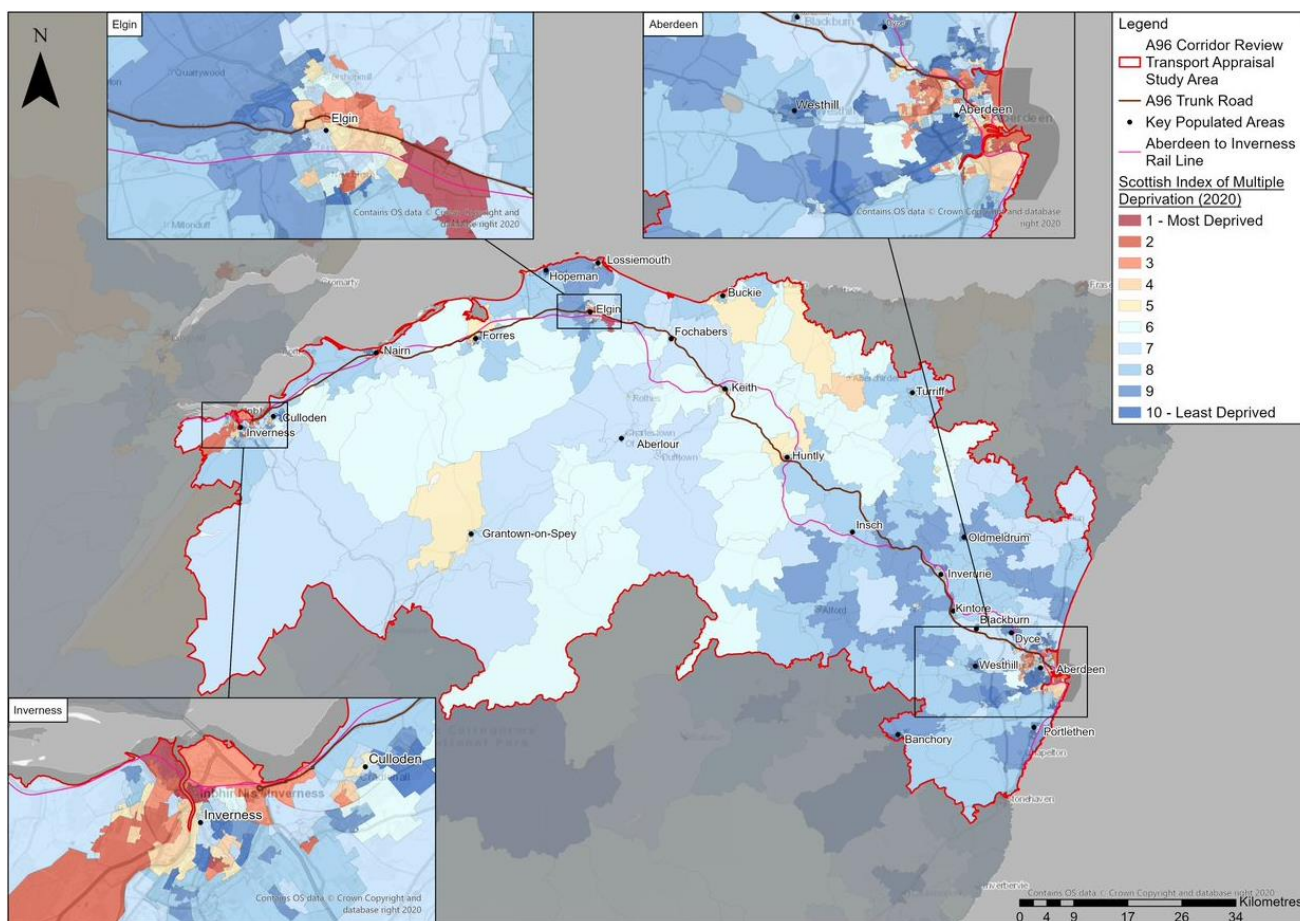


Figure 23: Transport Appraisal Study Area – Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation 2020

(Click image to enlarge figure)

The proportion of data zones in the transport appraisal study area that ranked within the 20% most deprived in Scotland is relatively small at 6.9%. Alongside this, 27.2% of data zones are ranked within the 20% least deprived zones across Scotland, suggesting an overall trend of lower deprivation across the transport appraisal study area.

SIMD 2020 data also suggests that for data zones within the transport appraisal study area, Aberdeen City has the greatest proportion of low deprivation, with 15.0% of data zones being ranked in the top 20% least deprived across Scotland. Aberdeenshire has approximately 9% of data zones in the top 20% least deprived zones whereas Highland (2.7%) and Moray (2.2%) have significantly less data zones in this very low deprivation threshold. However, both Inverness and Aberdeen have numerous areas of high and low deprivation within their settlement boundaries. As such, Aberdeen City and Highland also have the most data zones in the transport appraisal study area classed in 20% most deprived, 4.2% and 2.2% respectively, compared to Moray (0.6%) and Aberdeenshire (0%).

In general, the more densely populated, urban areas of the transport appraisal study area show the greatest amount of deprivation. This is in line with the pattern witnessed across the country, with specific demographics including housing, crime and income all more variable in the urban areas such as Aberdeen, Inverness and Elgin than in rural regions. Despite rural

areas performing comparatively well in these demographics, mainly due to the sparseness of the population, these areas do perform weaker in terms of access as services are not as readily available.

In summary, the settlements and cities along the A96 corridor and in the transport appraisal study area all display some degree of variation of deprivation, but there is an overall pattern of low deprivation for the majority of the transport appraisal study area. Rural areas, particularly in Aberdeenshire and within the influence of Aberdeen City show the least deprivation, whereas areas in Moray and the two cities of Aberdeen and Inverness display the greatest deprivation. Access is therefore a key factor of deprivation for much of the transport appraisal study area outside of the two cities⁵⁷.

2.3.8. Digital Connectivity

In terms of broadband coverage, Ofcom Combined Nations Report⁵⁸ data from 2021 suggests that Aberdeen City has very good connectivity, with over 97% of homes having access to Superfast broadband (over 30Mbps) and 56.4% of premises having access to full-fibre broadband. This exceeds the national average of just under 95% of the population having access to superfast broadband, and just under 30% of premises being full fibre.

However, the other three Local Authorities all have lower than national average accessibility. Moray, Highland and Aberdeenshire all display lower accessibility to superfast speeds and full-fibre premises than the Scotland average and Aberdeen City. This is demonstrated in Table 1.

⁵⁷ Scottish Government, Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation - Geographic Access to Services Indicator, 2020,
<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/personalandhouseholdfinances/expenditure/datasets/averageweeklyhouseholdexpenditurebyoutputareaclassificationofacgrouptablea52><https://www.ofcom.org.uk/research-and-data/multi-sector-research/infrastructure-research/connected-nations-2021/interactive-report>

⁵⁸ Ofcom, Combined Nations 2021 Interactive Report, 2022
<https://www.ofcom.org.uk/research-and-data/multi-sector-research/infrastructure-research/connected-nations-2021/interactive-report>

Table 1: Broadband Connectivity

Council	Superfast (Over 30 Mbps) (% premises)	Full Fibre FTTP (% premises)
Scotland	94.8%	29.5%
Aberdeen City	97.3%	56.4%
Aberdeenshire	85.1%	16.7%
Highland	82.5%	22.2%
Moray	88.3%	28.2%

Table 1 demonstrates a significant variability in digital connectivity. Whilst Aberdeen, as the largest urban area and key economic centre within the transport appraisal study area has very good coverage, those in more rural areas may have lower accessibility to digital services. This can have an impact on the need to travel; a lack of digital connectivity may require more trips to be made to key services such as employment, health services and education.

In terms of mobile data, Table 2 summaries the coverage of each local authority region and the in-vehicle coverage along major roads⁵⁹.

Table 2: Mobile Data Coverage

Council	Mobile Operator 4G Coverage (At least one operator)	Major Roads In-Vehicle 4G Coverage (At least one operator)
Scotland	82%	95%
Aberdeen City	100%	100%
Aberdeenshire	91%	98%
Highland	73%	91%
Moray	89%	94%

Table 2 indicates that Aberdeen City has a fully active mobile data service capable of 4G connectivity across the entire local authority area. Aberdeenshire and Moray have coverage well above the national average but are still missing approximately 10% coverage

⁵⁹ Ofcom, Combined Nations 2021 Interactive Report, 2022,
<https://www.ofcom.org.uk/research-and-data/multi-sector-research/infrastructure-research/connected-nations-2021/interactive-report>

geographically. Highland has less than 75% coverage, likely due to the rural nature of the region outside of the transport appraisal study area.

In-Vehicle connectivity along major roads is above 90% in all LAs within the transport appraisal study area. To the west, Aberdeenshire and Aberdeen City are very well connected with only 2% of the major road network not capable of receiving 4G data in Aberdeenshire, and Aberdeen having a fully connected network. Highland and Moray have slightly weaker coverage, less than the Scotland average, though this may be a reflection of roads outside the transport appraisal study area for Highland.

2.3.9. Health

Census 2011⁶⁰ data, presented in Figure 24, indicates that the proportion of adults in some of the smaller and more rural settlements in the transport appraisal study area with a long term physical or mental health condition is generally higher than the national average of 30%. This includes Forres, Nairn and Buckie in the top 10 most populated settlements, but also relates to smaller towns including Keith and Huntly. Larger settlements including the two cities in the transport appraisal study area and Elgin, and those within a closer proximity to the major urban area of Aberdeen (Inverurie, Westhill and Portlethen) however fall below the national average.

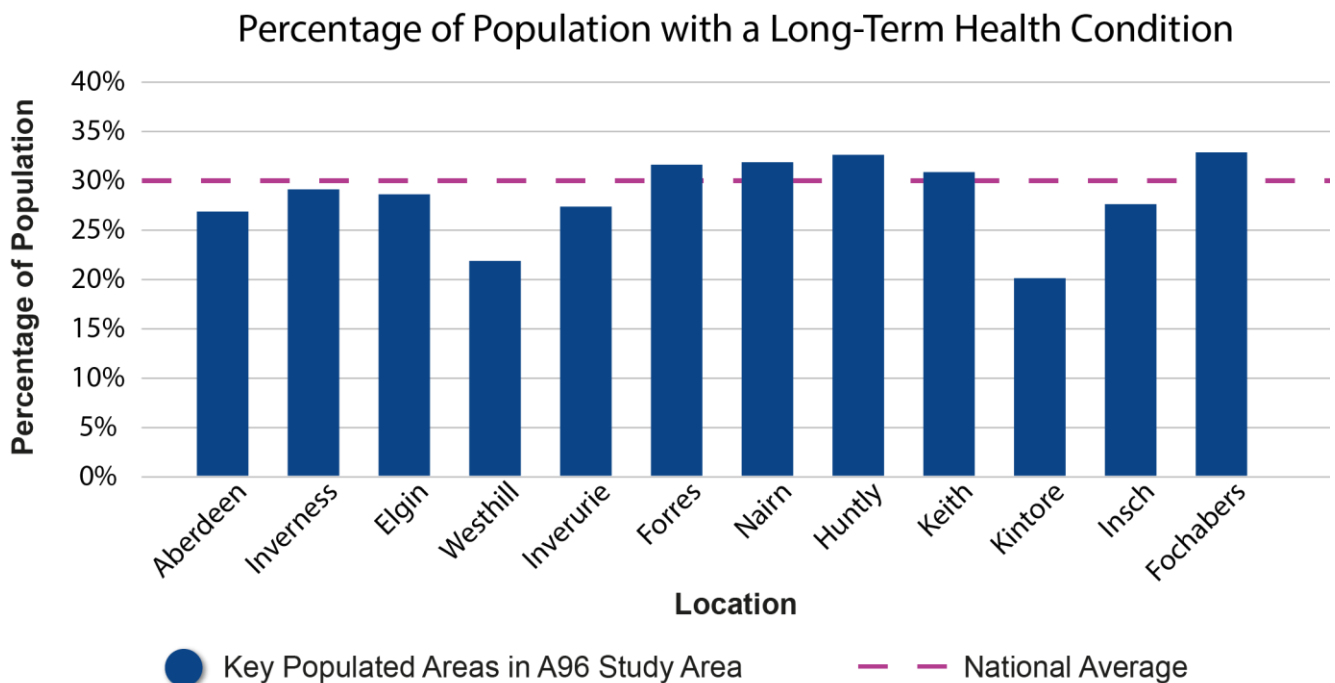


Figure 24: Long Term Physical or Mental Health Condition for Settlements in the Transport Appraisal Study Area

⁶⁰ NRS, 2011 Census (Scotland), 2011, <https://www.scotlandscensus.gov.uk/>

However, the Scottish Household Survey has suggested that for LAs in 2019⁶¹, the change in the proportion of the population with a long term physical or mental health condition has varied greatly in recent years and so no long-term trends are clearly apparent. This can be seen in Figure 25.

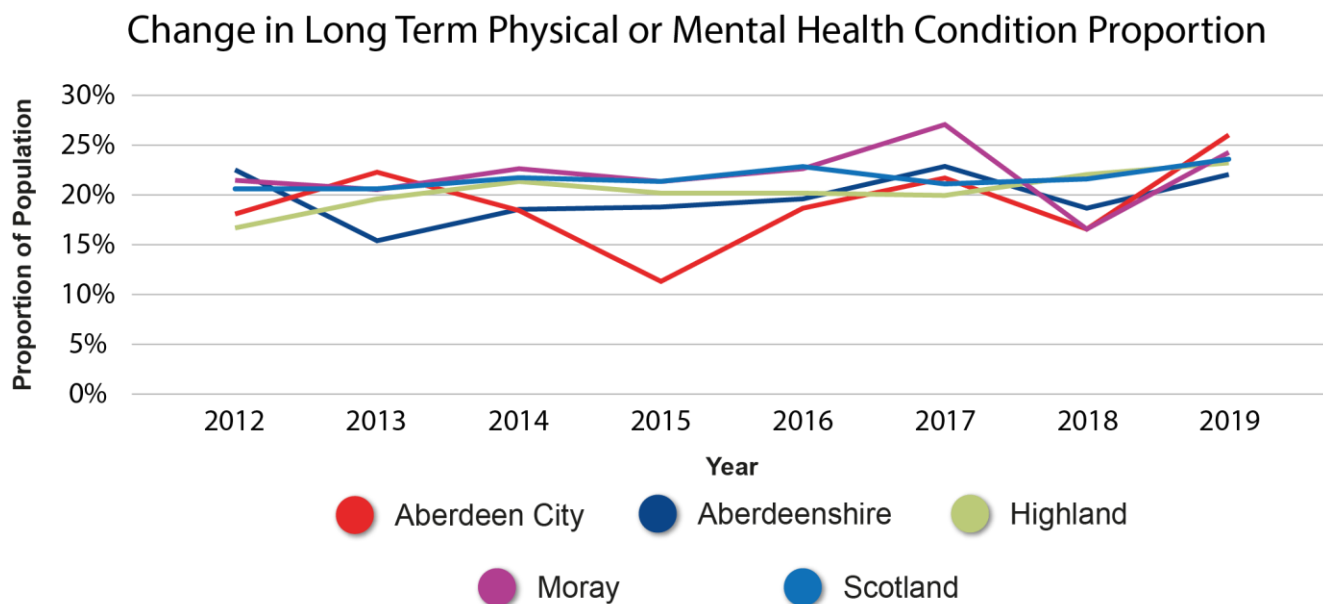


Figure 25: Change in Long Term Physical or Mental Health Condition Proportion

2.4. Environmental Context

Within the A96 Corridor Review Environmental study area (7.5km either side of the A96), there are a number of areas classified as environmentally sensitive with varying levels of statutory protection at international, national, regional and local level. Environmental designations fall either completely or partially within the Environmental study area and include (approximately):

- 43 Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI);
- Eight Special Protection Areas (SPA);
- Seven Special Areas of Conservation (SAC);
- Four Ramsar sites;
- One Local Nature Reserve (LNR);
- Two Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) Reserves;
- 17 Gardens and designed landscapes;
- 20 Conservation Areas;
- Four Battlefield Sites;

⁶¹ Scottish Government, Scottish Household Survey 2019, 2019, <https://scotland.shinyapps.io/sg-scottish-household-survey-data-explorer/>

- 236 Scheduled Monuments;
- Three Bathing Water Areas (where there may be interactions with the corridor)⁶²;
- Eight Drinking Water Safeguard Zones⁶³;
- 14 Water Framework Directive (WFD) Designated Ground Water Bodies; and
- 34 Water Framework Directive Designated Surface Watercourses (based on crossing locations).

No other significant environmental designations are found within the Environmental study area. The various environmental designations and potential constraints have been mapped and presented in Figure 26⁶⁴.

The environmental designations are located throughout the full extent of the A96 Corridor Review Environmental study area however the number, frequency and density of environmental designations is notably higher at the western end, particularly between Inverness and Huntly where there are a number of designations covering a large area. The full extent of the Moray Firth coastline within the Environmental study area has environmental protection. The Environmental study area crosses the River Spey at Fochabers; the river is designated as a SAC, SPA, Ramsar and SSSI for the much of its length.

There are no areas of national landscape protection, such as National Scenic Areas or National Parks, within the Environmental study area although the northern boundary of the Cairngorms National Park is approximately 10km to the south.

The corridor contains four historic battlefield sites; including one to the east of Inverness, one to the east of Nairn, and two others close to Oldmeldrum and Inverurie. The Battle of Harlaw site near Inverurie borders the A96 itself. There are a large number of heritage designations throughout the Environmental study area with the A96 itself passing close to a number of Scheduled Monuments, Gardens and Designed Landscapes and passing through Conservation Areas in Elgin, Fochabers and Keith.

⁶² Scottish Environmental Protection Agency (SEPA), Water Classification Hub, 2022, <https://www.sepa.org.uk/data-visualisation/water-classification-hub/>

⁶³ Scot Gov, Scotland's Environment Web, 2022, <https://map.environment.gov.scot/sewebmap/>

⁶⁴ Contains SNH information licensed under the Open Government Licence v3.0

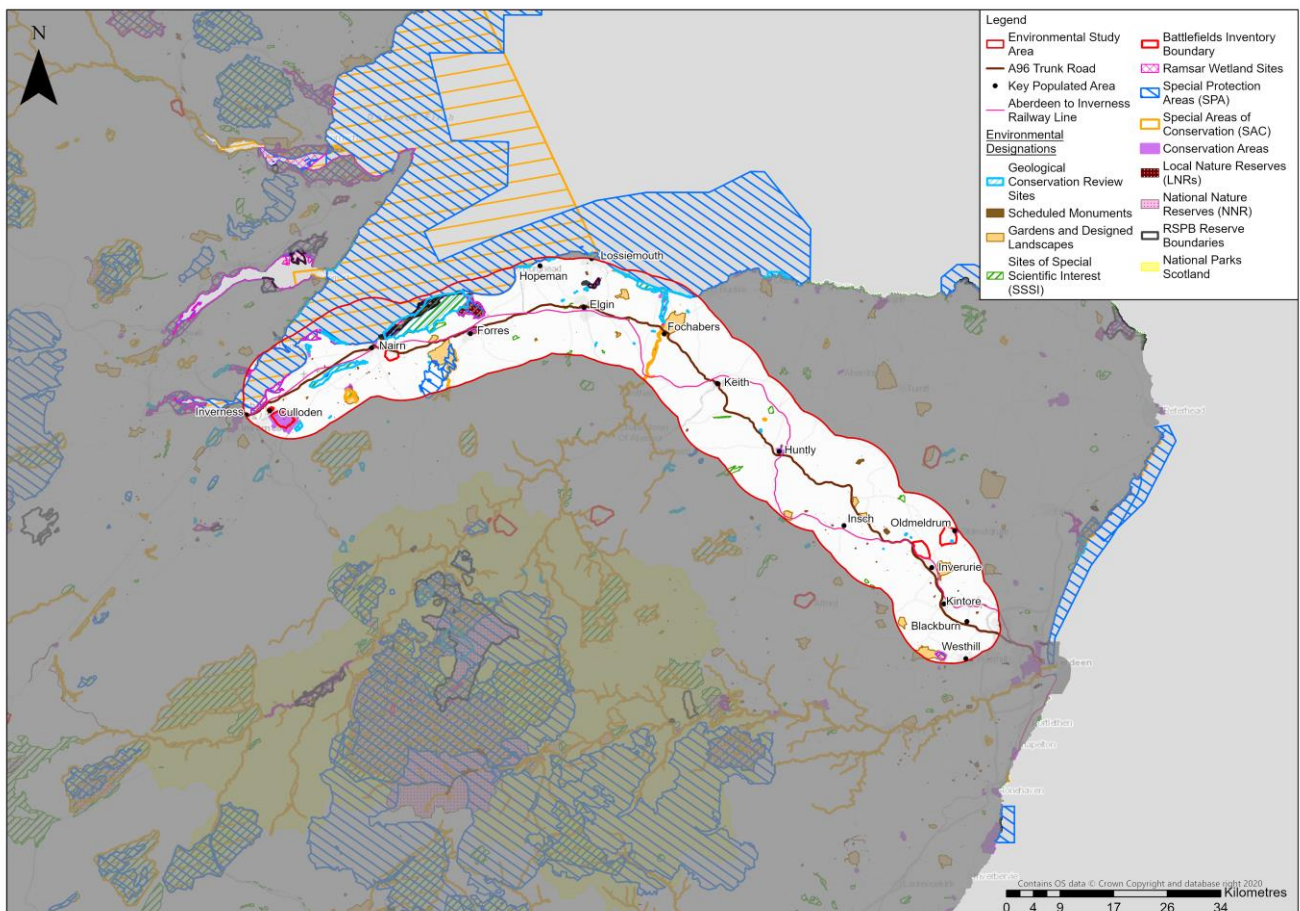


Figure 26: Environmental Designations for the Environmental Study Area

(Click image to enlarge figure)

2.4.1. Noise

The Environmental Noise (Scotland) Regulations 2006 were introduced in Scotland to implement / transpose European Union, Assessment and Management of Noise Directive 2002/49/EC (known as the Environmental Noise Directive - END). The aims of the END are to define a common approach in order to avoid, prevent or reduce the harmful effects of environmental noise. Under the Environmental Noise (Scotland) Regulations, three rounds of strategic noise mapping of major roads, railways, airports and agglomerations has been completed across Scotland.

Scotland's noise map⁶⁵ illustrates noise exposure from rail, road, air traffic and industrial sources in accordance with the END. The main sources of noise within the Environmental study area are sections of the A96 itself, A941 towards Rothes, A944 towards Kingsford, A940 towards Granttown on Spey and B9013 towards Burghead. There are large areas of noise sources within Aberdeen and Inverness, however this is beyond the extent of the study corridor. Sections of the Aberdeen – Inverness rail line are also a contributor of noise in the

⁶⁵ Scottish Government (Environmental Quality Division), Scotland's Noise, 2022, <https://noise.environment.gov.scot/noisemap/>

Environmental study area (Figure 27). This figure illustrates the noise levels above 55 decibels (dB) as coloured contour bands at 5dB intervals based on consolidated noise sources for the average day (L_{day}), evening (L_{evening}) and night (L_{night}) metric (referred to as L_{den}). 55 dB L_{den} is the EU indicator threshold for noise exposure defined in the END 2002/49/EC. As expected, the greatest consolidated noise sources are at the eastern end of the A96 due to proximity to Aberdeen and its associated various industrial land uses and main transport routes entering and exiting the city. As noted, this is outwith the Environmental study area. Within the Environmental study area itself, the main sources of noise are from the A96 and the railway line which both follow a similar east-west alignment. There are some peripheral roads which are also noise sources, however these are more scattered in the western extent or form direct connections with the A96. Noise emissions from airports and industry outside of Aberdeen have not been modelled as they do not meet the criteria set out in the END.

The Regulations also require the production of Noise Action Plans (NAPs) to manage noise. These NAPs identify locations where people are most likely to be annoyed by noise (Candidate Noise Management Areas [CNMAs]) and areas to be preserved (Candidate Quiet Areas [CQAs]) from the strategic noise mapping. These areas then go through a filtering process to determine which will progress to actual Noise Management Area (NMA) and Quiet Area (QA) status.

Responsibility for assessing the potential for implementing cost effective noise mitigation measures within NMAs rests with either Transport Scotland, Network Rail, or the local roads authority, depending on who is responsible for the road/rail. There is one Round 3 CQA which falls within the Environmental study area, which is 'West Woods' located south of A96 and west of A90. There are 12 road CMNAs and 2 rail CMNAs proposed within Aberdeen and 5 road CMNAs in Inverness, however these are outside the Environmental study area.

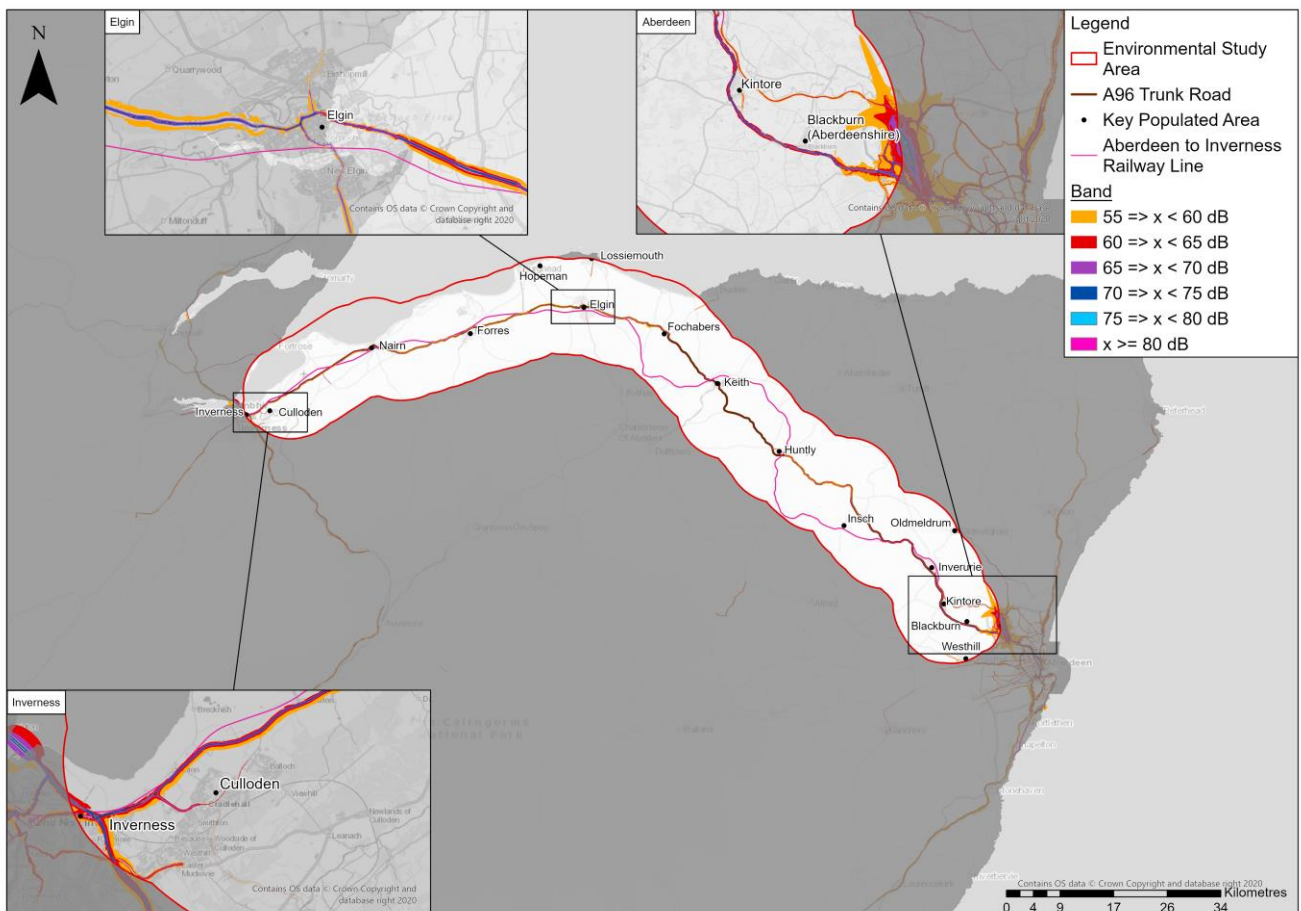


Figure 27: Noise Mapping for the Environmental Study Area

(Click image to enlarge figure)

2.4.2. Water / Flooding

There are a total of 294 surface water features within the Environmental study area, which includes rivers, lochs, water bodies and coastal waters. There are 11 surface water catchments within the corridor that interact with the A96. These are:

- Beauly/ Inverness Firth;
- Inverness Coastal;
- River Nairn;
- Moray Coastal;
- Muckle Burn;
- River Findhorn;
- River Lossie;
- Spey Bay Coastal;
- River Spey;
- River Deveron; and

- River Don.

A significant number of watercourses flow through the corridor and are crossed by the A96 itself. The largest watercourses in the corridor are the River Spey, to the immediate west of Fochabers, and the River Don (and its tributary – the River Urie) at Inverurie. Under the WFD classifications, these designated river catchments range from having 'Bad' to 'Good' Ecological Status, with the main reasons for not achieving 'Good' status being physical modification and chemical failings⁶⁶. These are large watercourses which range from having sections that are more laterally dynamic to sections that have been heavily modified, as illustrated by the River Urie where crossed by the existing A96. The majority of river crossings are at points where the rivers are fresh water with the exception of the River Nairn which is tidal at the point where it is crossed by the A96.

The Scottish Environmental Protection Agency (SEPA) flood mapping⁶⁷ identifies flood risk from river and coastal flooding at medium (1-in-200 year) and high (1-in-10 year) annual likelihood of flooding (Figure 28). Given the significant number of watercourses, the main risk of flooding within the A96 corridor is from river flooding. This includes the current route of the A96 itself. The flood mapping illustrates that the River Don poses significant flood risk to roads and settlements between Old Rayne and Dyce, with Kintore and Inverurie at significant risk. The other main settlements within the corridor of Nairn, Forres, Elgin, Fochabers, Huntly and Blackburn show significant areas of flood risk from various watercourses, including the River Spey and River Deveron. Keith however, is deemed to be at low risk. Flood protection schemes have been implemented within the corridor, including at Forres⁶⁸, Elgin and Huntly, and a flood study for Inverurie and Port Elphinstone is underway⁶⁹. Coastal flood risk is confined to the coastal settlements within the wider Environmental study area of Findhorn, Burghead and Lossiemouth, although the estuary at Findhorn does allow for a greater extent of coastal flood risk inland. There is also some potential coastal flood risk at Nairn.

⁶⁶ Scottish Environmental Protection Agency (SEPA), Water Classification Hub, 2022, <https://www.sepa.org.uk/data-visualisation/water-classification-hub/>

⁶⁷ SEPA, Flood Map, 2022, <https://map.sepa.org.uk/floodmap/map.htm>

⁶⁸ Moray Council, Flood Management, n.d., http://www.moray.gov.uk/moray_standard/page_80332.html

⁶⁹ Aberdeenshire Council, Home – Inverurie and Port Elphinstone Flood Study, n.d., <http://www.inveruriefloodstudy.com/>

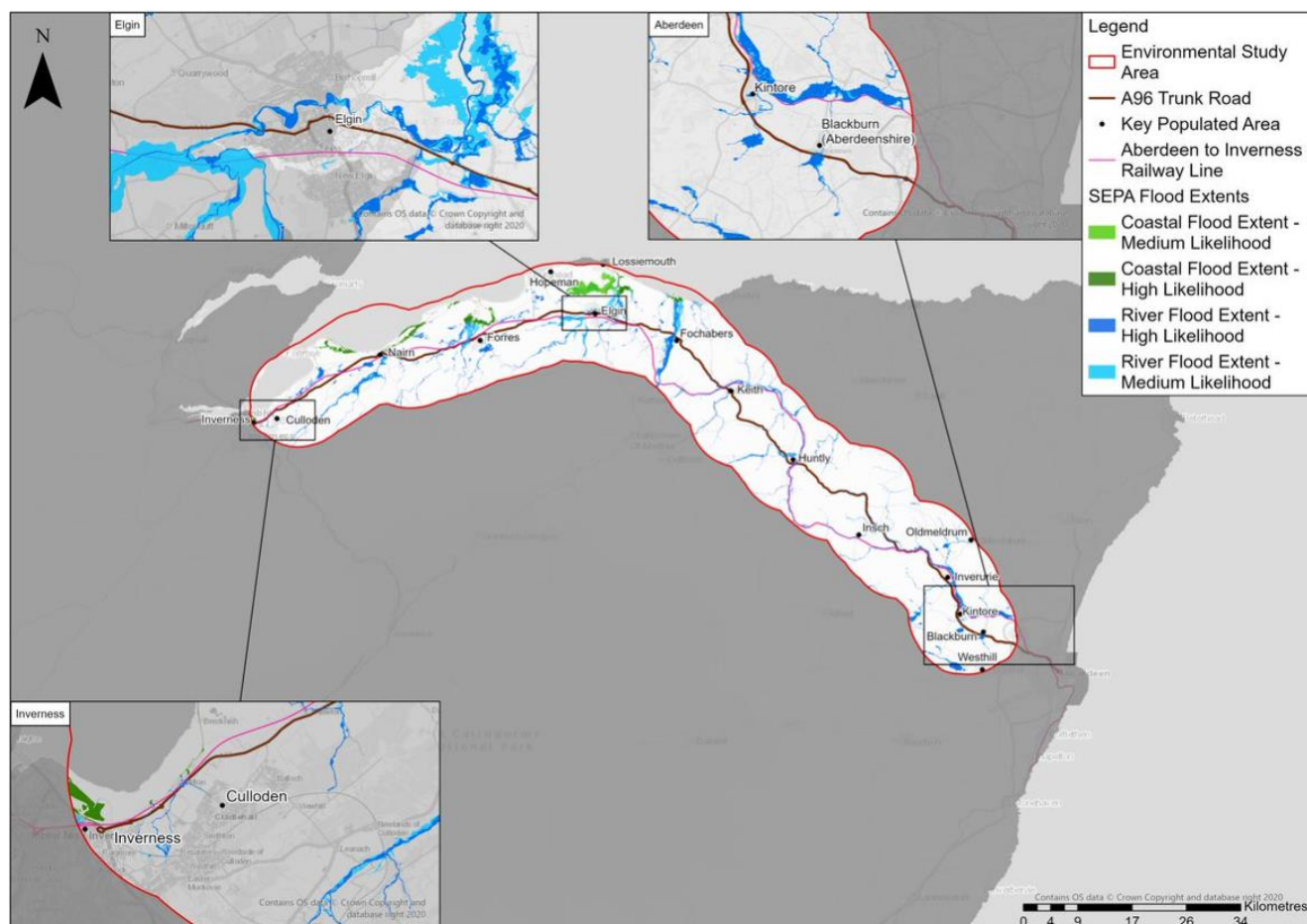


Figure 28: Flood Mapping for the Environmental Study Area

(Click image to enlarge figure)

2.4.3. Soils and geology

Peat is an important carbon sink. More than 20% of Scotland is covered by peat soil, with peatlands holding over half of Scotland’s terrestrial store of carbon⁷⁰. However, within the Environmental study area, there are no significant areas of buried peat (including carbon-rich soil, deep peat and priority peatland habitat). Scotland’s Soils⁷¹ mapping (Carbon and Peatland Map) is divided into five classes of carbon and peatland, and also illustrates areas of non-soil, unknown soil, and mineral soil. The classes are as follows:

Class 1 - Nationally important carbon-rich soils, deep peat (>50cm depth) and priority peatland habitat. Areas likely to be of high conservation value – Peat Soil;

⁷⁰ NatureScot, Managing Nature for Carbon Capture, 2020, <https://www.nature.scot/professional-advice/land-and-sea-management/carbon-management/managing-nature-carbon-capture>

⁷¹ Scotland’s Soils, Peatland Restoration, 2019, <https://soils.environment.gov.scot/resources/peatland-restoration/#:~:text=The%20soil%20maps%20of%20Scotland%20use%20the%20Soil,ha bitats%20now%20or%20have%20been%20in%20the%20past>

Class 2 - Nationally important carbon-rich soils, deep peat and priority peatland habitat. Areas of potentially high conservation value and restoration potential – Peat Soil with occasional peaty soil;

Class 3 – Occasional peatland habitats, mostly carbon-rich soils, with some areas of deep peat – Predominantly peaty soil with some Peat Soil;

Class 4 - Area unlikely to be associated with peatland habitats or wet and acidic type. Area unlikely to include carbon-rich soils – Predominantly mineral soil with some Peat Soil;

Class 5 - No peatland habitat recorded. May also include areas of bare soil. Soils are carbon-rich and deep peat – Peat Soil.

Figure 29 shows there to be large swathes of Class 4 and Class 5 within the corridor, with some smaller areas of Classes 1 and 3 to the north and south of Keith. The majority of the land within the corridor is agricultural.

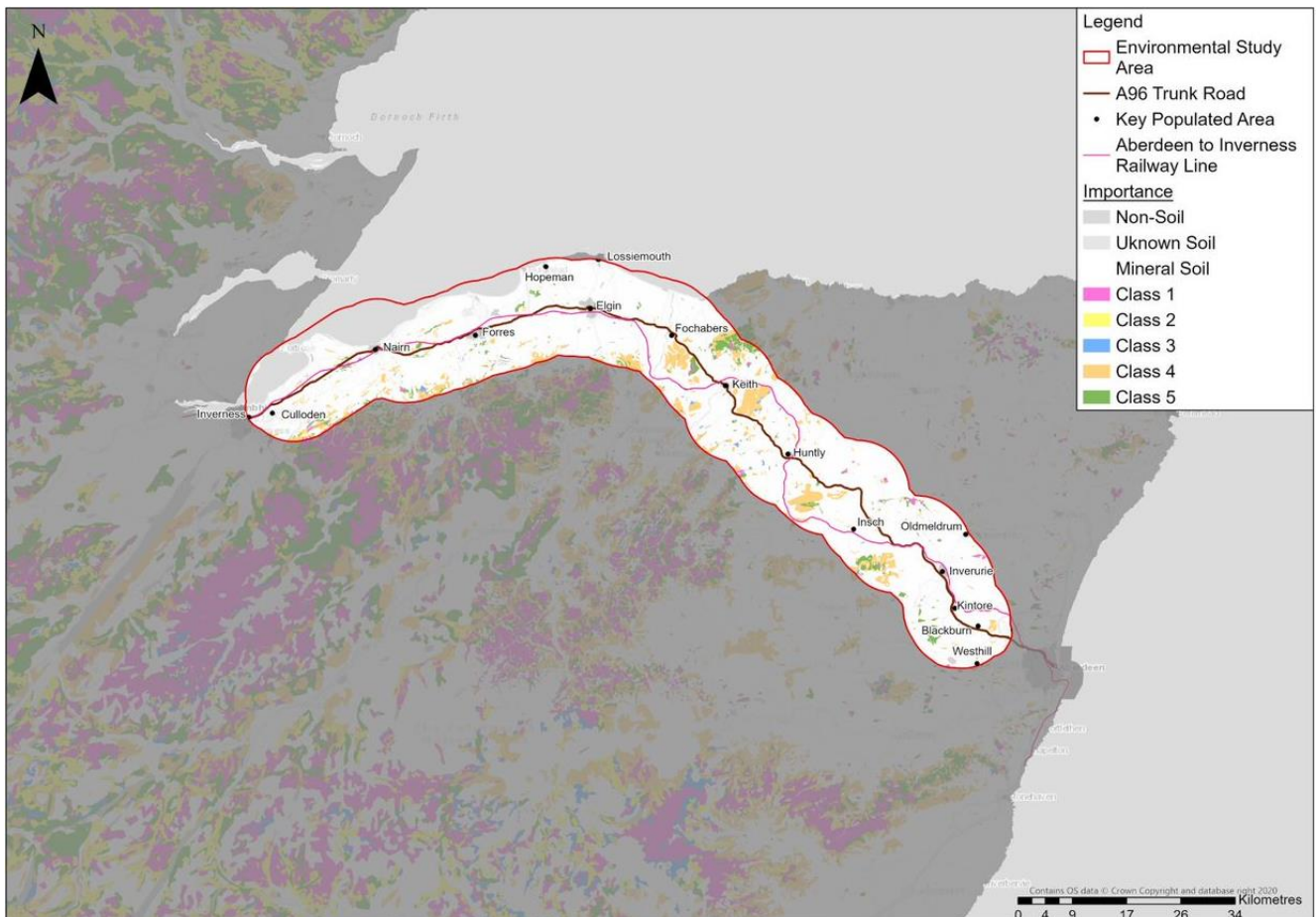


Figure 29: Carbon and Peatland Map for the Environmental Study Area

(Click image to enlarge figure)

2.4.4. Air Quality

A review of air quality monitoring data collected within the corridor between 2015 and 2019 for the council administrative areas of Moray⁷² and Aberdeenshire⁷³, show that annual mean concentrations of Nitrogen Dioxide (NO₂) remained stable and well below the Air Quality Objective (AQO) across the years reviewed. The highest monitored NO₂ concentrations in the Environmental study area in 2019 within Moray and Aberdeenshire were 22.7µg/m³ and 25.9µg/m³ respectively, which were substantially below the annual mean NO₂ AQO of 40µg/m³. Air quality within the Highland Council⁷⁴ area is below the AQO of 40µg/m³, with the exception of the existing Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) declared for the potential exceedance of NO₂ within Inverness City Centre, however this is beyond the Environmental study area. The highest 2019 NO₂ concentration within the Environmental study area for the Highland Council area was 33.0µg/m³; again, below the annual mean NO₂ AQO.

There are no declared AQMA within the Environmental study area however there are three declared within Aberdeen City Council area, all to the east of the Environmental study area, and one, as previously discussed in the previous paragraph, to the west within Inverness. Anderson Drive AQMA within Aberdeen City was declared for the potential exceedance of annual mean NO₂ and Particulate Matter (PM₁₀) AQOs⁷⁵. The AQMA encompasses Haudagain Roundabout and Auchmill Road on the northern fringes of Aberdeen⁷⁶ and includes the junction between the A96 and A92 but while including part of the A96, as noted it is outwith the Environmental study area.

The highest NO₂ concentration relevant to public exposure in 2019 within the Environmental study area was 38µg/m³, though does not exceed the NO₂ AQO. Whilst there is no PM₁₀ monitoring data within the Environmental study area, PM₁₀ monitoring is undertaken within the wider Aberdeen City area. The highest PM₁₀ concentration in 2019 was 14.0µg/m³, which is the highest within all the local authorities in the corridor and is below the annual mean AQO of 18µg/m³. The highest PM_{2.5} concentration in 2019 within all of the local authorities considered was 8µg/m³ (data capture <75%) and is below the annual mean AQO of 10µg/m³.

Mapped background annual mean concentrations of oxides of nitrogen (NO_x – a precursor for NO₂), NO₂, PM₁₀ and PM_{2.5}, based on a 2018 reference year, projected to 2022, were obtained from the LAQM support tools provided by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra)⁷⁷ for use in air quality assessments. The backgrounds are provided for the UK as a 1km by 1km grid network. A summary of the minimum and maximum background

⁷² Moray Council, Moray Council Air Quality Annual Progress Report, 2020

⁷³ Aberdeenshire Council, Aberdeenshire Council Air Quality Annual Progress Report, 2021

⁷⁴ The Highland Council, The Highland Council Air Quality Annual Progress Report, 2021

⁷⁵ Aberdeen City Council, Air Quality Annual Progress Report (APR) for Aberdeen City Council, 2021

⁷⁶ Aberdeen City Council, Air Quality Management, 2022, <https://www.aberdeencity.gov.uk/services/environment/air-quality-aberdeen/air-quality-management>

⁷⁷ Defra, Background Air Quality Maps, 2020, <https://uk-air.defra.gov.uk/>

concentrations across the A96 Environmental study area for the current year (2022) is provided in Table 3.

Table 3: Defra Background Concentrations (2022) along the A96 corridor

Pollutant	AQO ($\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$)	2022 Mapped Annual Mean Background Concentration ($\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$)	
		Min	Max
NO _x	30	1.9	43.5
NO ₂	40	1.6	26.9
PM ₁₀	18	5.5	11.6
PM _{2.5}	10	3.2	6.7

Bold indicates exceedance of relevant Air Quality Objective

Current year (2022) background concentrations are below the relevant annual mean AQO, with the exception of the maximum NO_x concentration, which is set for the protection of vegetation and ecosystems.

The Pollution Climate Mapping (PCM) model was developed to report on compliance with European Air Quality Directive (EU Directive 2008/50/EC) Limit Values by Defra⁷⁸; these Limit Values are still relevant for assessing compliance post-Brexit⁷⁹ as they have been transposed into UK law⁸⁰. There are a number of PCM links that correspond to the A96 corridor where current (2022) roadside annual mean NO₂ concentrations are predicted to be between 3.5 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ and 35.2 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$. Based on these Defra PCM forecasts, concentrations are predicted to be compliant with Limit Values.

2.5. Transport Context

Figure 30 displays the key transport networks within the A96 Corridor Review transport appraisal study area, including the National Cycle Network (NCN), rail lines and stations, as well as airports and the A-roads and B-roads surrounding the A96 trunk road. The map demonstrates the wide-ranging transport network and multimodal options available to transport users across the region.

⁷⁸ Defra, 2020 NO₂ and PM projections data (2018 reference year), 2022, <https://uk-air.defra.gov.uk/library/no2ten/2020-no2-pm-projections-from-2018-data>

⁷⁹ United Kingdom (UK) Government, The Environment (Miscellaneous Amendments) (EU Exit) Regulations 2020, 2020

⁸⁰ United Kingdom (UK) Government, 2010 No. 1001 Environmental Protection, The Air Quality Standards Regulations 2010, 2010

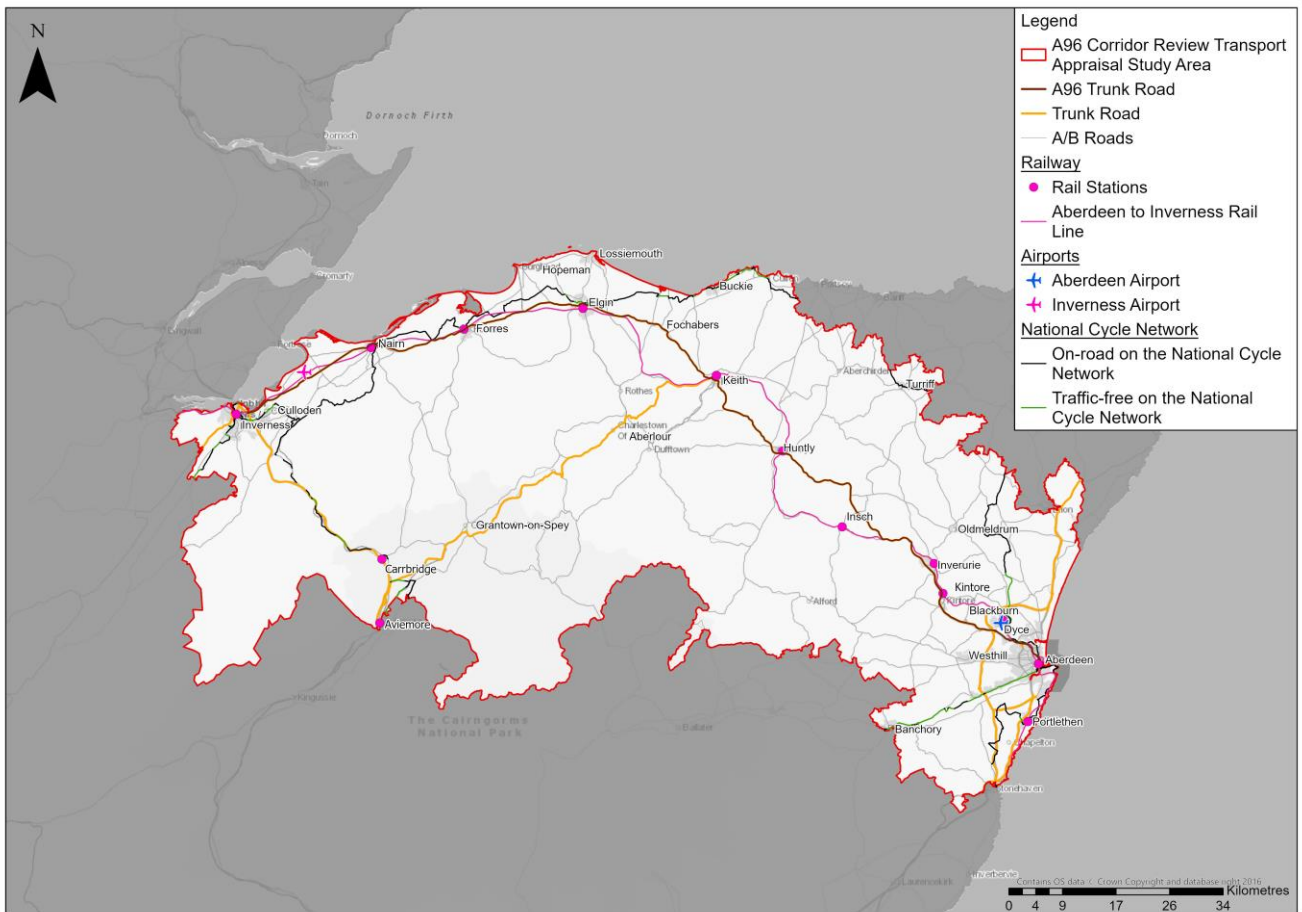


Figure 30: A96 Corridor Review Transport Appraisal Study Area Transport Network

(Click image to enlarge figure)

2.5.1. Active Travel

Figure 31 shows the active travel network within the transport appraisal study area.

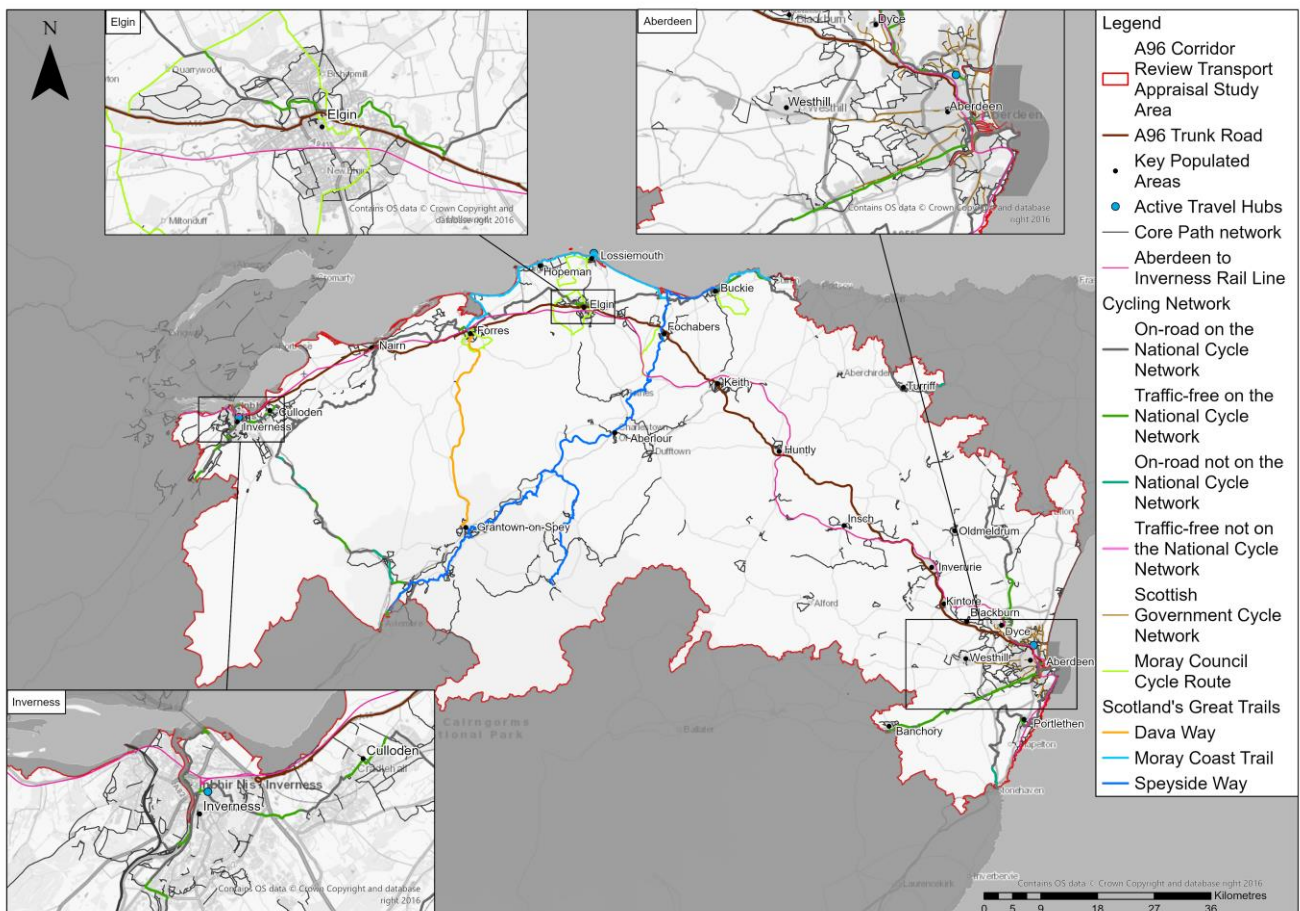


Figure 31: Active Travel Network

(Click image to enlarge figure)

There are several on and off-road active travel corridors in the transport appraisal study area, many being local networks, alongside a network of long-distance cycle routes that form part of the National Cycle Network (NCN). The NCN routes offer long-distance connections between the rural and urban communities within the wider transport appraisal study area and beyond. These include:

- NCN 1 – Between Inverness and Aberdeen, the route is partially inside the transport appraisal study area and travels through the towns of Nairn, Elgin and Turriff. The route travels to the north-east of the transport appraisal study area towards Maud and into Aberdeen along the route of the A947.
- NCN 195 – Route from Ballater (South of the transport appraisal study area) to Aberdeen
- NCN 7 – Route from the South of Inverness following the general alignment of the A9 trunk road, connecting to NCN 1 near Culloden

Long sections of the NCN routes in the transport appraisal study area are on-road and therefore require interactions with traffic. Traffic-free parts of the routes exist in small sections but for longer travel between settlements and towns it is necessary to travel on-road.

Other long-distance active travel routes are present throughout the transport appraisal area and form part of Scotland's Great Trails. Some of the notable active travel trails in the area, as shown in Figure 31, include a route along the Moray coast between Cullen and Forres (Moray Coast Trail), a route linking Forres and Grantown-on-Spey and beyond to Aviemore (Dava Way) and a route between Grantown-on-Spey and Spey Bay (Speyside Way). These three trails form a cyclic route around Moray, linking together rural settlements in the region. Short sections of other routes also fall within the transport appraisal study area, including The Great Glen Way which runs between Inverness, Fort William, and the Formartine and Buchan Way between Dyce and Maud and connects to the coastal towns of Fraserburgh and Peterhead.

As well as long distance cycling, there are several official way marked active travel routes and core paths as designated by each Local Authority. These routes provide connections between local settlements away from the national routes, such as between Elgin, Lossiemouth and Hopeman. As the NCN routes all divert away from the central A96 corridor between Elgin and Aberdeen, these core paths and regional connections are often the only recreational active travel routes to navigate by walking and cycling in, and between settlements and towns. There is also a multitude of unofficial routes in the region that provide local access within and between settlements that complement the core path network along the corridor.

As seen in the travel to work data presented in Figure 9⁸¹, walking/wheeling and cycling is used frequently across the transport appraisal study area, with the proportion of trips to work being 14%, three percentage points greater than the national average. Levels of walking/wheeling and cycling combined are highest in Aberdeen City (17%) and other urban centres such as Inverness (22%) and Elgin (21%), as well as within some rural settlements, including Huntly (30%) and Keith (20%). The proportion of active travel is lowest in Aberdeenshire (8%), including settlements close to the boundary of Aberdeen, such as Kintore (3%), Blackburn (4%) and Westhill (7%).

2.5.2. Bus Network

There are several commercial bus services in operation in the settlements along the A96 corridor. The entire A96 route is covered by a bus route between Aberdeen and Inverness, with local services available in some of the larger towns along the route including Elgin and Inverurie. The regional bus network is primarily underpinned by supported public and school transport services run by Stagecoach, as well as First Bus in Aberdeen City, alongside smaller coach operators and local authority run services. In 2019, 20% of bus kilometres travelled in Aberdeenshire were supported by the council⁸². Community transport and demand responsive transport services are operated within each of the local authorities although coverage is limited, with membership often required.

Frequency of services depends on time of day and location, with more rural areas seeing fewer bus services provided, and there is a trend of declining use of bus in some parts of the transport appraisal study area. NESTRANS reported in 2017/18, 26.5 million trips were made

⁸¹ NRS, 2011 Census (Scotland), 2011, <https://www.scotlandscensus.gov.uk/>

⁸² NESTRANS, Regional Transport Strategy for the North East of Scotland, 2021, https://www.nestrans.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/Nestrans-RTS_PUBLISHED.pdf

by bus in the north-east (Aberdeenshire and Aberdeen City), 3.4 million less than three years prior⁸³, and travel to work data suggests all LAs outside of Aberdeen show lower bus use than the national average.

Figure 32 shows the change in share of population using the bus four or more days a week in the Scottish LA areas from 2003 to 2017⁸⁴ and highlights that there has been a wide variation in performance across local authorities over this period.

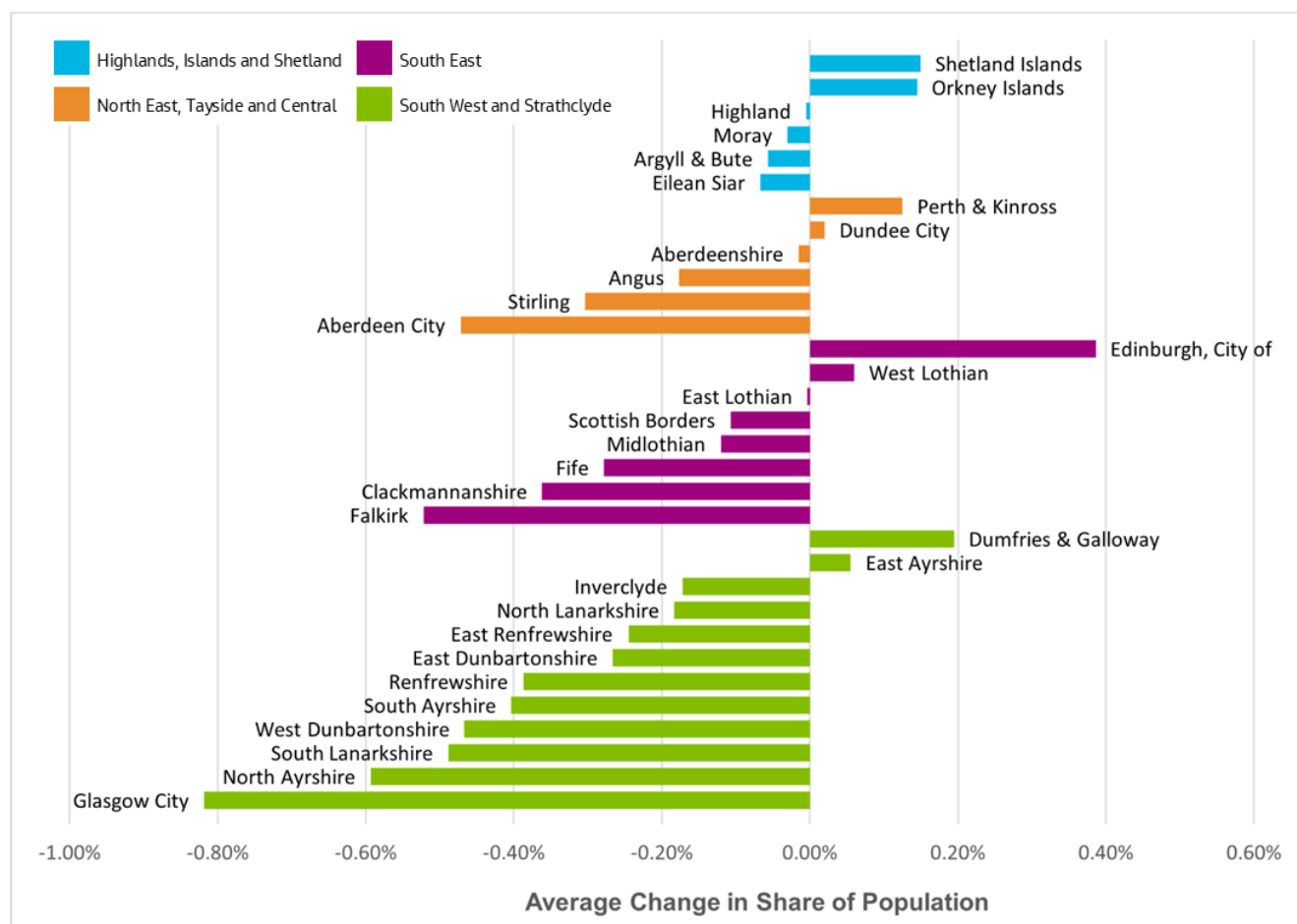


Figure 32: Change in average annual share of population using the Bus four or more days a week, 2003/04 – 2017⁸⁵

All four of the LAs that make up the transport appraisal study area show a year-on-year decline in regular bus usage, suggesting again there is a long-term pattern of declining bus use. Highland, Moray and Aberdeenshire have seen a relatively small change in relation to

⁸³ NESTRANS, Regional Transport Strategy for the North East of Scotland, 2021, https://www.nestrans.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/Nestrans-RTS_PUBLISHED.pdf

⁸⁴ Adults (16+) – use of local bus services, and train services, in the previous month. Transport and Travel in Scotland. Calculated on the basis of the trend in the percentage change per annum across 2003/04, 2005/06, 2007/08, 2009/10, 2012/13, 2014, 2015, 2016 and 2017.

⁸⁵ Scottish Government, Transport and Travel in Scotland, 2017

other LAs across Scotland. Aberdeen City has seen an average decline of almost 0.5% per year, higher than two major cities of Edinburgh and Dundee but markedly better than Glasgow.

Timetable information has revealed an expected journey time between Aberdeen and Inverness of approximately 4h 10m for a trip departing around 9am. This is over an hour slower end to end than the equivalent estimated car trip time provided via Google⁸⁶ for the same departure time.

There are four designated Park and Ride sites located in the transport appraisal study area, all around Aberdeen. Craibstone Park and Ride is accessible from the A96 just inside the AWPR, and Kingswells is similarly just inside the AWPR where it meets the A944, approximately 4km south of the A96. Other Park and Ride sites are situated at Bridge of Don and Newtonhill away from the A96. Onwards travel at each location is available by bus.

2.5.3. Rail Network

Through the transport appraisal study area, there is a prominent rail line between Inverness and Aberdeen that generally follows the A96, though diverts between Keith and Elgin so that Fochabers is not served by rail. The route includes 11 stations, including both city destinations as terminuses. A new station at Kintore opened in 2020 and a new station at Dalcross for Inverness Airport is currently under construction.

Further connections can be made from Inverness to the Highland area, and south towards Glasgow and Edinburgh (and onward to London via the East Coast Mainline) via Perth. Aberdeen similarly has a further route to the south, towards Dundee, Glasgow and Edinburgh (and onward to London via the East Coast Mainline).

Figure 33 demonstrates the origin and destinations of annual rail trips⁸⁷ within the transport appraisal study area between March 2018 and March 2019 to identify the most popular routes travelled by train. Note this data only represents the origin and destination rail station, not of the entire journey.

⁸⁶ Google, Google Maps, 2022, <https://www.google.com/maps>

⁸⁷ Data sourced from LENNON Rail Ticketing Data

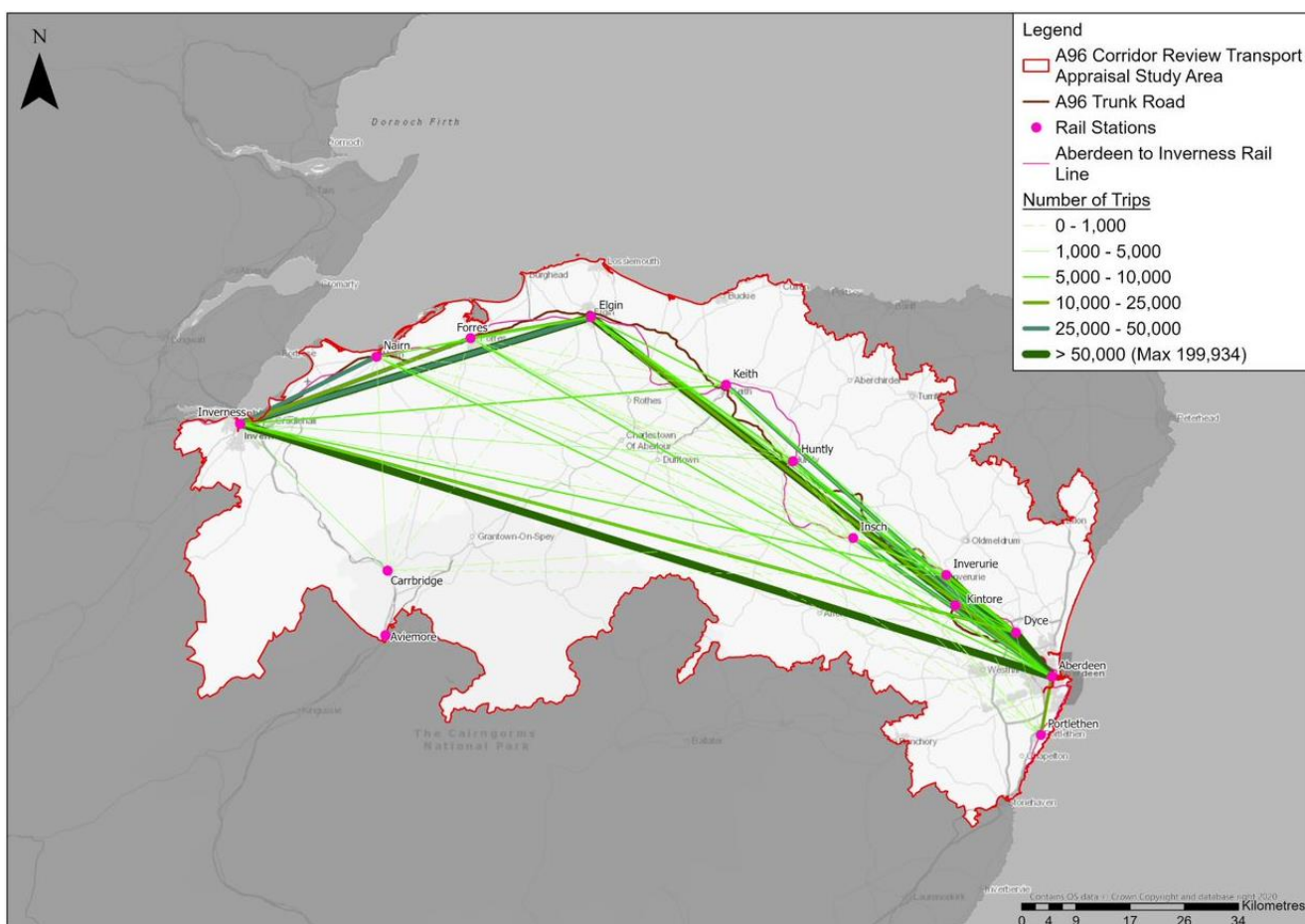


Figure 33: Rail Movements between Stations in the Transport Appraisal Study Area

(Click image to enlarge figure)

Much of the rail travel in the region is dominated by Aberdeen and the most popular routes are generally attracted to the city, for example from Inverurie. The magnitude of trips between Elgin, Aberdeen and Inverness exceeds those from the smaller stations that lie between these three locations. Keith and Huntly predominantly are attracted to Aberdeen, whereas Forres and Nairn are more likely to travel to Inverness. Elgin rail trips are relatively evenly split between the two larger cities. There are much fewer trips outside of these three stations.

In terms of station utilisation and overall passenger demand trends, Figure 34 demonstrates the average annual change in passenger numbers at each of the stations between Aberdeen and Inverness between 2008/09 and 2018/19⁸⁸. Please note that the data runs from April to April, as such 2018/19 represents the last full year of data not affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.

⁸⁸ Office of Road and Rail, Annual estimates of the number of entries/exits and interchanges at each station in Great Britain, Table 1415, <https://dataportal.orr.gov.uk/statistics/usage/estimates-of-station-usage>

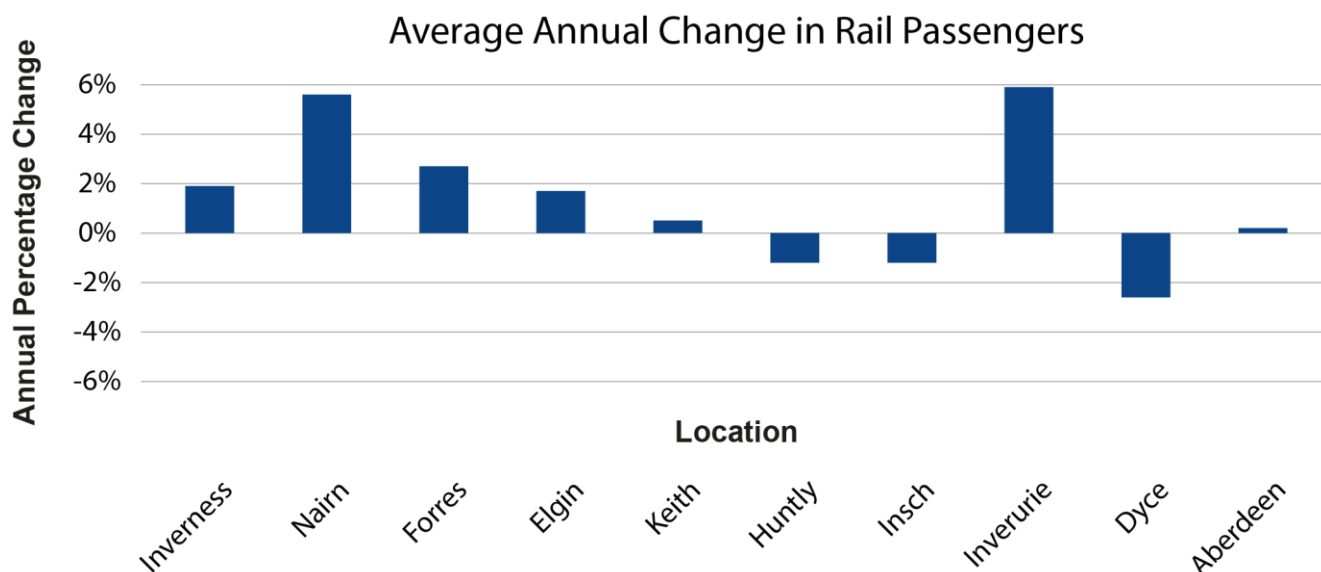


Figure 34: Average Annual Change in Station Entries and Exits - 2008/09 to 2018/19

Generally, patronage in the region has increased over the past decade at the busiest stations in the region. Aberdeen has seen a very small average increase of approximately 0.2% per year, whereas Inverness has grown almost 2% per year. Inverurie and Nairn, two towns generally considered in commuter areas to the two cities in the transport appraisal study area, have grown substantially more, almost 6% per year each. Dyce has seen the biggest decrease in passengers, over 2% per year and Huntly and Insch have both seen a decline of approximately 1% per year.

However, in more recent years the patronage on rail has generally declined. Between 2016/17⁸⁹ and 2018/19⁹⁰, only Forres saw a rise in passenger numbers (2%). All other stations on the line saw a decrease, including both terminuses and busiest stations in terms of absolute passengers. Aberdeen station entry and exits decreased by over 14% between 2016/17 and 2018/19, however Inverness decreased by just over 1%. This suggests that more recently people have moved away from rail for journeys.

2.5.4. Road Network

The A96 trunk road connects the two most northerly cities in Scotland, Aberdeen and Inverness. It provides a key connection for the rural areas and towns between these two cities to enable access to key services such as education, employment and healthcare facilities. The extents of the A96 trunk road section is from Raigmore Interchange in the west to the AWPR Craibstone junction in the east. Between Smithton Roundabout west of Inverness and Port Elphinstone Roundabout in Inverurie, the A96 is predominantly single carriageway. Short

⁸⁹ Office of Road and Rail, Annual estimates of the number of entries/exits and interchanges at each station in Great Britain, Table 1415, 2016/2017, <https://dataportal.orr.gov.uk/statistics/usage/estimates-of-station-usage>

⁹⁰ Office of Road and Rail, Annual estimates of the number of entries/exits and interchanges at each station in Great Britain, Table 1415, 2018/2019, <https://dataportal.orr.gov.uk/statistics/usage/estimates-of-station-usage>

sections, between approximately 0.5 miles and 1.2 miles, of overtaking or crawler lanes are provided intermittently along the route. Connections can be made from the A96 to other trunk roads in the region, including the A90 (AWPR), A95 and A9, as well as several other non-trunk A-roads, B-roads and local connections.

For the majority of the route the A96 is national speed limit. However, through urban areas including Nairn, Forres, Elgin and Keith the speed limit reduces to 30mph through the centre of these towns. On approach to Raigmore Interchange in Inverness, the speed limit is reduced to 50mph and then further to 30mph. Between just south of Inverurie and Aberdeen, the A96 is dual carriageway in both directions with a signed speed limit of 70mph outside of Aberdeen. The speed limit is subsequently reduced to 50mph towards Craibstone Roundabout.

All junctions on the A96 are at-grade with the exception of Tavelty Junction just north of Kintore and Gauchhill Junction near the centre of Kintore. The at-grade junctions are predominantly formed of priority junctions or roundabouts with some junctions in urbanised areas signalised to allow better traffic flow from minor/local routes onto the A96 trunk road. The local road network accessed from the A96 provides further travel opportunities to communities on the Moray Firth and rural areas across Aberdeenshire, Moray and parts of the Highland LA areas. Distances between communities and key services means the accessibility provided by the road network is important for many settlements within the transport appraisal study area. The A96 is also a crucial access point for many commercial sites, industrial areas and residential properties via local access routes.

Historically, congestion has been commonly reported at Raigmore Interchange where the A96 trunk road meets the A9 trunk road. Junction improvement work has been commissioned at Raigmore in recent years with the aim of reducing the impact of congestion. Other delays are more likely to occur in the urbanised areas where traffic volumes are increased and there is a greater volume of at-grade roundabouts and junctions that delay traffic. Journey times in Elgin and Nairn for example were reported to be highly variable in feedback received in the public consultation survey responses. The presence of increased traffic and junctions results in the A96 traffic slowing as strategic traffic interacts with local traffic with feedback from the stakeholder engagement workshops and the public consultation noting large variations in journey times particularly at peak commuting hours or when incidents have occurred on the network.

Traffic volume is widely variable along the A96, with a lower Annual Average Daily Traffic (AADT) figure in the rural section between Huntly and Lhanbryde than on approach to the major cities at either end of the road and Elgin. Figure 35 demonstrates the pattern of AADT flows at counters along the A96 for 2019 through 2021.

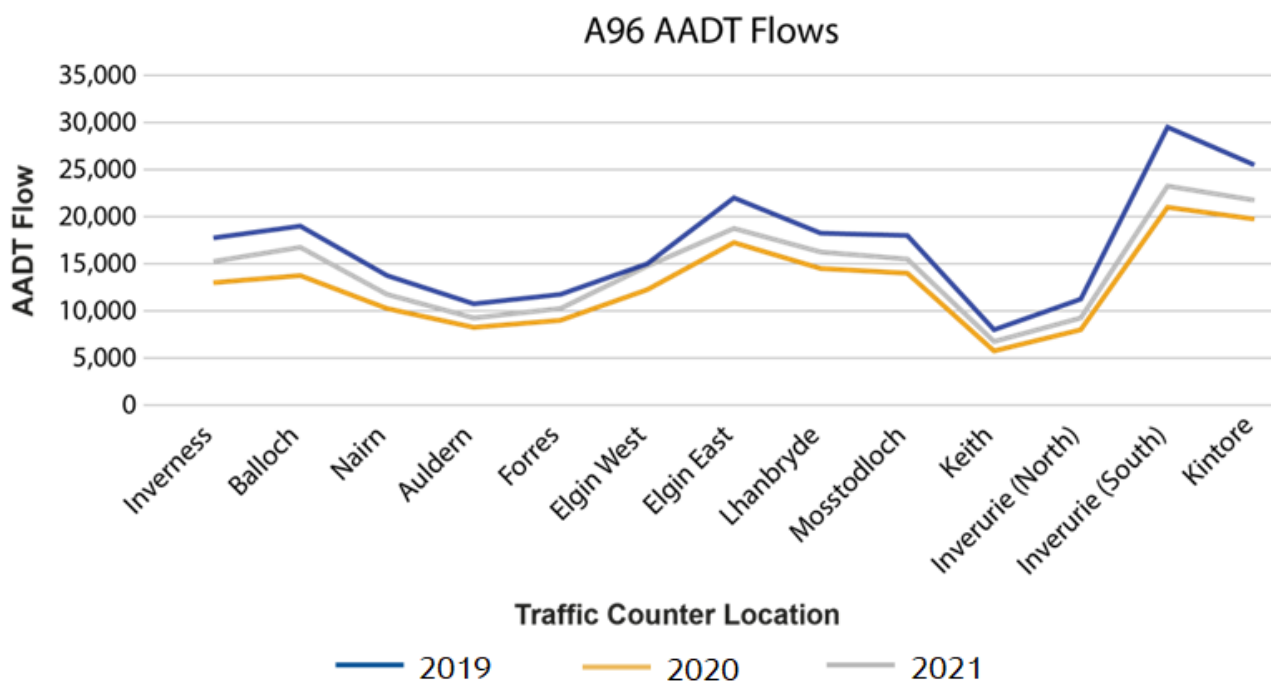


Figure 35: A96 Annual Average Daily Traffic Flows, 2019-2021

Figure 35 demonstrates the variation in traffic flow with clear increases around Inverness, Elgin and Aberdeen, and lowest flows in the rural areas between the three major population centres, particularly around Keith and Huntly. It also shows that although 2021 demonstrated a recovery from the notable reductions experienced due to the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, the traffic volume has not yet returned to the pre-COVID-19 levels along the entirety of the route.

Traffic flows on the A96 for the section between Inverurie and Aberdeen are significantly higher than the rural sections and greatest for the entirety of the route, with an AADT of almost 30,000 vehicles prior to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Pre-COVID-19 pandemic, traffic patterns for the A96 demonstrated a peak in the summer months around July to September, with a significant peak in August. This suggests a rise in recreational trips and tourists visiting the area. Winter months and particularly January and December demonstrate lower than the AADT volumes.

Traffic counters also indicate a high proportion of Heavy Goods Vehicles (HGVs) on the A96. Up to 16% of vehicles recorded in 2019 at traffic counters were HGVs and in general the proportion of goods vehicles is above 8% for the entire route. HGVs are restricted to 40mph on the A96 so a high proportion of goods vehicles often restricts all vehicle speeds and leads to platooning. Feedback from the stakeholder workshops and public consultation has also indicated that slow moving vehicles, including agricultural and farm traffic, cause frustration on the A96 as they increase journey times combined with a perceived lack of safe overtaking opportunities.

Accident data on the A96 has been provided by Transport Scotland for 2015 through 2019. This represents the most up to date 5-year period for pre-COVID-19 road conditions due to the pandemic causing a noticeable reduction in traffic volumes as highlighted above. As such, accident data for the period 2020 to 2022 would not be representative to include in analysis of the longer-term trends, or to include in the calculation of accident rates for the A96 trunk road.

Accident rates have been calculated for the A96 between Hardmuir, to the east of Nairn, and Craibstone Junction. The Personal Injury Accident (PIA) rate for this section of the A96 for the period 2015 to 2019 is slightly below the national average for trunk A-roads of a similar type for the majority of the route. However, in the urban areas of Keith and Forres, where the posted speed limit on the A96 reduces from the national speed limit, the PIA rate is 1.9 times and 1.3 times the national average respectively.

Accidents involving casualties that are Killed or Seriously Injured (KSIs) are also significantly higher in the urban areas of Keith and Forres, at 4.8 times and 3.1 times the national average respectively. The rate of KSIs on the rural sections between Hardmuir and Forres (1.4 times), Fochabers and Keith (1.1 times), Keith and east of Huntly (1.3 times) and the dual carriageway section between Kintore and Craibstone (1.1 times) are also above the national average.

The trunk road operating company has provided the designated diversion routes that are reported in response to any incident. Incidents can include, but are not limited to, road traffic collisions, general planned maintenance, weather instances including snow and flooding. In the five-year period from 2016-21, the trunk road operating company Management of Incidents (MOI) database indicates a section of the A96 was closed on average approximately 24 times per year, with a maximum of 34 closures in 2017. Diversion routes vary greatly in length, with the most severe time and distance increases occurring generally in the rural sections of the route. Within towns and settlements along the route, there is often an adjacent B-road or local access road that can be used for alternative travel, but for the rural sections this is less common. For larger vehicles, such as buses and HGVs, a strategic diversion is essential for safe onwards travel. As such, for a closure on either approach towards Huntly, the recommended diversion route would result in a detour of over 60km to Banff on the Moray Firth that is estimated to take approximately 40 minutes without the increase in traffic a closure on the A96 is likely to create.

2.5.5. Air Connectivity

Both Aberdeen and Inverness airports are directly served by the A96 via designated junctions and serve as potential key destinations to travellers from within the transport appraisal study area, and arrival points for visitors. Figure 36⁹¹ and Figure 37⁹² summarise passenger trends for the two airports within the transport appraisal study area.

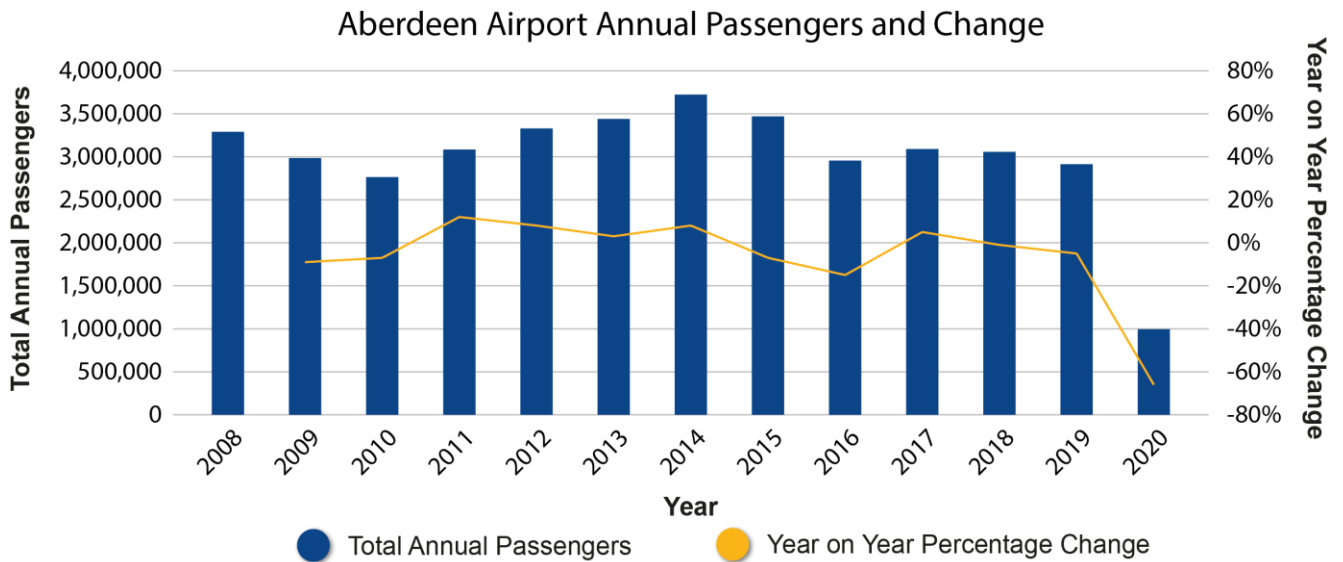


Figure 36: Aberdeen Airport Passenger Numbers, 2008-2020

⁹¹ Transport Scotland, Scottish Transport Statistics No.38 2019 Edition – Chapter 8: Air Transport In Scotland, 2019, <https://www.transport.gov.scot/publication/scottish-transport-statistics-no-38-2019-edition/chapter-8-air-transport-in-scotland/#tb81>

⁹² Transport Scotland, Scottish Transport Statistics No.38 2019 Edition – Chapter 8: Air Transport In Scotland, 2019, <https://www.transport.gov.scot/publication/scottish-transport-statistics-no-38-2019-edition/chapter-8-air-transport-in-scotland/#tb81>

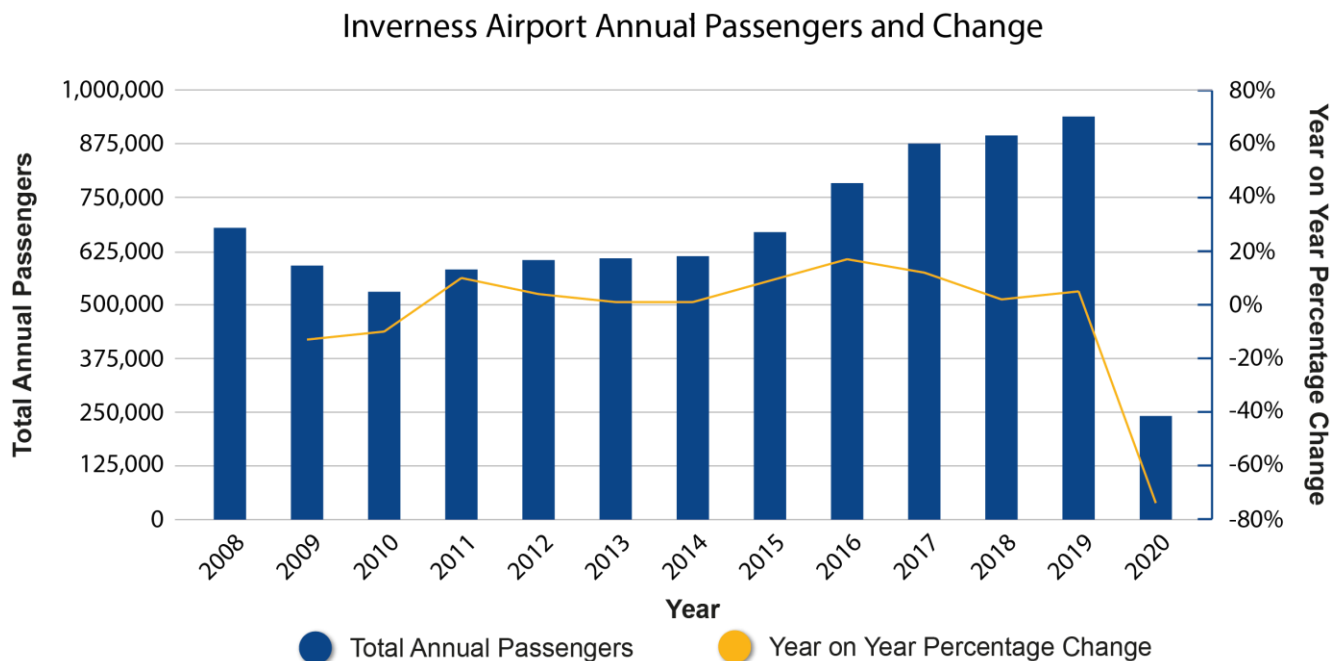


Figure 37: Inverness Airport Passenger Numbers, 2008-2020

Aberdeen international airport served approximately 3M passengers a year Pre-COVID-19, though there was a decline in passengers in recent years from an initial rise from 2010 to 2014. Inverness however displayed a significant increase, although patronage is significantly lower than Aberdeen in terms of absolute passenger numbers as the airport mainly serves domestic flights, including connections to the islands as well as England and Northern Ireland. The COVID-19 pandemic caused a significant drop in passengers due to both domestic and international travel restrictions, though this is expected to return in coming years.

2.5.6. Ferry / Ports

Although not a direct access from the A96, ports at Peterhead, Aberdeen and Invergordon are all 'major' ports as defined by STPR2 that are either within the transport appraisal study area or are at least partially served by the A96 as part of the trunk road network for visitors and haulage movements.

Aberdeen and Peterhead were noted through STPR2 as having major freight tonnage movements. Aberdeen was also defined as being a major commercial port. Access to the ports is likely to come at least in part from the A96, which increases HGV traffic on the routes.

Invergordon, to the north of Inverness, was highlighted as a major cruise port which would suggest links to seasonal growth in traffic demand and an increase in unfamiliar trips in summer months. Although traffic is more likely to increase on the A9 due to the Central Belt connections, there may be some increases on the A96 corridor to and from Aberdeen and the east coast.

2.6. Context Summary

- **Geographical Context:** The transport appraisal study area is a geographically diverse region that includes Scotland's two most northerly cities in Aberdeen and Inverness, urban areas and accessible and remote rural communities.
- **Policy Context:** To establish the overall strategic fit of the A96 Corridor Review, key elements of policy, strategy and legislation were reviewed at a local, regional and national level. This included the consideration of not only infrastructure planning and investment but also broader topic areas including Spatial Planning, Economic Development and Climate Change.

Through this comprehensive review, it is recognised that there is significant impetus, across all levels, to strengthen and enhance multimodal connections through targeted infrastructure investment, particularly for underserved rural areas, that can support emerging and future levels of planned growth and to facilitate a sustainable and just transition towards meeting ambitious Climate Change targets. In particular, the relationship between the A96 trunk road corridor between Nairn and Aberdeen and its interfacing local communities and businesses is identified as being pivotal whereby any enhancement of the current transport corridor will both directly and indirectly contribute towards successfully achieving strategic objectives and priorities, including both those relating to transport itself but also other dependent and complementary sectors.

- **Socio-Economic Context:** The majority of the region's population and employment opportunities are located within Aberdeen. Inverness and Elgin are also key hubs for economic activity. There is a trend of an aging population in the transport appraisal study area since 2012, with a growth in population aged 65 and over, particularly in rural settlements and areas. Industry is varied across the transport appraisal study area, but Mining, Manufacturing and Utilities and Human Health and Social Work make up generally the highest proportion of roles (based on 2020 BRES based employment data). Aberdeen has a high proportion of Professional, Scientific and Technical Activities roles, whereas the other three LAs that make up the transport appraisal study area have higher than average Construction and Agricultural, Forestry and Fishing employment. GVA within the region has experienced strong growth, with Aberdeen contributing over £10Bn to the economy in 2018. Economic activity is high across the transport appraisal study area with a lower than national average rate of unemployment. Deprivation is also generally low in the transport appraisal study area, particularly in rural Aberdeenshire, though in urban centres there are pockets of higher deprivation.
- **Environmental Context:** There are a number of cultural, natural and heritage land designations throughout the Environmental study area that include: Sites of Special Scientific Interest, Special Areas of Conservation and Special Protection Areas. Within the Environmental study area, the main sources of noise are from the A96 and the Aberdeen to Inverness railway line. In terms of air quality, the levels of NO₂ and PM₁₀ are generally well below the Air Quality Objective. There are no declared AQMA within the Environmental study area however there are

three declared within Aberdeen City Council area, all to the east of the Environmental study area, and one to the west within Inverness.

- **Transport Context:** Travel by private car is the dominant mode of transport within the transport appraisal study area and is very high in Aberdeenshire and towns surrounding Aberdeen. Compared to the national benchmark, bus is a popular mode in Aberdeen but low across the rest of the transport appraisal study area. Rail use is low across the entire transport appraisal study area for travel to work and in recent years there has been a trend of reducing use year on year since 2016. Walking and cycling are popular in the transport appraisal study area, with areas in Aberdeen City, Moray and Highland all showing higher than national average use of active travel, though Aberdeenshire is well below this benchmark. Travel distances are often shorter in the largest urban areas of Aberdeen, Inverness and Elgin and the proportion of people who travel under 5km for work in the transport appraisal study area (39%) is higher than the national average (32%). Outside of these areas, travel distances are longer and often match the distance to the closest of the major economic centres; Aberdeen, Inverness or Elgin. Over one fifth (22%) of people in Aberdeenshire travel over 20km to work, compared to the national average of just 13%.

3. Problems and Opportunities

3.1. Approach to Problem & Opportunity Identification

Deriving evidenced transport related problems and opportunities is a critical element of the Initial Appraisal: Case for Change. They are identified from a range of sources including a review of existing policy and strategy documents, data analysis and extensive stakeholder engagement.

Consideration has also been taken of the extensive work that has been undertaken in relation to the A96 trunk road itself, including review of the documentation and engagement with the respective consultants. However it should be noted that the A96 Corridor Review is multimodal and as such encompasses all transport modes, rather than considering road only.

This chapter sets out the problems and opportunities with the transport network in the corridor and details the approach to their identification.

3.2. Data Analysis

A wide range of data sources have been used to identify the transport related problems and opportunities in the region. Analysis of the data has also enabled problems and opportunities identified through stakeholder engagement to be evidenced to understand the real and perceived nature of feedback and comments raised. Sources of analysis have included primary data such as Scotland's Census 2011⁹³, Scottish Household Survey (SHS)⁹⁴, Business Register and Employment Survey (BRES)⁹⁵ and accident data, as well as data gathered from recent reports and studies relevant to the transport corridor. The data has been interrogated and collated making use of GIS tools and through the creation of data dashboards. Key findings from the data analysis are presented below, to evidence the problem and opportunity themes that are set out.

3.3. Stakeholder Engagement

Stakeholder engagement is an important element in the identification of problems and opportunities, as well as capturing feedback on potential interventions to address the problems and opportunities raised.

A number of stakeholder engagement activities for the A96 Corridor Review have been undertaken including a series of virtual workshops. This has consisted of:

⁹³ NRS, 2011 Census (Scotland), 2011, <https://scotlandscensus.gov.uk/>

⁹⁴ Scottish Government, Scottish Household Survey, 2017, <https://www.gov.scot/Topics/Statistics/16002>

⁹⁵ Business Register and Employment Survey, 2018, <https://www.ons.gov.uk/searchdata?q=BRES>

- Stakeholders Workshops to seek views on the problems and opportunities in the transport corridor, and capture their suggestions for potential options that would address these, in the following sessions:
 - A96 Transport Working Group
 - Environmental Stakeholders
 - A96 Transport Working Group (second session)
 - Environmental Stakeholders (second session)
 - Active Travel and Accessibility
 - Business Groups
- Public engagement through the A96 Corridor Review Online Survey undertaken in May/June 2022 to enable individuals and organisations to feed into the review process which generated 4,594 responses.

3.4. Online Survey: Reported Problems on the A96 Corridor

As part of the engagement exercise undertaken for the A96 Corridor Review, an online survey was developed to collect the views from the public and organisations on the transport issues and challenges that affect the transport corridor. Respondents were asked their opinions and views on a range of topics related to the transport network and operation throughout the region. As part of the survey, respondents were asked to consider their top three priorities based on the issues or dissatisfaction they had highlighted in the survey. Over 6,000 priorities were raised by respondents.

Some of the key recurring priorities suggested from respondents included:

- **Roads** – Improving overall journey times and reliability of journey times
- **Safety** – Improve safety of all travellers at at-grade junctions on the A96, and more widely, a lack of safe crossing points for active travel users in both rural and urban areas highlighted.
- **Cycling** – The lack of availability of safe cycling infrastructure, particularly between communities is a common concern from respondents.
- **Bus** – Frequency, reliability, cost and accessibility of bus services in the area are all identified problems.
- **Rail** – Frequency and cost were also identified as problems on the Rail network, with other submissions noting issues with physical accessibility at stations for those with mobility impairments.
- **Integration** – Integration between public transport modes was highlighted as an area that requires improvement.

More detailed information regarding the results on the online consultation survey can be found in the A96 Corridor Review Stakeholder & Public Engagement Consultation Report, available from the Transport Scotland website⁹⁶.

The information gathered from the stakeholder engagement workshops and the online consultation survey have been used to inform the identification of the transport related problems and opportunities.

3.5. Problems & Opportunities

3.5.1. Problems

The following transport-related problems have been identified for the transport appraisal study area, with supporting evidence to support the problem and opportunity themes provided in this section. The identified problem themes are:

- Safety and Resilience
- Socio-Economic and Location of Services
- Public Transport Accessibility
- Competitiveness of Public Transport with Other Modes
- Travel Choice and Behaviour
- Health and Environment

SAFETY AND RESILIENCE

Road Accidents

Analysis has identified a potential accident problem on specific urban sections of the A96. Accident rates for the A96 between Hardmuir and Craibstone Junction have been calculated for urban and rural sections for the 5-year pre-COVID-19 period of 2015 to 2019, where traffic levels are unaffected by the pandemic.

Urban areas of the A96 route are considered to be in towns where the posted speed limit is reduced from national speed limit, and includes sections through Forres, Elgin and Keith. According to the information recorded on the STATS19 data, the ratio comparing the local rate of PIAs shows that the local accident rate on the A96 is almost double (1.9 times) the national average in Keith and higher than the national average in Forres (1.3 times), but less than the national average in Elgin (0.7 times). PIA covers accidents of all severities, including fatal, serious and slight, however does not include damage only accidents.

The local/national ratio of accidents including a KSI casualty has also been compared to the national average for similar road types. KSIs are more common than the national average for multiple sections of the A96, but are very high in Keith (4.8 times) and

⁹⁶ Transport Scotland, A96 Corridor Review: Overview, 2022, <https://www.transport.gov.scot/our-approach/strategy/a96-corridor-review/#overview>

Forres (3.1 times). The rate of KSIs is also slightly greater on the A96 than the national average for the rural sections between Hardmuir and Forres (1.4 times), Fochabers and Keith (1.1 times), Keith and East of Huntly (1.3 times) and Kintore and Craibstone (1.1 times). All other sections of the A96 are below the equivalent national average for trunk A-Roads.

Accident rates suggest that there is a particular issue with road safety in the urban areas of Keith and Forres. This is both in terms of the number and severity of accidents that occur. Some rural sections also display a slightly higher than average number of KSIs than the national average. The section between Fochabers and East of Huntly is greater than the national average.

Information recorded within STATS19 contains contributing factors and the location of accidents, which suggest that “failed to look properly”, “loss of control” and “failed to judge other persons path/speed” are all a common contributing factor. Also, approximately 50% of all accidents between 2015 and 2019 occurred at or near a junction, of which almost half were at staggered or T-junctions.

Overtaking is not indicated as a major contributor to accidents in the STATS19 data, although feedback from the public consultation survey highlighted that HGVs and agricultural vehicles are a source of delay and driver frustration due to a lack of safe overtaking opportunities. As such, although the number of accidents directly involving an overtaking vehicle is relatively low, approximately 5% according to the STATS19 data for 2015 to 2019, the frustration and stress caused by slow moving vehicles may be captured within the contributory factor of “careless / reckless / in a hurry” that was recorded in approximately 20% of accidents between 2015 and 2019 on the A96.

Trunk Road Resilience

The resilience of the A96 was also highlighted as a problem during stakeholder engagement and from the desk-based data analysis undertaken. There is a noted lack of alternative options, particularly on rural sections of the route, which can result in long diversionary routes during periods of road closure. Any diversions or delay have an impact on the reliability of road-based journeys, including trips by private car, public transport and freight. Freight traffic is heavily dependent on the road to provide access to key markets and destinations, including ports and harbours across the transport appraisal study area and beyond⁹⁷. Industries such as agriculture and food and drink, in particular whisky, are important to both the regional and national economy. As these industries rely on the transport network, and in particular the road network, to transport their good to market⁹⁸, delays and diversions along the corridor can potentially have an economic impact across the region.

⁹⁷ Nestrans, Freight Gateway Interconnectivity, 2018, <https://www.nestrans.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/PORTIS-4ABZ1-Baseline-Report.pdf>

⁹⁸ HITRANS, Whisky Logistics Study, 2011, https://www.hitrans.org.uk/Documents/Whisky_Logistics_Study.pdf

Between 2016 and 2021, the trunk road maintenance company Management of Incidents (MOI) Database suggests that a section of the A96 was closed on average 24 times each year, and a total of 143 times in this six year period. Figure 38 indicates the proportion of the causes of all closures on the A96.

Causes of all Closures on the A96, 2016-21

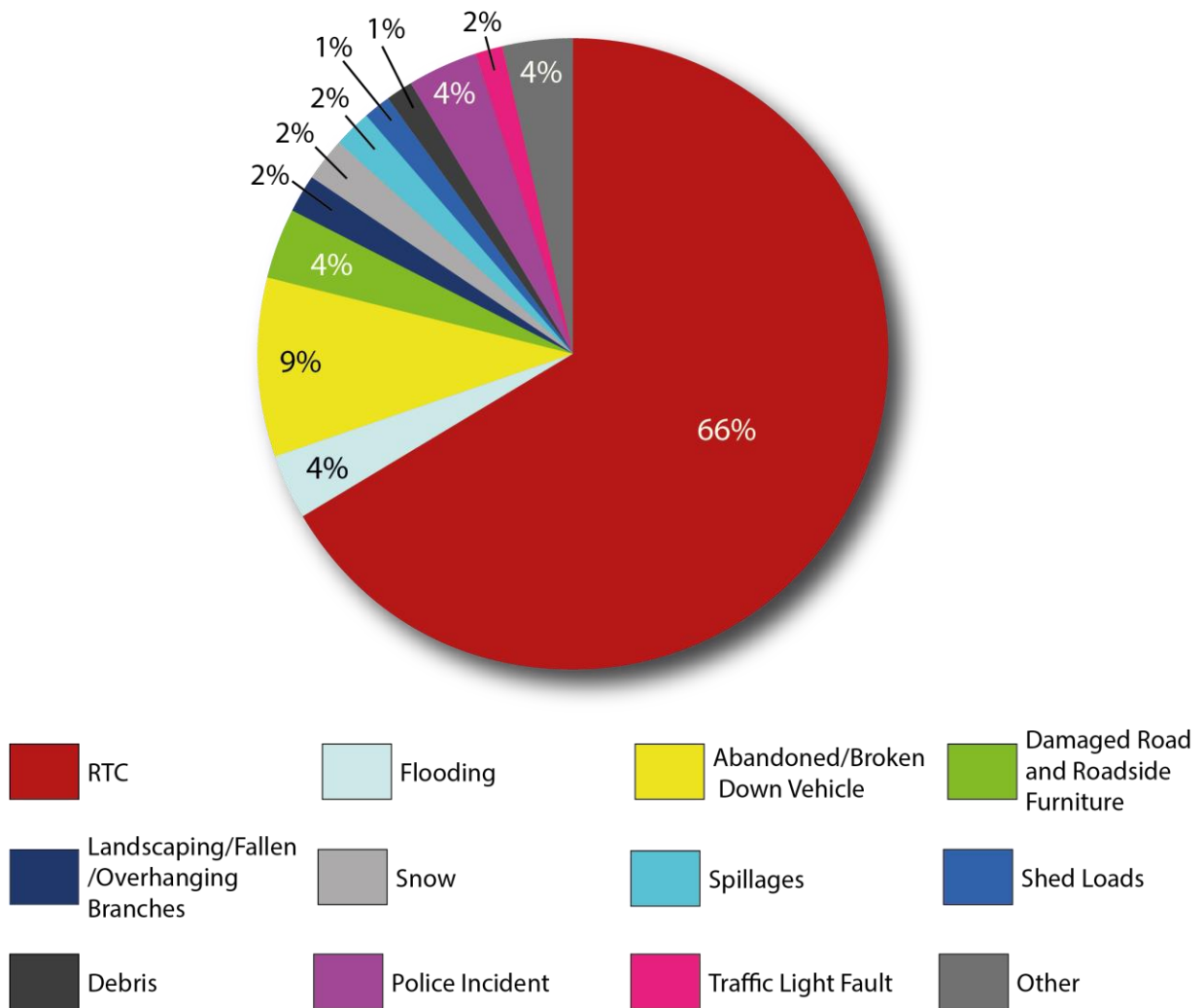


Figure 38: Causes of Closure on the A96

Road traffic collisions (RTCs)⁹⁹ are by far the most common reason for closures on the A96 according to the MOI database, causing almost two thirds of total closures between 2016 and 2021. Abandoned/broken down vehicles were responsible for almost 10% of closures. Adverse weather (Flooding and snow) was responsible for a combined 6% of closures directly, though could also be responsible for some of the other road closure causes, such as debris (1%), and landscaping/fallen/overhanging branches (2%).

Closure locations and the recommended diversion routes from the trunk road maintenance company is presented in Figure 39. A full table indicating the length of the

⁹⁹ In the context of road closures and the figure above from the MOI database, RTCs include damage only accidents without any physical harm, as well as personal injury accidents

diversion routes and the number of times each section of the road was closed, based on the MOI database between 2016 and 2021, is included in Appendix B.

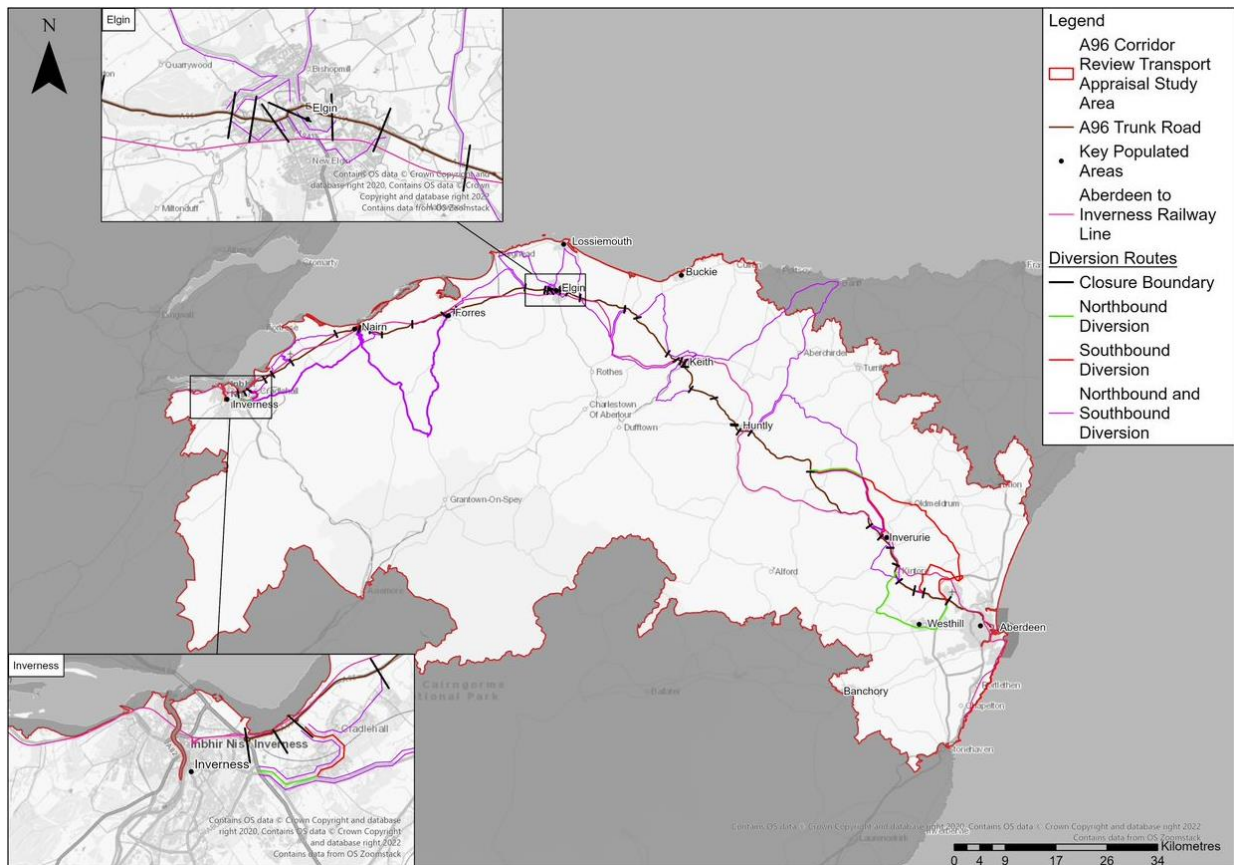


Figure 39: Recommended Diversion Routes

(Click image to enlarge figure)

The most common closures on the A96 between 2016 and 2021, and their subsequent diversion distance, were:

- Between Drimmies Junction and Colpy Junction (A920) – 16km section, closed 13 times between 2016 and 2021, with an approximate diversion length of 21km
- Between Chapel of Stoneywood and Little Clinterty Roundabout – 4.4km section, closed 11 times between 2016 and 2021, with an approximate diversion length of 18km southbound and 21km northbound
- Between Smithton Roundabout and Raigmore Interchange – 1.7km section, closed 11 times between 2016 and 2021, with an approximate diversion length of 7.4km
- Balloch to Smithton Roundabout – 3.5km section, closed 10 times between 2016 and 2021, with an approximate diversion length of 4.3km
- A97 junction East of Huntly to B9115 junction at Newtack – 19.1km section, closed nine times between 2016 and 2021, with an approximate diversion length of 65km

Some of the most common locations for an incident to occur result in the longest signed diversion routes. For example, an incident on the A96 between Huntly and Keith results in a recommended 65km diversion via Banff along the A97 and A947, which occurred on average 1.5 times a year between 2016 and 2021. Incidents in the majority of rural locations result in lengthy diversions due to the lack of suitable adjacent roads in the region.

Therefore, the number of incidents on the A96 resulting in road closures, combined with the length of diversion routes, can cause significant issues for road users across the transport appraisal study area. Delays for commercial vehicles can have a significant economic impact for businesses, resulting in lost revenue or increased costs.

Rail Resilience

Resilience on the rail network is also a problem. From the public consultation survey, one quarter of people (25%) said that they were dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with the journey time reliability of trains. As noted previously, punctuality statistics indicate that none of the busiest rail stations in the transport appraisal study area perform particularly strongly. Table 4 demonstrates the Scotrail Public Performance Measure (PPM) and on time arrivals information for all stations in the transport appraisal study area where PPM data is available, and comparators from across Scotland taken as a 12-month rolling average in November 2019¹⁰⁰, prior to COVID-19 restrictions being implemented.

Table 4: Public Performance Measure Results for Selected Rail Stations

Station	Terminating ScotRail Services on Time* (%)	All Arriving ScotRail Services on Time* (%)	PPM (Services Arriving or Terminate within five minutes of Scheduled Arrival Time) (%)
Aberdeen	63.4	64.0	79.8
Inverness	61.7	61.5	78.5
Elgin	76.2	58.2	87.1
Dyce	61.5	60.7	88.4
Inverurie	73.6	54.8	83.7
Glasgow Queen Street	39.4	39.4	82.9
Glasgow Central	55.2	55.1	93.2
Edinburgh Waverley	49.9	50.0	82.9
Dundee	48.6	49.0	80.7
Stirling	59.8	61.7	87.6

¹⁰⁰ Scotrail, Performance Update November to December 2019, 2019, <https://www.scotrail.co.uk/performance-and-reliability>

Fort William	85.3	71.6	82.7
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* On Time is defined as within 59 seconds of booked or scheduled time

In general, whilst the punctuality of services arriving or departing at stations within the transport appraisal study area do not appear particularly high, they are better or on par with many of the major rail stations across Scotland. Scotrail target for PPM at this time was 92.5%¹⁰¹, of all services to arrive within five minutes of their timetabled arrival, however; all of the stations within the transport appraisal study area did not achieve this target, which is not uncommon across Scotland.

In addition to reliability issues, sections of the railway network are prone to closure during periods of adverse weather. In December 2021, for example, services were removed between Inverness and Elgin due to the risk of flooding from Storm Barra¹⁰², and speed restrictions in February 2022 were implemented due to heavy rain, resulting in delays on journeys towards Aberdeen¹⁰³. While replacement bus services are often put into place during incidents that result in cancellations, journey times are significantly longer.

SOCIO-ECONOMIC AND LOCATION OF SERVICES

The key urban centres of Aberdeen and Inverness, situated 100 miles apart at the eastern and western end of the corridor respectively, represent the key population and employment centres within the corridor. Elgin provides a smaller but key employment area for Moray and rural north-east Scotland and is situated approximately 40 miles east of Inverness.

BRES data for 2017¹⁰⁴ highlights the importance of these areas in terms of employment locations in the transport appraisal study area. Just over half of all jobs are located in only 5% (30) of the data zones situated with the transport appraisal study area. Of those 30 data zones, 27 are located in either Aberdeen, Inverness or Elgin, with over half (18) in Aberdeen. This demonstrates the economic importance of these settlements, and in particular Aberdeen, to those residing in the corridor. With the largest proportion of employment opportunities in the region, travel distances to work in Aberdeen are generally longer than other local authorities, with commuters travelling

¹⁰¹ Scotrail, Performance and Reliability, 2022, <https://www.scotrail.co.uk/performance-and-reliability>

¹⁰² The Scotsman, Storm Barra: Train operators cancel and change services as Scotland gears up for extreme weather, 2021, <https://www.scotsman.com/news/transport/storm-barra-train-operators-cancel-and-change-services-as-scotland-gears-up-for-extreme-weather-3484713>

¹⁰³ Press and Journal, Commuters in north and north-east warned of train delays amidst heavy rain, 2022, <https://www.pressandjournal.co.uk/fp/news/aberdeen-aberdeenshire/3953823/commuters-in-north-and-north-east-warned-of-train-delays-amidst-heavy-rain/>

¹⁰⁴ Business Register and Employment Survey, 2017, <https://www.ons.gov.uk/searchdata?q=BRES>

from Aberdeenshire, Moray and Highland. Travel to work data suggests commuting results in a net increase of almost 39,000 people in Aberdeen City¹⁰⁵, with almost 43,000 people commuting from the other three local authority areas to the city¹⁰⁶.

Travel to Work¹⁰⁷ information also suggests that people are travelling longer distances to work from smaller towns than those residing in the urban centres of Aberdeen, Inverness or Elgin. Figure 40 demonstrates a summary of travel to work distances for settlements along the route.

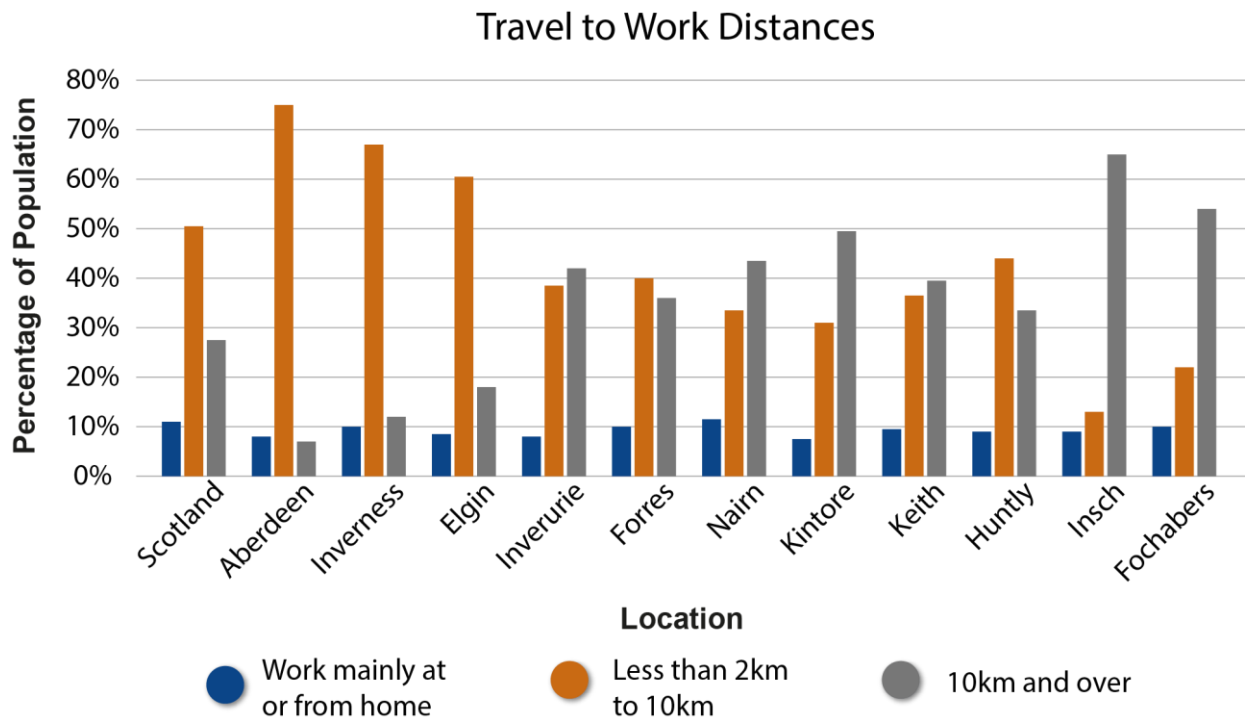


Figure 40: Distance Travelled to Work by Location

In the large urban areas of Aberdeen, Inverness and Elgin a higher proportion of the population have a travel to work distance under 10km compared to the national average. However, in the majority of towns along the corridor, the distance travelled to work is generally longer, with a larger proportion of residents travelling 10km or more. The percentage of trips with a travel to work distance greater than 10km in the three largest urban areas lies between 7% and 18%, the more rural towns have percentages in the range 30% to 50%, with individual towns such as Inch reporting a very high figure of 65%.

Making long distance trips for access to key services such as employment limits the potential for active travel (walking/wheeling and cycling) as a mode choice. A trip of 10km is anticipated to take a person approximately two hours to walk or 30 minutes to

¹⁰⁵ ONS, 2011 Census (Scotland) Location of usual residence and place of work by method of travel to work, 2011, <https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/census/2011/wu03uk/chart>

¹⁰⁶ ONS, 2011 Census (Scotland) Location of usual residence and place of work by method of travel to work, 2011, <https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/census/2011/wu03uk/chart>

¹⁰⁷ NRS, 2011 Census (Scotland) (Table QS703SC), 2011, <https://scotlandscensus.gov.uk/>

cycle. There are also physical issues with active travel use for long distances in the transport appraisal study area, such as elevation changes in rural areas that can dissuade casual cyclists.

Figure 41¹⁰⁸ shows the travel distances by mode of transport for the LAs in the transport appraisal study area. Note that the data in this figure is for whole LA areas and not just the data zones within the transport appraisal study area boundary.

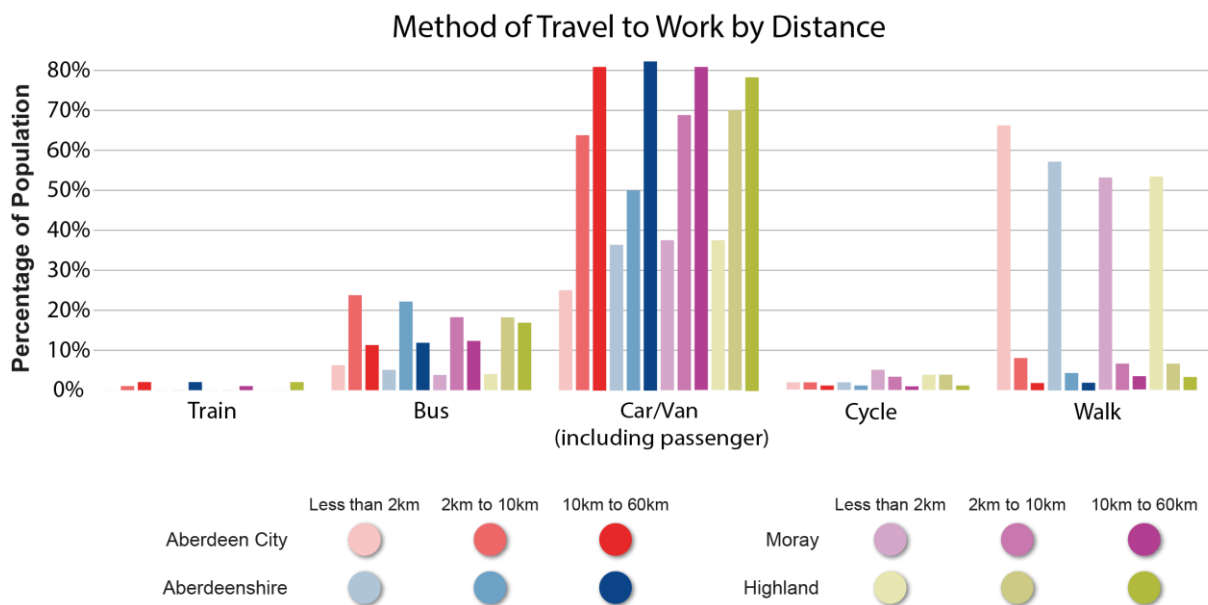


Figure 41: Method of Travel to Work by Distance for LAs

For a travel to work distance of less than 2km, over 50% of trips are made by walking in each LA. However, for trips between 2km and 10km, this reduces significantly to between 4% and 8% per LA, and even further for trips over 10km. Cycling is used for less than 5% of journeys in each LA no matter the distance of trip, though is lower for trips over 10km.

Outside of Aberdeen, almost 40% of journeys to work 2km or less are made by private vehicle. It is therefore evident that there is a reliance on private vehicles for journey to work of all distances, however this increases in line with journey distance as the opportunity for walking and cycling reduces.

PUBLIC TRANSPORT ACCESSIBILITY

Due to the rural nature of the majority of the transport appraisal study area, the geographic spread of the population and the concentration of employment and other key services in Aberdeen, Inverness and Elgin, it is challenging to provide an extensive and inclusive public transport network. The distances between the three largest areas only serves to add to this challenge.

¹⁰⁸ NRS, 2011 Census (Scotland), 2011, <https://www.scotlandscensus.gov.uk/>

As bus service provisions in the region are commercial enterprises, services are only provided if they are commercially viable. As such, subsidies are provided by local authorities to ensure key services can operate, however funding for these services continues to come under pressure. The suburbs and settlements close to Aberdeen and Inverness are well connected by bus via the radial routes, however the more rural towns are less well connected, with less frequent bus services travelling to the cities along the A96. Connections between the cities are provided via both bus and rail, with the frequency of rail services, which also serve all the towns on the A96 corridor, limited by long single-track sections. In many cases for public transport, services between the rural settlements and Aberdeen and Inverness serve a limited number of stops within the cities, meaning a change is required to make onward journeys.

The more rural areas within the transport appraisal study area are not as well served by public transport, with problems around service quality, accessibility and reliability, in addition to lower frequencies and service availability, leading to lower bus mode share in these areas. The travel to work mode share for bus¹⁰⁹ for Aberdeen, Inverness and Elgin is presented alongside the accessible small towns average and remote small towns average in Figure 42.

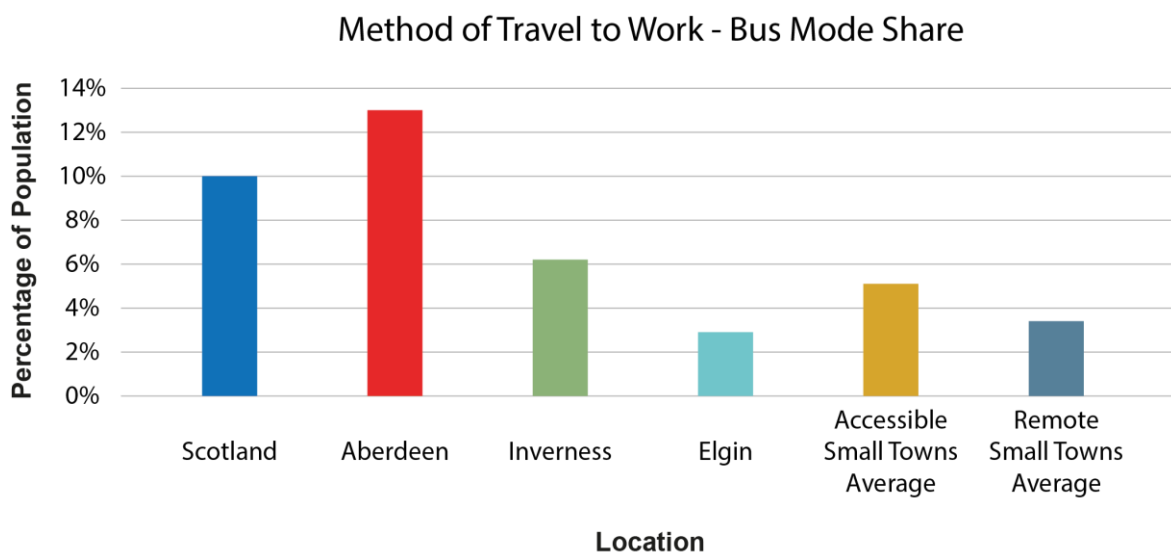


Figure 42: Bus Mode Share for Travel to Work

Outside of Aberdeen, the use of bus for travel to work is very low, with most areas demonstrating a considerably lower percentage of bus travel than the national average Scotland (10%). This is true in Inverness (6%) and Elgin (3%), as well as in the accessible small towns, which include Nairn (5%) and Lossiemouth (6%), and the remote small towns, which include Keith (4%) and Huntly (4%).

¹⁰⁹ NRS, 2011 Census (Scotland), 2011, <https://scotlandscensus.gov.uk/>

The Scottish Accessibility to Bus Indicator (SABI)¹¹⁰ highlights the relative lack of accessibility for most in the transport appraisal study area to bus. Figure 43 shows the SABI bus accessibility for the corridor ranked into deciles (10% bands) showing relative performance against all data zones in Scotland. Note that the higher deciles represent better accessibility to bus.

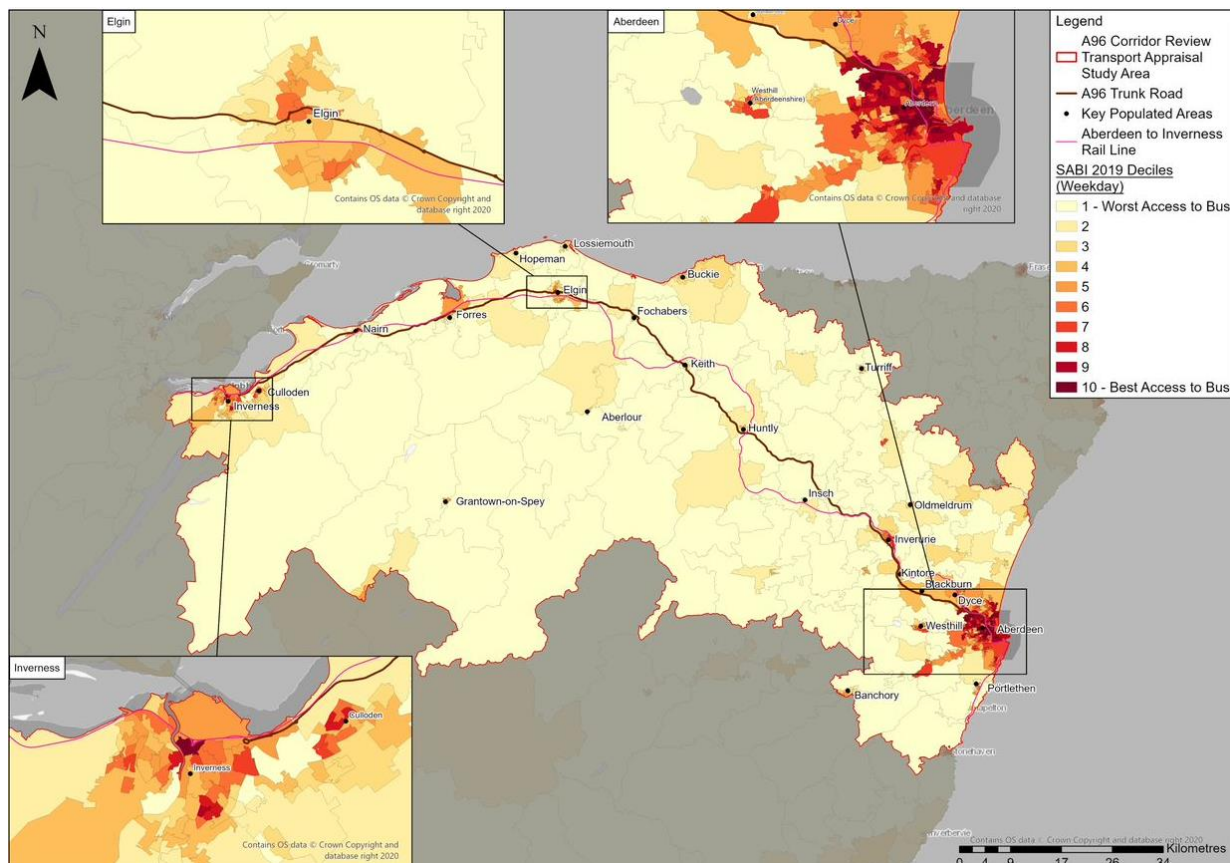


Figure 43: Scottish Accessibility to Bus Indicator – A96 Corridor Review Transport Appraisal Study Area

(Click image to enlarge figure)

Figure 43 shows that the rural areas between the cities and towns all rank in the lower end for bus accessibility, with many in the bottom 20% of data zones for bus accessibility in comparison to the rest of Scotland. This is consistent with the public consultation perception that there is a lack of service provision across the transport appraisal study area, and results in low bus patronage as services do not provide access to key services.

Aberdeen generally has good access to bus services and the majority of data zones are ranked in the top half for Scotland. However, this trend does not continue outside the

¹¹⁰ Transport Scotland, Scottish Access to Bus Indicator (SABI), 2019, <https://statistics.gov.scot/data/bus-accessibility>

city boundary, with fewer higher ranked zones in Kintore, Inverurie and Oldmeldrum for example.

The SABI data suggests accessibility of bus services is not as great in the west of the corridor as they are in Aberdeen. The SABI ranking for data zones within Inverness is similar to the Scottish average, and accessibility in Elgin lower than average. The accessible, commutable towns of Nairn and Forres in the west also generally have very poor bus accessibility, with all data zones in these areas ranking in the bottom 50% nationally.

Feedback from the public consultation has also indicated a lack of integration between public transport modes, through integrated timetables or combined tickets for example, which also affect the attractiveness of public transport. As the main services between settlements generally only serve key stops within each town or city, interchange between services and modes is often required. This comes at an additional cost to users and requires additional time to interchange.

There is a lack of public transport accessibility for locations across the transport appraisal study area, including both the rural and remote rural areas and towns. National Public Transport Accessibility Tool (NaPTAT) results considering the public transport network in 2022, highlight the proportion of population who cannot reach key services within a particular journey time.

Table 5 shows the proportion of the population who live within 30 minutes travel time by public transport of key services, and Table 6 shows the proportion of population within two hours of key services.

Table 5: Accessibility to Key Services by Public Transport in under 30 minutes

Area	Total Population of Area (16+)	Emergency Department Hospital	GP	Higher Education	Large Food Store	Shopping Centre	High School
A96 Corridor Review Transport Appraisal Study Area	456,943	36%	80%	47%	76%	53%	64%
Aberdeen City	193,271	57%	99%	74%	89%	85%	87%
Aberdeenshire	106,556	1%	46%	3%	51%	10%	52%
Moray	79,673	22%	68%	27%	67%	19%	38%
Highland	77,443	46%	88%	58%	87%	68%	67%

Across the transport appraisal study area, almost two thirds of the population cannot access an emergency department and approximately 50% cannot access higher education within half an hour, using public transport. Similarly, although less pronounced, over a third of pupils cannot access a high school and one fifth of people cannot access a General Practitioner (GP) within 30 minutes. Taking the total population of the transport appraisal study area, this means approximately 294,000

people are not within a 30 minute public transport journey of an emergency department and approximately 93,000 cannot reach a GP surgery.

Aberdeenshire shows the lowest percentage of key services able to be accessed within 30 minutes. For example, only 3% of the population can reach a higher education facility, just 1% have access to an emergency department hospital within 30 mins, and approximately half of residents have access to a GP surgery, high school or large food store within this journey time. Moray also shows a lower percentage of the population able to access key services within 30 minutes. This suggests that the travel distances and journey times by public transport to access key facilities restricts patronage and encourages private car trips, particularly in Aberdeenshire and Moray.

Table 6: Accessibility to Key Services by Public Transport in under two hours

Location	Total Population of Area (16+)	Emergency Department Hospital	GP	Higher Education	Large Food Store	Shopping Centre	High School
A96 Corridor Review Transport Appraisal Study Area	456,943	86%	89%	86%	89%	84%	86%
Aberdeen City	193,271	98%	99%	99%	99%	99%	98%
Aberdeenshire	106,556	67%	73%	64%	74%	60%	72%
Moray	79,673	79%	81%	75%	81%	73%	73%
Highland	77,443	91%	96%	94%	95%	92%	95%

Across the transport appraisal study area, over 10% of the population cannot access key services including an emergency department hospital, GP surgery or higher education facility within two hours. This equates to approximately 50,000 people within the transport appraisal study area having a public transport journey time of over two hours to these services, or are unable to access a public transport node (stop or station) within typical walking behaviour¹¹¹. Public Transport accessibility is generally higher in both Aberdeen City and Highland as the cities of Aberdeen and Inverness have better transport provision than the rural areas. As a result a higher proportion of people can travel to these key services within a two hour public transport journey time.

In Aberdeenshire, approximately one third of the population cannot access an emergency department by public transport within two hours, and over a quarter cannot access a GP surgery. Moray similarly has a relatively low level of public transport accessibility within a two hour journey time, with approximately one fifth of people not being able to access an emergency department, GP surgery or large food store by public transport. Furthermore, approximately 75% of pupils in both Aberdeenshire and Moray have access to a high school within a two hour public transport journey time.

¹¹¹ Maximum walking thresholds applied to public transport nodes (stops and stations); 800m to bus stops and 1600m to bus and train stations.

Some rail stations in the transport appraisal study area are not accessible to the mobility impaired or those travelling with children in push chairs, with Inch, Huntly, Nairn and Inverurie along the Aberdeen to Inverness line not being completely step-free according to National Rail Enquiries station information¹¹². Stakeholder Engagement completed as part of appraisal work for improving accessibility at Inch demonstrated that the public is dissuaded from using the railway at Inch because in the northbound direction the platform is not step free¹¹³.

COMPETITIVENESS OF PUBLIC TRANSPORT WITH OTHER MODES

Bus journey times are not competitive with other modes for journeys along the corridor, however rail is generally more competitive than car, as shown in Figure 44^{114,115,116} for journey times between Aberdeen and Inverness in both directions, with eastbound journey times shown in green and westbound journey times shown in red. Figure 45 shows a breakdown by section between the settlements on the A96 trunk road for car and bus.

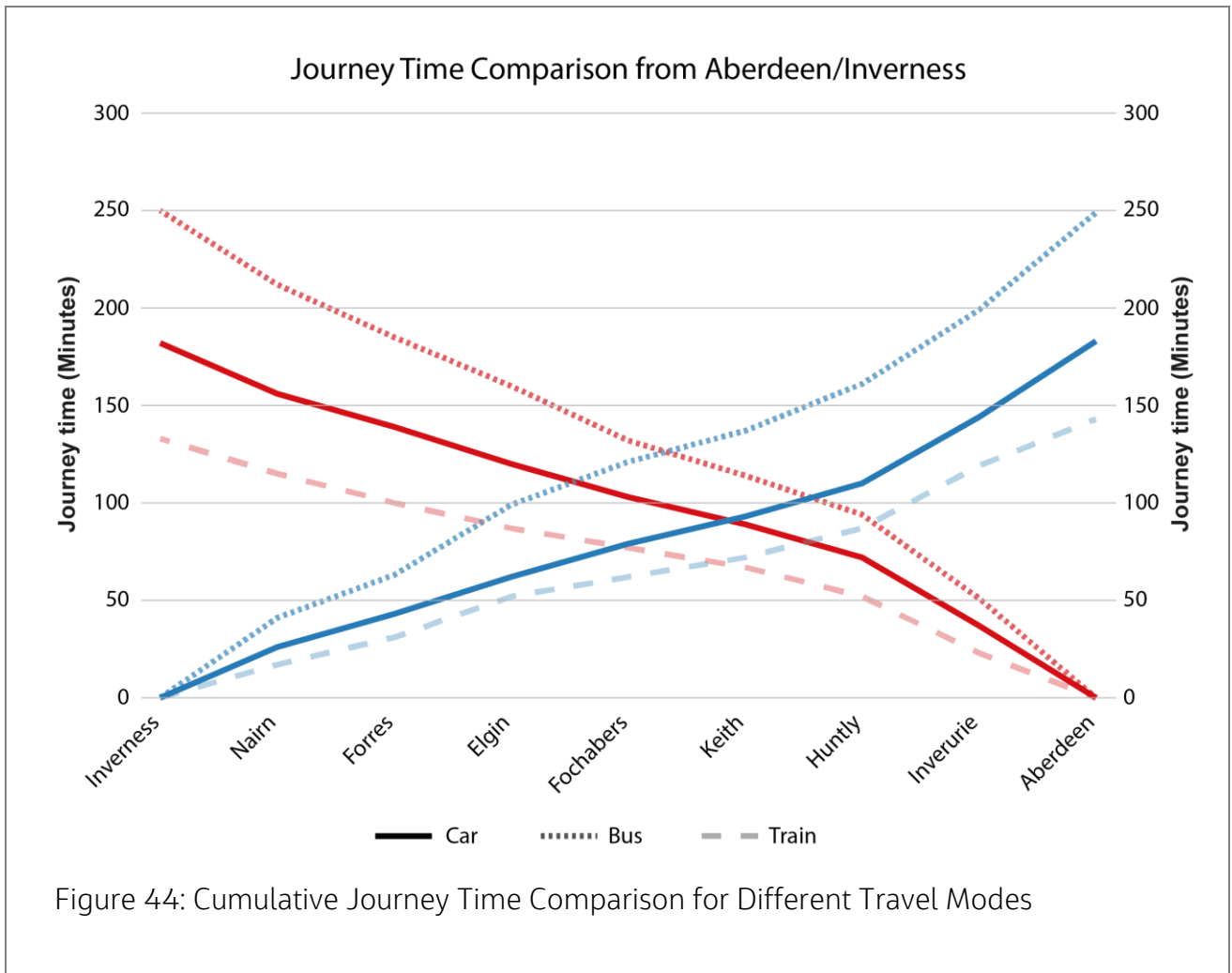
¹¹² National Rail Enquiries, National Rail Stations, 2022, https://www.nationalrail.co.uk/stations_destinations/default.aspx

¹¹³ AECOM, Improving Accessibility at Inch Station, 2020, https://www.nestrans.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/2020_04_24_Accessibility-at-Inch_Preliminary-Appraisal-and-Appendices.pdf

¹¹⁴ Scotrail, Inverness-Aberdeen Train Times, 2022, <https://www.scotrail.co.uk/plan-your-journey/timetables>

¹¹⁵ Stagecoach, Plan A Journey, 2022, <https://www.stagecoachbus.com/plan-a-journey>

¹¹⁶ Google, Google Maps, 2022, <https://www.google.com/maps>



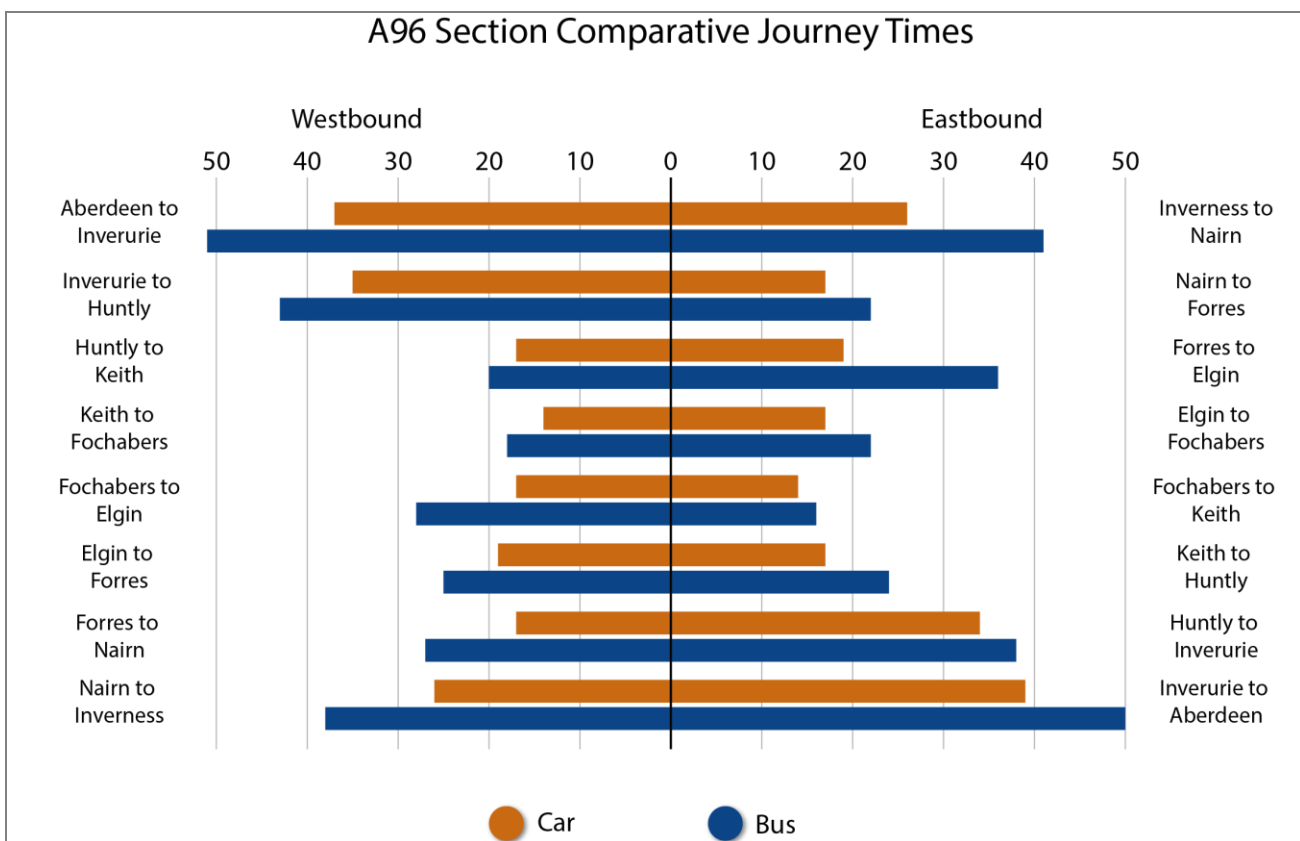


Figure 45: Sectional Journey Time Comparison for Different Travel Modes

Figure 44 and Figure 45 highlight that bus travel is significantly slower than car. For travel between the two cities, bus timetables show a journey time of over four hours, whereas for car a typical trip would take approximately one hour less. Looking at the individual sections of the route, bus journey times are generally similar to car in the rural areas, but as they approach the larger settlements, a greater differential in journey time occurs, making long distance bus travel less attractive along the corridor.

Engagement with the bus operator Stagecoach, who run a regular service along the A96 between Aberdeen and Inverness, has highlighted a series of problems that face buses along the corridor. A common theme of these problems is the impact of congestion, highlighted to be worst at traditional peak commuting times by Stagecoach causing delays to services. This was noted at sections in Inverurie, Elgin, Nairn and on approach to Inverness. Congestion and bus journey time reliability was also highlighted in feedback from the online survey responses. Of those who answered and deemed it applicable, 80% of respondents reported that they were either dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with the level of traffic congestion on the A96, and 53% reported dissatisfaction with bus journey time reliability specifically, which is directly affected by congestion.

Rail does not suffer from the same issues as bus, with journey times for rail services quicker than private vehicles, as demonstrated in Figure 44, where a journey between

Aberdeen and Inverness is approximately 40-50 minutes quicker by rail in the AM peak hour.

Rail delays and cancellations for October to November 2019¹¹⁷ indicate a lack of reliability in rail services. Aberdeen is by far the most popular rail station in the transport appraisal study area, however only 79.8% of all trains arrived within five minutes of their booked arrival time in this period. Inverness similarly only had just under 78.5% of trains within five minutes of their scheduled arrival. This compares to 88.3% for Scotland overall. Elgin (87.1%) and Dyce (88.4%) performed significantly better and equivalent to the national average in this period, but Inverurie had a percentage of only 83.7%, almost 5% below the national average. As such, the network has clear issues with reliability that is likely to deter travellers from using rail often.

The trend of rail patronage on the Aberdeen to Inverness line indicates a drop in passengers in recent years, though this may also have been affected by rail improvement works in 2018 and 2019¹¹⁸ and the development of new stations at Kintore and Dalcross for Inverness Airport. Nonetheless, the mode share of rail for trips and the negative trend in patronage between 2016/17¹¹⁹ and 2019/20¹²⁰, as shown in Figure 46 is indicative of the problems facing rail in the transport appraisal study area.

¹¹⁷ Scotrail, Performance Update October to November 2019, 2019,
<https://www.scotrail.co.uk/performance-and-reliability>

¹¹⁸ Rail Engineer, Finishing the Job – Redoubling Aberdeen to Inverurie, 2019,
<https://www.railengineer.co.uk/finishing-the-job-redoubling-aberdeen-to-inverurie/>

¹¹⁹ Office of Road and Rail, Annual estimates of the number of entries/exits and interchanges at each station in Great Britain, Table 1415, 2016/2017,
<https://dataportal.orr.gov.uk/statistics/usage/estimates-of-station-usage>

¹²⁰ Office of Road and Rail, Annual estimates of the number of entries/exits and interchanges at each station in Great Britain, Table 1415, 2019/2020,
<https://dataportal.orr.gov.uk/statistics/usage/estimates-of-station-usage>

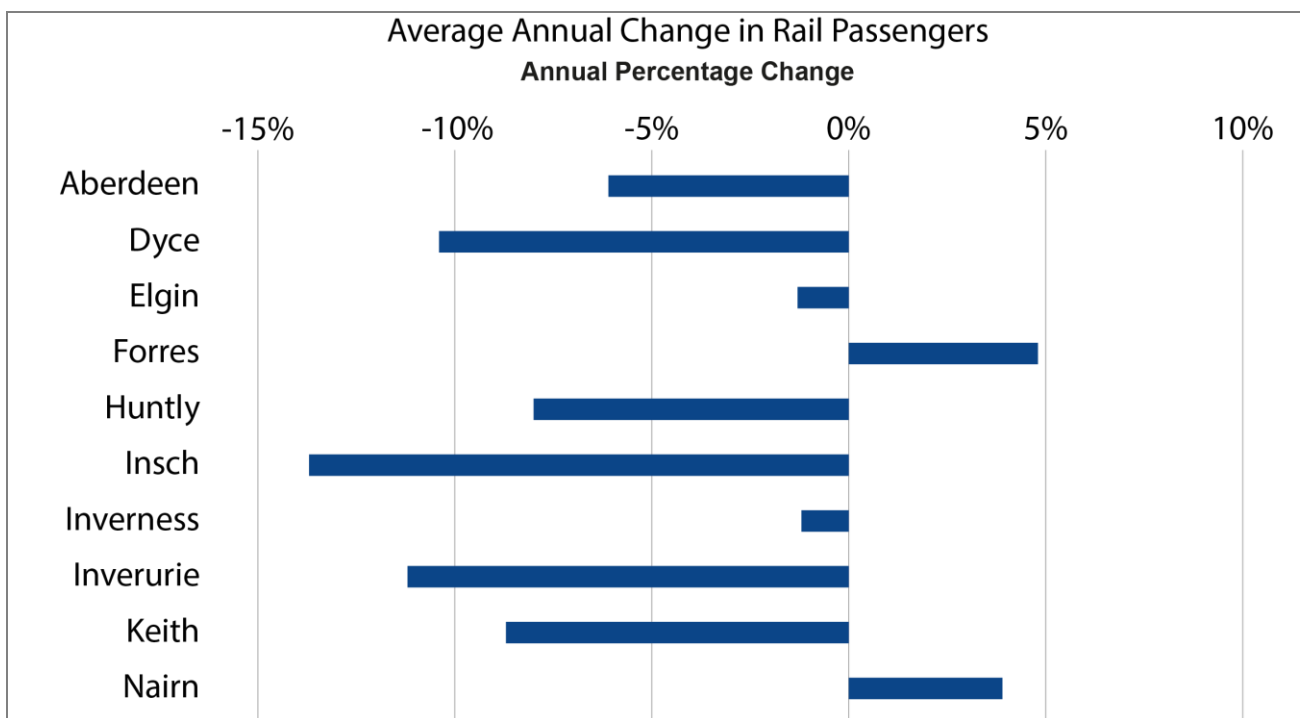


Figure 46: Average Annual Change in Rail Station Entry and Exits between 2016 and 2020

Outside of Forres and Nairn, all other stations on the Aberdeen to Inverness line have shown an annual decline in passengers in recent years, prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. Inch, Dyce and Inverurie have seen the largest passenger reductions, in excess of 10% per year on average for the three years considered. Inverness and Elgin are showing a much slower reduction, approximately 1% per year on average.

The cost of travel is another problem facing public transport. The public consultation survey for the A96 Corridor Review revealed that just over three quarters of respondents (75%) were dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with the cost of rail travel and just over half were dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with the cost of bus travel. Public consultation as part of the NESTRANS Regional Transport Strategy (RTS) revealed that the perceived high cost of public transport was a key issue for the region¹²¹. The NESTRANS RTS also highlighted that only 49% of people in the region stated they were satisfied or very satisfied with the value of money for their bus journey in 2019, whereas satisfaction levels for Scotland as a whole was 71% (for 2018).

The HITRANS region has also picked up on the issue of rising costs affecting public transport. The 2016 Main Issues Report¹²² noted that public transport fares had

¹²¹ NESTRANS, Regional Transport Strategy for the North East of Scotland, 2021, https://www.nestrans.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/Nestrans-RTS_PUBLISHED.pdf

¹²² HITRANS, HITRANS Regional Transport Strategy Re-Fresh – Main Issues Report April 2016, 2016, https://hitrans.org.uk/userfiles/file/Regional_Transport_Strategy_Refresh_Main_Issues_Report.pdf

increased 18% over the previous five years, and that where there are gaps in the network, people without access to a car often have to rely on taxis which are even more expensive.

Table 7 demonstrates equivalent monthly costs for three journeys across the transport appraisal study area by rail, bus and car. Prices derived from Scotrail website¹²³ (March 2022), Stagecoach website¹²⁴ (March 2022), and UK Government Advisory Fuel Rates¹²⁵ (March 2022). Public transport costs are taken for a monthly pass and car cost assumes 20 trips per month in an unleaded petrol fuelled car with an engine size under 1400cc.

Table 7: Average Monthly Costs for Travel by Mode

Route	Bus	Rail	Car
Inverness to Aberdeen	£150	£698.20	£546
Elgin to Inverness	£122.50	£311.90	£204.36
Inverurie to Aberdeen	£90	£156	£90.48

Note that the prices in this table do not account for discounts such as railcards, student discounts or National Entitlement Cards. Car costs only include fuel and do not account for other cost including insurance, tax, maintenance and parking charges.

For longer distance travel, bus compares favourably to car but travel times and service provision, as already discussed, are key barriers. For shorter trips, such as the commuter journey between Inverurie and Aberdeen, the price of car travel is similar that of bus.

The price of rail travel, without applying any discounts due to railcards, is higher than the estimated cost of fuel for driving (based on the assumptions stated above). Coupled with the issues regarding reliability, this restricts the competitiveness of the mode.

TRAVEL CHOICE AND BEHAVIOUR

The rurality of much of the transport appraisal study area, centralisation of key services in the larger urban economic centres, and the lack of competitive public transport means that many in the region choose to use car as their predominant mode of transport. This is most apparent in the rural areas that surround the economic centres. Figure 47 shows the proportion of homes in each data zone within the transport appraisal study area that do not have access to a car or van¹²⁶.

¹²³ Scotrail, 2022, <https://www.buytickets.scotrail.co.uk/>

¹²⁴ Stagecoach, Tickets, 2022, <https://www.stagecoachbus.com/tickets>

¹²⁵ HM Revenue and Customs, Advisory Fuel Rates, 2022, <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/advisory-fuel-rates>

¹²⁶ NRS, 2011 Census (Scotland), 2011, <https://scotlandscensus.gov.uk/>

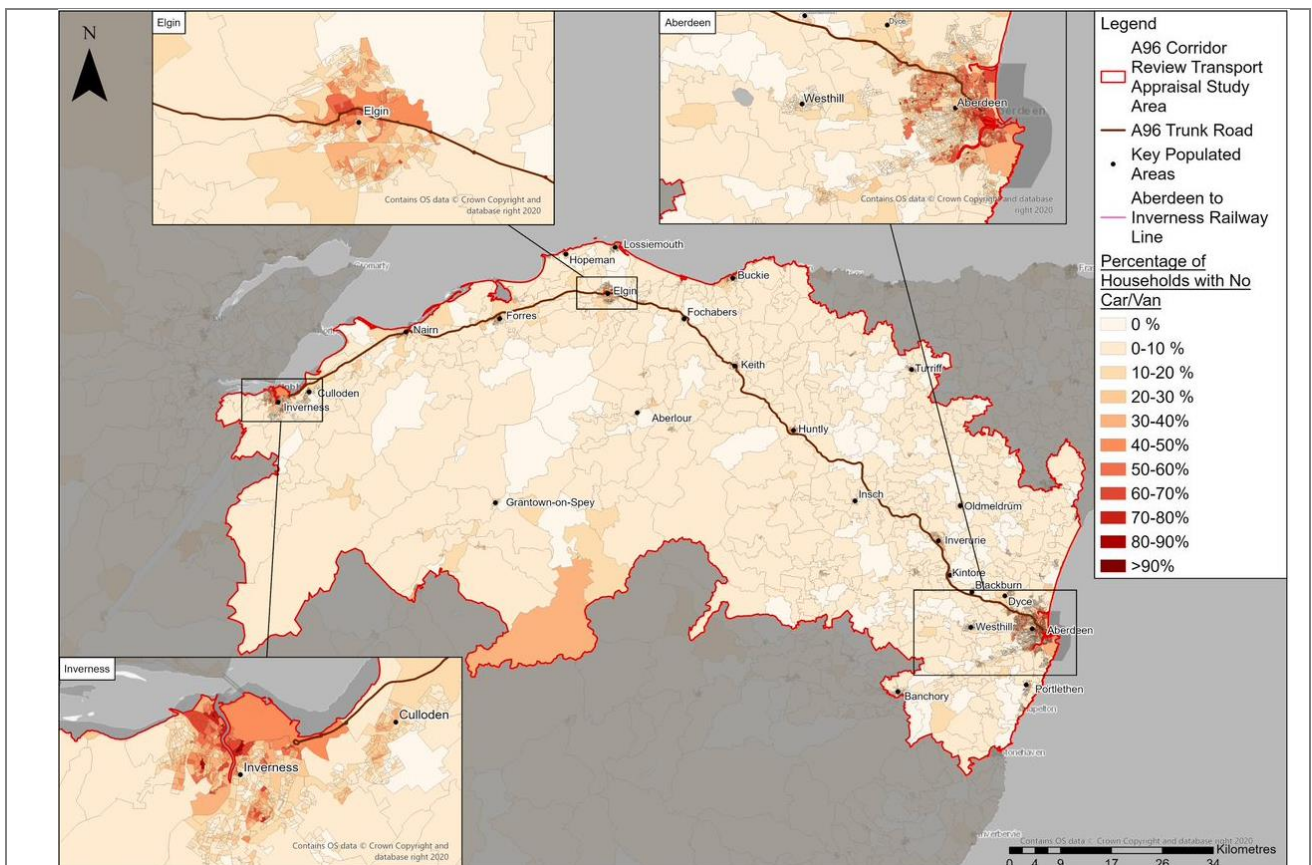


Figure 47: Percentage of Households with no car/van in the Transport Appraisal Study Area

(Click image to enlarge figure)

Access to private vehicles is very high across the transport appraisal study area. Approximately 78% of data zones in the transport appraisal study area have access to at least one vehicle, which is nine percentage points higher than the national average (69%)¹²⁷. The vast majority (70%) of data zones in the transport appraisal study area that do not have access to at least one car are located in Aberdeen, reflecting the very high availability of vehicles in the rest of the transport appraisal study area.

Communities in Aberdeenshire generally have a greater accessibility to private vehicles than the other Local Authorities in the region. In Aberdeenshire, 90% of households have access to at least one car or van whereas the average for the whole transport appraisal study area is 78%¹²⁸, with Moray having the second highest access at 81%. Cross-referencing this information with the location of key services and employment (see Socio-Economic and Location of Services problem above) indicates a high volume of vehicle trips around the eastern section of the route, towards Aberdeen, on both the A96 and other routes, as people use car to access Aberdeen for employment, education, health services and other key services.

Private vehicle accessibility is generally lowest in the larger urban areas of Aberdeen, Inverness and Elgin, reflecting the fact that public transport provision is generally better

in these areas and key services are generally geographically closer to residents, increasing the viable modes of travel available, including active transport. As shown in the travel to work data from Census 2011¹²⁹, combined walking and cycling in Aberdeen and Inverness are 19% and 22% respectively, notably higher than the Scotland average (11%) and wider LAs in general, particularly Aberdeenshire (9%).

Travel distances to key services is a key factor in the high levels of car accessibility, with private vehicles often the only viable mode of travel and perceived as the most convenient method of travel. The issues mentioned previously in this report of poor public transport accessibility, evidenced with NaPTAT data, long travel distances to employment destinations and a dispersed population across rural areas are major contributory factors to the high accessibility of private vehicles in the transport appraisal study area, exacerbated by the centralisation of key services to the large urban areas.

Analysis of key vehicle Origin-Destination patterns across the transport appraisal study area demonstrates that internal trips within Aberdeen, Inverness and Elgin are also highly likely to be made by car¹³⁰. Over 6,600 trips are made solely within Elgin, of which over 63% are made by car¹³¹. This is despite end-to-end trips across Elgin being within a suggested one hour journey time for walking, and 15 minutes for cycling. Therefore, the usage of cars is still high even where ownership is not as high as in rural areas.

Population statistics demonstrate significant more growth in over 65s than under 16s¹³² (refer to Figure 8). Figure 48 demonstrates the relationship between age and method of travel to work. Note that this covers whole LA areas and not just the data zones within the transport appraisal study area.

¹²⁷ NRS, 2011 Census (Scotland), 2011, <https://scotlandscensus.gov.uk/>

¹²⁸ NRS, 2011 Census (Scotland), 2011, <https://scotlandscensus.gov.uk/>

¹²⁹ NRS, 2011 Census (Scotland), 2011, <https://scotlandscensus.gov.uk/>

¹³⁰ NRS, 2011 Census (Scotland), 2011, <https://scotlandscensus.gov.uk/>

¹³¹ NRS, 2011 Census (Scotland), 2011, <https://scotlandscensus.gov.uk/>

¹³² National Records of Scotland, Time Series Data, 2021, <https://www.nrscotland.gov.uk/statistics-and-data/statistics/statistics-by-theme/population/population-estimates/small-area-population-estimates-2011-data-zone-based/time-series>

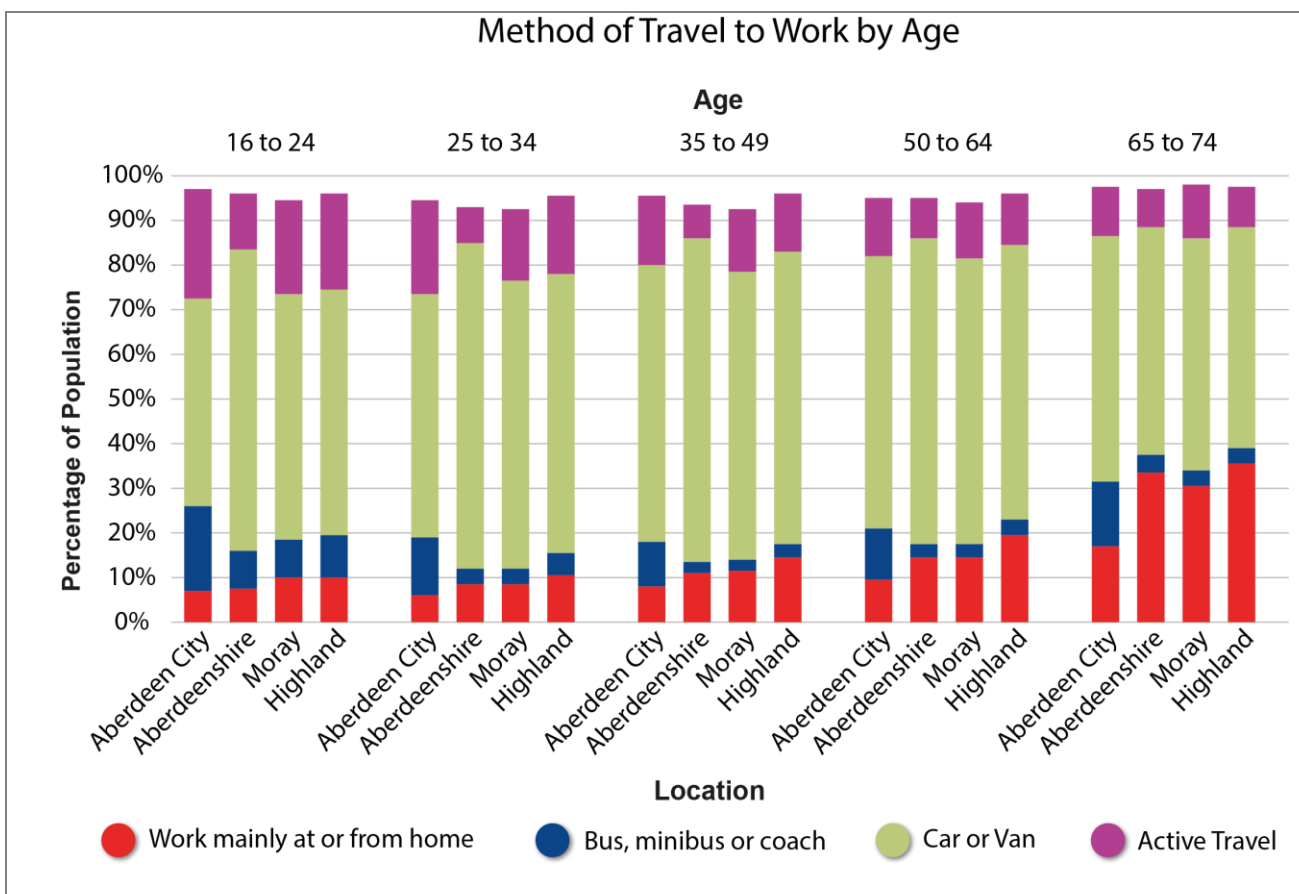


Figure 48: Method of Travel to Work by Age for Local Authorities

Older workers are less likely to use active travel for trips to work, with the percentage of people travelling actively reducing in line with age. The proportion of active travel trips decreases by between nine percentage points and 13 percentage points for Aberdeen City, Moray and Highland, and four percentage points in Aberdeenshire when comparing those aged 16 to 24 with 65 to 74, with a steady decline evident in the intervening age categories. Car travel to work is most common in the 35 to 49 and 50 to 64 age ranges, though is high across all age groups. Aberdeenshire has the highest proportion of people driving to work, with over 70% of people aged 25 to 34 and 35 to 49 using a car.

Workers aged 65 to 74 do so more from home, but those that do travel are likely to use a car, with approximately 45% to 50% of people in this age range driving to work across the four LAs. As such, this data suggests that as people get older, they are more likely to drive to work rather than use active travel or public transport¹³³.

This trend is potentially linked to the physical conditions of older people which may restrict long distance active travel, and result in a heavier reliance on motorised transport. This coupled with the limited public transport availability in certain areas of the transport appraisal study area is resulting in a reliance on private car, particularly for those aged over 65. With almost 20% of the population within the transport appraisal

¹³³ NRS, 2011 Census (Scotland), 2011, <https://scotlandscensus.gov.uk/>

study area aged 65 or over¹³⁴, and evidence suggesting an ageing population in recent years, car dependency is likely to further increase in the future without intervention.

HEALTH AND ENVIRONMENT

Transport makes a significant contribution to total Carbon Dioxide (CO₂) emissions, as well as having local air quality impacts from substances such as particulates and Nitrogen Oxides that can affect personal health. The proportion of transport related CO₂ emissions across the four LAs that make up the transport appraisal study area is shown in Figure 49¹³⁵. Note this is for the whole LAs and not just the area within the study boundary; this relates to Aberdeenshire and Highland.

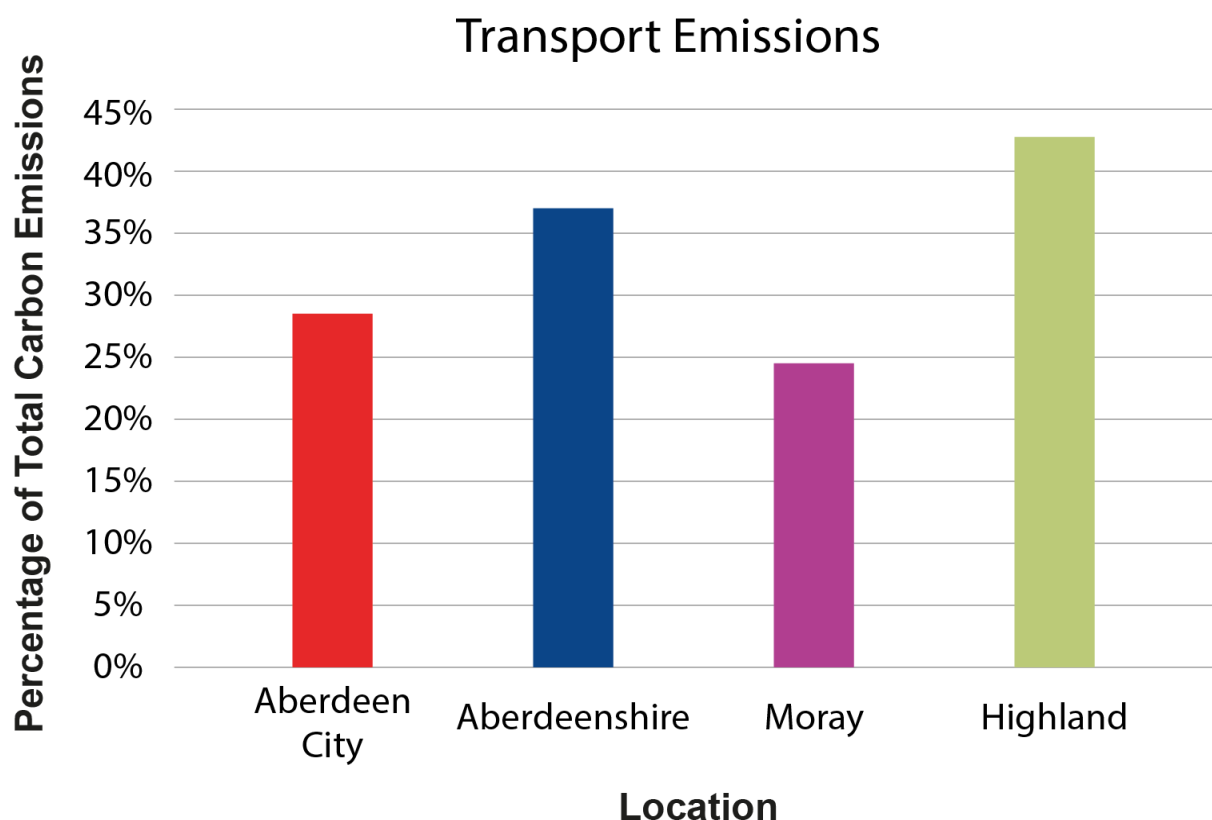


Figure 49: Contribution of Transport to Carbon Emissions

Highland has a much greater share of transport CO₂ emissions, most likely due to the rural nature and requirement to travel far distances to access key services from locations outside of the transport appraisal study area.

Aberdeenshire has a high proportion of car trips, contributing to the high transport emissions (37%) as a percentage of carbon emissions for the LA. Aberdeenshire also

¹³⁴ National Records of Scotland, 2021, Population Estimates Summary (Current Geographic Boundaries), <https://statistics.gov.scot/resource?uri=http%3A%2F%2Fstatistics.gov.scot%2Fdata%2Fpopulation-estimates-2011-datazone-linked-dataset>

¹³⁵ National Atmospheric Emissions Inventory, CO₂ Interactive Map, 2019, <https://naei.beis.gov.uk/laco2app/>

has a high kiloton (kt) per head of population at 2.4kt per head, just below the figure of 2.5kt in Highland, but greater than the 1.6kt in Moray and 1.4kt per head in Aberdeen.

Transport related emissions are exacerbated in the region by high car ownership, with only 22% of households in the transport appraisal study area having no access to a car or van, compared to the national average of 31%¹³⁶. Aberdeenshire in particular has very high car ownership in the transport appraisal study area, with 90% of households having access to a vehicle. Larger settlements including Inverness (71%), Elgin (75%) and Inverurie (81%) all have a percentage of households with access to at least one vehicle greater than the national average (69%)¹³⁷. Over a third of households across the whole transport appraisal study area own more than one car (35%), compared to 27% for Scotland as a whole¹³⁸.

The Highland Council and Moray Council have both declared a Climate Emergency and committed to reducing their emissions with the creation of dedicated groups and panels within the full councils to monitor progress. The Highland Council has set a target of being carbon neutral by 2025¹³⁹, and Moray Council has set the same goal but by 2030¹⁴⁰. Despite not having declared a Climate Emergency, Aberdeen City have also set out a Climate Change Plan with a "Net Zero Vision" by 2045¹⁴¹. Similarly, Aberdeenshire Council has set a target to reduce emissions by 75% in 2030 (from a 2010/11 baseline) and Net Zero by 2045¹⁴². With transport a key contributor to emissions and the predominance of travel by private car in these council areas and across the wider

¹³⁶ NRS, 2011 Census (Scotland), 2011, <https://www.scotlandscensus.gov.uk/>

¹³⁷ NRS, 2011 Census (Scotland), 2011, <https://www.scotlandscensus.gov.uk/>

¹³⁸ NRS, 2011 Census (Scotland), 2011, <https://www.scotlandscensus.gov.uk/>

¹³⁹ The Highland Council, Agendas, Reports and Minutes – Thursday 9th May 2019, 2019, https://www.highland.gov.uk/meetings/meeting/4119/highland_council/attachment/75435

¹⁴⁰ Moray Council, Minute of Special Meeting of the Moray Council – Thursday 27th June 2019, 2019, <https://moray.cmis.uk.com/moray/Document.ashx?czJKcaeAi5tUFL1DTL2UE4zNRBcoShgo=tSmeO2Dd2wnfqntaDk7QP6ZTf7Igt8FfTdR7nHXCPOefkEtRa6AEtg%3d%3d&rUzWRP%2bZ3zd4E7lkn8Lyw%3d%3d=pwRE6AGJFLDNlh225F5QMaQWCtPHwdhUfCZ%2fLUQzgA2uL5jNRG4jdQ%3d%3d&mCTIbCubSfXsDGW9IXnlq%3d%3d=hFfUdN3100%3d&kCx1AnS9%2fpWZQ40DXFvdEw%3d%3d=hFfUdN3100%3d&uJovDxwdjMPoYv%2bAJvYtyA%3d%3d=ctNJff55vVA%3d&FgPIIEJYlotS%2bYGoBi5oLA%3d%3d=NHdURQburHA%3d&d9QjjOag1Pd993jsyOJqFvmyB7X0CSQK=ctNJff55vVA%3d&WGewmoAfeNR9xqBux0r1Q8Za60lavYmz=ctNJff55vVA%3d&WGewmoAfeNQ16B2MHuCPMRKZMwaG1PaO=ctNJff55vVA%3d>

¹⁴¹ Aberdeen City Council, Council Climate Change Plan 2021-2025, 2021, <https://www.aberdeencity.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2021-10/Council%20Climate%20Change%20Plan%202021-25%20Towards%20a%20Net%20Zero%20and%20Climate%20Resilient%20Council.pdf.pdf>

¹⁴² Aberdeenshire Council, Climate Change Declaration – Our Sustainable Future, <https://www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/media/25146/climatechangedeclaration.pdf>

transport appraisal study area, there is an increasing need to reduce environmental impact of travel.

Although the only Air Quality Management Areas (AQMA) in the transport appraisal study area lies outside the corridor extents (AQMA's are located within Aberdeen and Inverness), there are localised impacts of high traffic volumes in urban areas. This can include noise pollution and local air quality in the close vicinity to the A96 in areas such as Forres, Elgin, Keith and Inverurie as well as all the other, smaller communities along the road's length. The high proportion of HGV traffic, up to approximately 16% of AADT in 2019, will also produce further pollutants, affecting local environment and health in these locations.

3.5.2. Opportunities

This section provides a summary of key opportunity themes identified for the A96 Corridor Review transport appraisal study area. The identified opportunity themes are

- Sustainable Economic Growth
- Improving Safety
- Health and Environment Impacts of Travel
- Travel Choice and Behaviour

SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC GROWTH

There are several strong growth sectors within the transport appraisal study area, with the rural areas in the region performing particularly well in terms of job roles in Agriculture, Forestry & Fishing, Food & Drink production and Tourism over recent years. Aberdeen has also displayed a strong proportion of professional roles including in Professional, Scientific and Technical Activities¹⁴³.

Industry and Freight

Aberdeenshire and Aberdeen City, accounts for more than 20% of Scotland's food and drink output, directly employing over 22,000 people. To help support the Scotland Food and Drink Ambition 2030¹⁴⁴ target to double industry turnover in Scotland, Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire have an ambition to grow the food, drink, agriculture, and seafood sector¹⁴⁵ by:

- Increasing turnover by 5% per annum

¹⁴³ ONS, Business Register and Employment Survey, 2020,
<https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/query/construct/summary.asp?mode=construct&version=0&dataset=189>

¹⁴⁴ Scotland Food and Drink, Ambition 2030, 2018,
<https://scotlandfoodanddrink.blob.core.windows.net//media/1465/ambition-2030.pdf>

¹⁴⁵ Opportunity North East, Transformational Leadership and Action, 2020,
<https://www.opportunitynortheast.com/food-drink-agriculture>

- Doubling output and exports by 2030
- Increasing productivity by 25% by 2025

Food and drink production in Moray is also a key sector, employing over 17% of the workforce, the highest per head in Scotland¹⁴⁶, with the Whisky industry being particularly important to the region. Whisky is a high value product, for which Scotland is globally renowned. Moray is home to approximately 44% of all Malt Whisky distilleries in Scotland, supporting approximately 1500 jobs¹⁴⁷.

The Moray Economic Strategy¹⁴⁸ also highlights the economic contribution of the timber industry and the scope of innovation in the subsector that provides future opportunities. The timber and logging industry is also prominent in the wider region, with the individual Grampian and Highland Regional Timber Transport Group's estimating a combined production of over 20M tonnes of timber from 2020 to 2029.

Increased productivity will require transport solutions to move more goods in and out of the region. There is an opportunity to maintain and enhance sustainable economic growth across the transport appraisal study area, combining a green and environmentally friendly approach to the movement of goods, whilst sustaining economic development.

The amount of goods transported by other modes, most notably rail, could be increased to reduce the reliance on less sustainable HGVs. This could reduce the risk of congestion and driver frustration, which could in turn reduce the number of road closures associated with road traffic accidents, minimising the economic impact of diversion routes. This has

¹⁴⁶ Moray Economic Partnership, The Moray Economic Strategy 2018-2028, <https://moray.cmis.uk.com/moray/Document.ashx?czJKcaeAi5tUFL1DTL2UE4zNRBcoShgo=fJsHSlAMpnZazH/sFvoRYjyncJDRZc4/BHphE3jOAMCSsggF0DcAuw==&rUzwRPf+Z3zd4E7lkn8Lyw===pwRE6AGJFLDNlh225F5QMaQWcTPHwdhUfCZ/LUQzgA2uL5jNRG4jdQ==&mCTIbCubSFFxsDGW9IXnlq===hFflUdN3100=&kCx1AnS9/pWZQ40DXFvdEw===hFflUdN3100=&uJovDxwdjMPoYv+AJvYtyA===ctNJff55vVA=&FgPLIEJYlotS+YGoBi5oIA===NHdURQburHA=&d9Qjj0ag1Pd993jsyOJqFvmyB7X0CSQK=ctNJff55vVA=&WGewmoAfeNR9xqBux0r1Q8Za60lavYmz=ctNJff55vVA=&WGewmoAfeNQ16B2MHuCpMRKZMwaG1PaO=ctNJff55vVA=>

¹⁴⁷ Highlands and Islands Enterprise, 2019-2022 Strategy <https://www.hie.co.uk/media/5006/strategyplusplanplus2019-2022-1.pdf>

¹⁴⁸ Moray Economic Partnership, The Moray Economic Strategy 2018-2028, <https://moray.cmis.uk.com/moray/Document.ashx?czJKcaeAi5tUFL1DTL2UE4zNRBcoShgo=fJsHSlAMpnZazH/sFvoRYjyncJDRZc4/BHphE3jOAMCSsggF0DcAuw==&rUzwRPf+Z3zd4E7lkn8Lyw===pwRE6AGJFLDNlh225F5QMaQWcTPHwdhUfCZ/LUQzgA2uL5jNRG4jdQ==&mCTIbCubSFFxsDGW9IXnlq===hFflUdN3100=&kCx1AnS9/pWZQ40DXFvdEw===hFflUdN3100=&uJovDxwdjMPoYv+AJvYtyA===ctNJff55vVA=&FgPLIEJYlotS+YGoBi5oIA===NHdURQburHA=&d9Qjj0ag1Pd993jsyOJqFvmyB7X0CSQK=ctNJff55vVA=&WGewmoAfeNR9xqBux0r1Q8Za60lavYmz=ctNJff55vVA=&WGewmoAfeNQ16B2MHuCpMRKZMwaG1PaO=ctNJff55vVA=>

previously been considered and trialled through the Lifting the Spirit programme to move whisky by rail between Elgin and the Central Belt in 2013¹⁴⁹. In 2020, to the north of the transport appraisal study area in Highland, a trial to transport timber from Georgemas Junction to Inverness via rail was estimated to reduce the number of HGVs journeys by 250 and saved 55,000 miles travelled by road¹⁵⁰ in six weeks. These trials indicate there are potential opportunities to be explored for rail freight in the transport appraisal study area. Alternative fuel vehicles can also help to minimise the environmental impact of HGVs that are required to travel on the road network to sustain the economic development through the transport appraisal study area.

Tourism

Tourism is also a growth sector for the region with potential to further contribute towards sustainable economic growth. Table 8 displays headline tourism figures for the Grampian¹⁵¹ and Highland regions in 2019¹⁵². Region tourism statistics are defined by VisitScotland and covers the whole LA areas, not just that within the transport appraisal study area.

Table 8: Tourism Statistics for 2019 in Grampian and Highland Regions

Location	Day Visitors	Overnight Visitors	Total Spend
Grampian (Aberdeen City, Aberdeenshire and Moray)	14,403,000	1,323,000	£856M
Highland	9,579,000	2,907,000	£1.553Bn

Although overall visitor numbers dropped between 2018 and 2019 in both Grampian and Highland regions, total spend increased in both areas. In Grampian total spend was up 18% compared to 2018¹⁵³ and the total spend in Highland increased by 46%

¹⁴⁹ HITRANS, Food Port – 1/9/2014 – New Year Newsletter, 2014,
<https://hitrans.org.uk/News/Story/133>

¹⁵⁰ Scottish Forestry, Timber rail trial on track, September 2020,
<https://forestry.gov.scot/news-releases/timber-rail-trial-on-track>

¹⁵¹ Visit Scotland, Insight Department: Grampian Factsheet (2019), 2019,
<https://www.visitscotland.org/binaries/content/assets/dot-org/pdf/research-papers-2/regional-factsheets/grampian-factsheet-2019.pdf>

¹⁵² Visit Scotland, Insight Department: Highland Factsheet (2019), 2019,
<https://www.visitscotland.org/binaries/content/assets/dot-org/pdf/research-papers-2/regional-factsheets/highland-factsheet-2019.pdf>

¹⁵³ Visit Scotland, Insight Department: Grampian Factsheet (2019), 2019,
<https://www.visitscotland.org/binaries/content/assets/dot-org/pdf/research-papers-2/regional-factsheets/grampian-factsheet-2019.pdf>

compared to 2018¹⁵⁴. The importance of tourism to the economy within The Highland Council area is reflected by the high proportion of employment within the Accommodation and Food sector; 10% compared to the national average of 7%¹⁵⁵. Additionally, 10% of employment in Moray is in the tourism sector¹⁵⁶ and The Strategy for Tourism Development in Moray aims to double the economic value of tourism and double the tourism-related workforce by 2025¹⁵⁷.

Whisky tourism has hit record levels in Scotland, with distilleries welcoming over two million visitors in 2018; this is a 56% increase compared to 2010¹⁵⁸. Whisky production contributes significantly to the national economy, and particularly in Moray, where the popularity of Speyside whiskies has also contributed to tourism in the area through the development of the region's Malt Whisky Trail.

Moray has also identified an opportunity to benefit from "cycling and walking tourism"¹⁵⁹. It notes that "the value of cycle tourism in Scotland is estimated to be between £241 million and £362 million per year", and a cumulative annual contribution to GVA of £129m¹⁶⁰. This opportunity would also benefit the sustainability of the region and reduce the carbon footprint of visitors whilst increasing the share of this income for Moray.

As part of the stakeholder engagement and public consultation process, the opportunity to increase the number of tourists using more sustainable modes, including active travel, bus and rail was highlighted. This in turn would help to improve visitor experience and assisting the growth of the tourism industry further. Active travel and public transport opportunities for tourists would increase the long-term sustainability of the industry, particularly from an environmental standpoint.

¹⁵⁴ Visit Scotland, Insight Department: Highland Factsheet (2019), 2019, <https://www.visitscotland.org/binaries/content/assets/dot-org/pdf/research-papers-2/regional-factsheets/highland-factsheet-2019.pdf>

¹⁵⁵ BRES 2020

¹⁵⁶ Highland and Islands Enterprise, The Strategy for Tourism Development in Moray, <http://www.moray.gov.uk/downloads/file122204.pdf>

¹⁵⁷ Highland and Islands Enterprise, The Strategy for Tourism Development in Moray, <http://www.moray.gov.uk/downloads/file122204.pdf>

¹⁵⁸ Scotch Whisky Association, Scotch Whisky distillery visits reach 2 million, 2019, <https://www.scotch-whisky.org.uk/newsroom/scotch-whisky-distillery-visits-reach-2-million/#:~:text=Scotch%20Whisky%20tourism%20saw%20record,56%25%20more%20than%20in%202010>

¹⁵⁹ The Moray Council Active Travel Strategy, 2016-2021, <http://www.moray.gov.uk/downloads/file113437.pdf>

¹⁶⁰ The Moray Council Active Travel Strategy, 2016-2021, <http://www.moray.gov.uk/downloads/file113437.pdf>

IMPROVING SAFETY

There is an opportunity to reduce accidents and accident severities on the A96 trunk road.

The overall accident rate (taking account of all Personal Injury Accidents) for the majority of the A96 trunk road is below the national average for Scotland for the equivalent urban or rural trunk A-roads. The two exceptions are the urban sections within Forres and Keith, which are 1.3 and 1.9 times the national average respectively. In terms of accident severity, the KSI accident rate for a number of rural and urban sections of the A96 trunk road are above the national average for Scotland. The two urban sections in particular indicate KSI rates significantly higher than the national average, with the Forres urban section being 3.1 times the national average and the Keith urban section being 4.8 times the national average. The rural sections with a KSI accident rate ranging from 1.1 to 1.4 times the national average are those between Hardmuir and Forres, between Fochabers and Keith, between Keith and Huntly and between Kintore and Craibstone junction.

Scotland's Road Safety Framework to 2030¹⁶¹ sets out the framework for improving road safety to meet the long-term goal of achieving no deaths or serious injuries by 2050. The vision of the Road Safety Framework is for Scotland to have the best road safety performance in the world by 2030, through embedding the Safe System approach at a national, regional, local and indeed individual level. The framework sets targets to achieve a 50% reduction in people killed or seriously injured, and a 60% reduction in children (aged under 16) killed or seriously injured by 2030.

There is an opportunity to improve safety for all road users and contribute towards the casualty reduction targets that are set out in the Road Safety Framework to 2030.

This also aligns with the Scottish Government's commitment to reduce car kilometres travelled by 20% by 2030, as reducing car-based travel will contribute to a reduction in accident numbers.

Feedback from the public consultation survey conducted for the A96 Corridor Review also highlighted road safety as a significant concern for those in the local area. When asked how safe people feel when travelling on the A96 road network, only 21% of respondents felt somewhat or very safe. When asked their satisfaction with road safety, of those who answered the question (excluding those who selected Not Applicable), only 11% said they were satisfied or very satisfied.

HEALTH AND ENVIRONMENT IMPACTS OF TRAVEL

¹⁶¹ Transport Scotland, Scotland's Road Safety Framework to 2030, 2021, <https://framework.roadsafety.scot/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/Road-Safety-Framework-2030-May-2021.pdf>

Reducing Vehicle Use

Transport Scotland has produced a roadmap¹⁶² for achieving a 20% reduction in car kilometres travelled by 2030 as committed to within the Scottish Governments Climate Change Plan 2020 Update¹⁶³. As such, there is a requirement to reduce the dependence on private vehicles, with an opportunity to do so by both reducing the need to travel and increasing sustainable travel choices.

Reducing the need to travel would benefit the environment by reducing transport related CO₂ emissions. The transport related CO₂ emissions across the LAs that make up the transport appraisal study area are relatively high, especially in Aberdeenshire and Highland. Reducing the number of trips made or vehicle kilometres travelled will help reduce this contribution and make progress towards meeting the Scottish Government's Net Zero target¹⁶⁴. There would also be a lower impact on local air quality in communities along the A96 corridor, creating a healthier environment for those who live and work in close proximity to the route.

Alternative Fuelled Vehicles

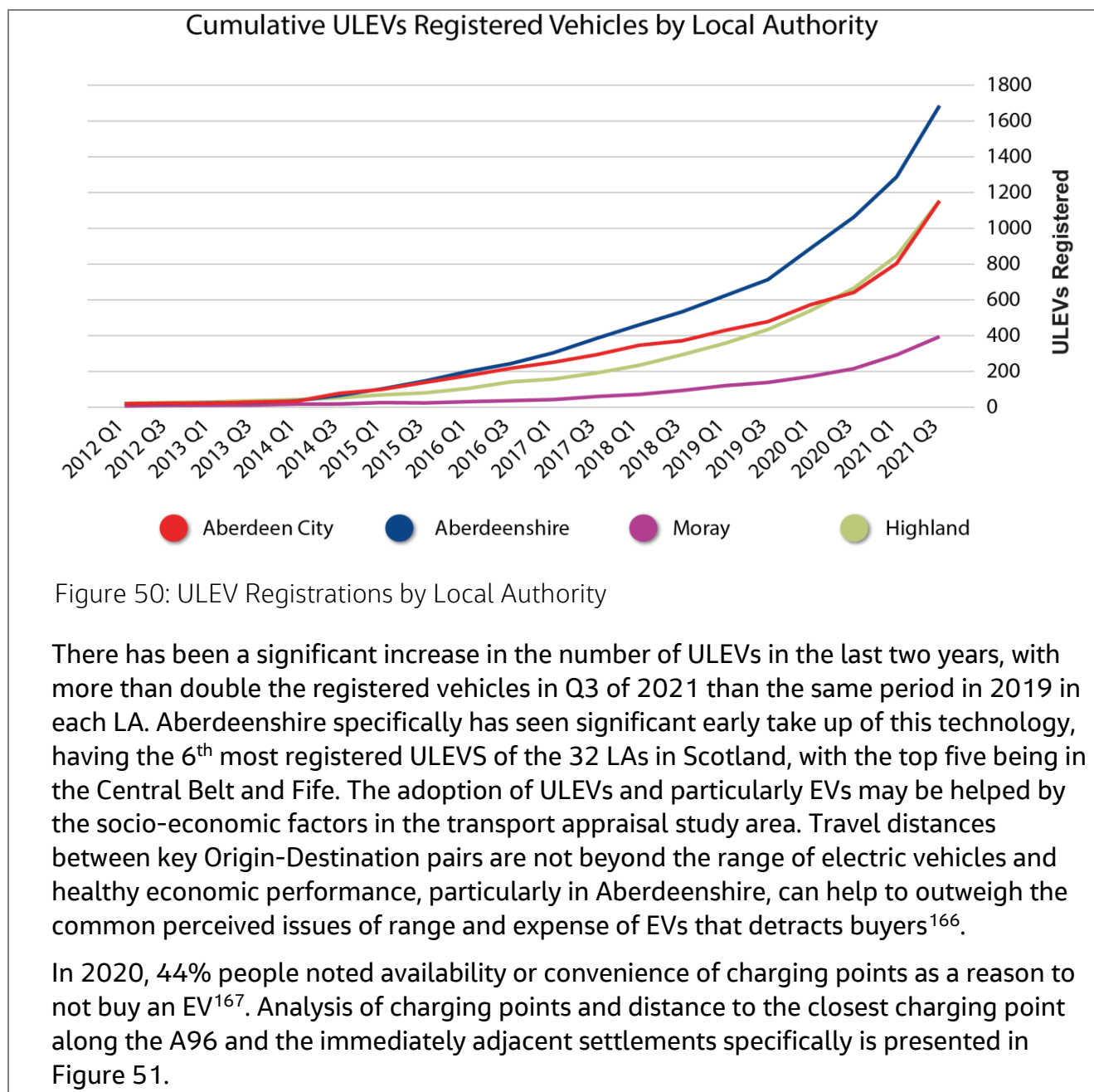
A key progression in reducing transport's contribution to carbon emissions and improving local air quality will be the development of Electric Vehicles (EVs) and the take up of such vehicles in the region. EV growth in the past decade has been relatively rapid as technology has developed and vehicles have become more readily available. Figure 50 demonstrates the number of Ultra Low Emission Vehicles (ULEVs) registered, which refers to full EVs, plug-in hybrid vehicles and fuel cell vehicles, in the four Local Authorities relevant to the transport appraisal study area¹⁶⁵. Note this refers to the entire LA areas and not just the part of the area that lies within the transport appraisal study area boundary.

¹⁶² Transport Scotland, A route map to achieve a 20 per cent reduction in car kilometres by 2030, 2022, <https://www.transport.gov.scot/publication/a-route-map-to-achieve-a-20-per-cent-reduction-in-car-kilometres-by-2030/>

¹⁶³ Scottish Government, Update to the Climate Change Plan 2018-2032, 2020, <https://www.gov.scot/binaries/content/documents/govscot/publications/strategy-plan/2020/12/securing-green-recovery-path-net-zero-update-climate-change-plan-20182032/documents/update-climate-change-plan-2018-2032-securing-green-recovery-path-net-zero/update-climate-change-plan-2018-2032-securing-green-recovery-path-net-zero/govscot%3Adocument/update-climate-change-plan-2018-2032-securing-green-recovery-path-net-zero.pdf>

¹⁶⁴ Scottish Nationalist Party, <https://www.snp.org/net-zero-by-2045/#:~:text=Ambitious%2C%20legally%2Dbinding%20emissions%20reduction,by%202045%20at%20the%20latest>

¹⁶⁵ Department for Transport Statistics, 2022, <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/all-vehicles-veh01>



¹⁶⁶ Scottish Government, Scottish Household Survey, 2022, <https://www.transport.gov.scot/publication/transport-and-travel-in-scotland-2020-results-from-the-scottish-household-survey-pdf-version/>

¹⁶⁷ Scottish Government, Scottish Household Survey, 2022, <https://www.transport.gov.scot/publication/transport-and-travel-in-scotland-2020-results-from-the-scottish-household-survey-pdf-version/>

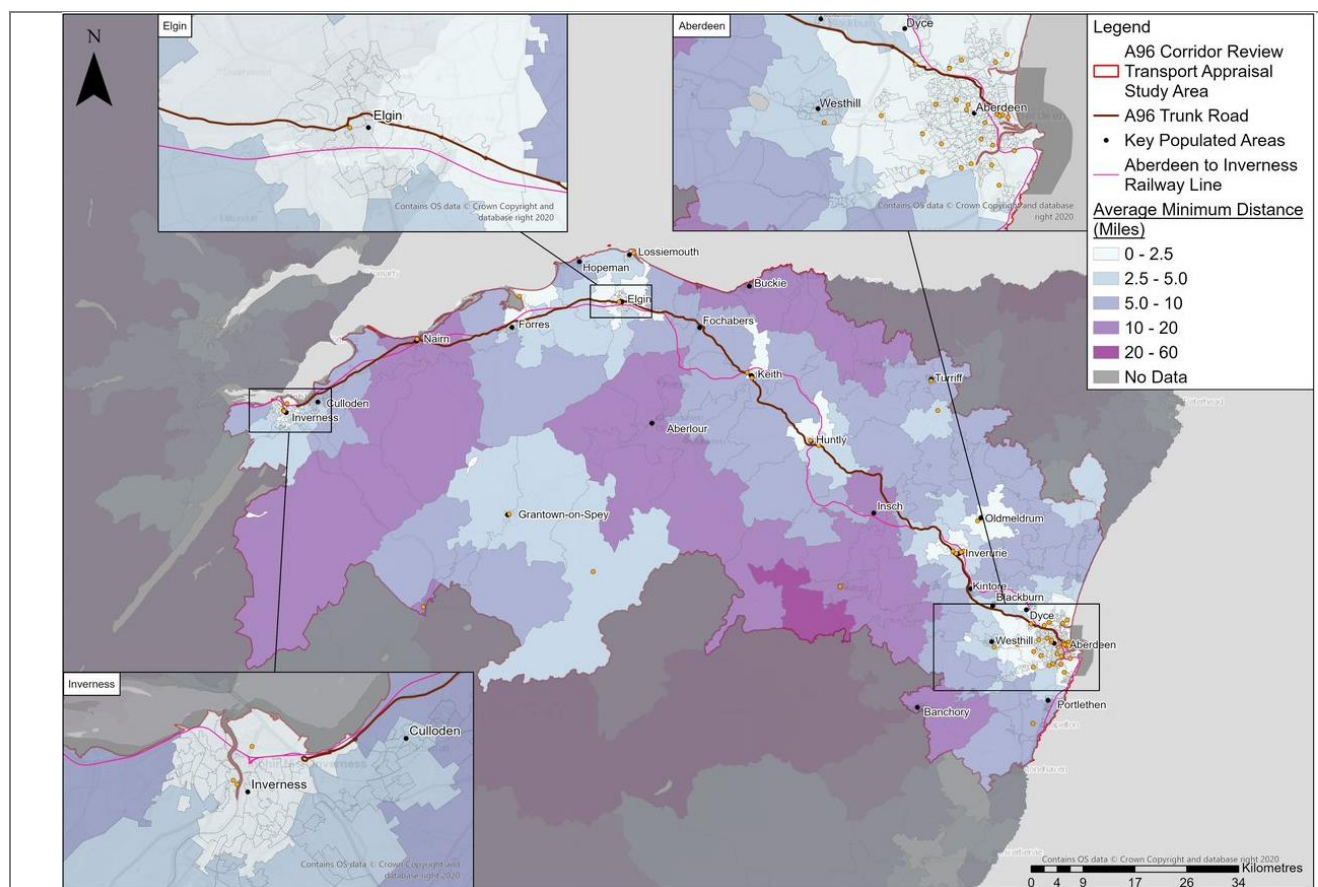


Figure 51: Average Distance to Charging Points within the Transport Appraisal Study Area

(Click image to enlarge figure)

Although there is availability of EV charging points in each of the settlements along the A96, rapid chargers are less common along the A96. As of August 2022, 18 rapid or ultra rapid charge locations were present in the settlements along the A96 between Craibstone and Raigmore Interchange¹⁶⁸, although there is no guarantee to the user that the charging points will be in operation. There is therefore an opportunity to build upon the charging infrastructure along the A96 as well as improving the reliability of existing infrastructure, to further improve the uptake of EVs within the transport appraisal study area.

Decarbonisation of Other Transport Modes

Further decarbonising the transport fleet beyond that of private vehicles presents greater opportunities to move towards net-zero, with alternative fuelled trains and ferries offering an opportunity to reduce the area’s carbon footprint, improve connectivity, and reduce the cost of providing transport services, making transport more affordable. One option is for “Green Hydrogen” to be used in industry and the transport network. Plans are in place for a plant north of Inverness to be made operational in 2024 to produce Green Hydrogen for the whisky production process, with an appreciation that if ramped

¹⁶⁸ Zap-Map, 2022, <https://www.zap-map.com/live/>

up, it could also be used as a clean fuel for the transport industry, including for buses, refuse vehicles and HGVs¹⁶⁹.

In Aberdeenshire, the opportunity to reduce transport emissions through clean energy vehicles and public transport improvements can contribute to a better environment and air quality. In 2018, HGVs contributed 19% of Scotland's total road transport emissions and Light Goods Vehicles a further 18%¹⁷⁰. With over one third of transport emissions coming from goods vehicles, this suggests that alternative modes for goods movement and cleaner fuel vehicles presents an opportunity to reduce emissions in the transport sector. This is relevant for the A96 corridor where the transport of goods is prominent, with up to 16% of traffic identified as HGVs in 2019.

Renewable Energy Production

The Highland Council region has the potential through wind, wave and tidal power to become a net exporter of renewable energy, meeting a proportion of the energy requirements of Scotland¹⁷¹. In Moray, wind energy is being harnessed, with the Moray East offshore wind farm having the capacity to produce enough clean energy to power 950,000 homes, saving 1.4M tonnes of CO₂ every year¹⁷². A second farm in Moray West is due to be operational in 2024/25¹⁷³. Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire are also active in increasing their renewable energy output. The world's largest floating offshore windfarm is based approximately 15km from Aberdeen, producing 50MW of energy since going

¹⁶⁹ Energy Voice, ScottishPower and Storegga to 'transform the Highlands' with green hydrogen, 2022, <https://www.energyvoice.com/renewables-energy-transition/hydrogen/uk-hydrogen/408944/scottishpower-and-storegga-to-transform-the-highlands-with-green-hydrogen/>

¹⁷⁰ Transport Scotland, Road Emissions by Vehicle Type, 2020, <https://www.transport.gov.scot/publication/carbon-account-for-transport-no-12-2020-edition/road-emissions-by-vehicle-type/>

¹⁷¹ Convention of Highlands and Islands, Renewables could boost Scottish Islands, 2016, <https://news.gov.scot/news/renewables-could-boost-scottish-islands>

¹⁷² Grampian Online, Final Moray East wind turbine installation hailed by MP and MSP, 2021, <https://www.grampianonline.co.uk/news/final-moray-east-wind-turbine-installation-hailed-by-mp-and-252805/>

¹⁷³ Moray West Offshore Wind Farm, Moray West – About our wind farm, 2020, <https://www.moraywest.com/about-us>

operational in 2021¹⁷⁴, with the capability of powering more than 50,000 households per year¹⁷⁵.

Looking at the evidence of recent investment into renewable and clean energy markets, there is a clear movement to “harness our world leading natural resources to generate clean energy” in the north-east¹⁷⁶, meeting the national target of a 75% reduction in all greenhouse gases by 2030 and aim for net zero by 2045 at the latest¹⁷⁷.

TRAVEL CHOICE AND BEHAVIOUR

As previously discussed, high car ownership coupled with a perceived lack of, or poorly performing, public transport provision results in a reliance on car-based trips across the transport appraisal study area, particularly from rural areas into the urban centres.

Increasing Travel Choices

Demand responsive transport is one such opportunity, with the concept of Mobility as a Service (MaaS) offering significant potential to increase travel choices and improve transport integration to people in both urban and rural areas. This is highlighted in the NESTRANS RTS¹⁷⁸ specifically, noting the Scottish Government commitment to a £2 million investment fund and the potential it could have on industries such as tourism as well as changing the way people perceive everyday travel. Providing easy to organise travel and increasingly seamless journeys offers the opportunity to reduce vehicle kilometres travelled by unsustainable modes, particularly in rural areas.

Other measures to increase travel choices exist in potentially improving physical accessibility at public transport stops and stations. As previously discussed, some rail stations are not fully step-free and so are inaccessible for people who are mobility impaired or for parents with young children in push chairs. This is true at Inch, Nairn, Huntly and Inverurie. Despite this, 6% of travel to work trips are made by train from

¹⁷⁴ Offshorewind.biz, World's Largest Floating Offshore Wind Farm Fully Operational, 2021, <https://www.offshorewind.biz/2021/10/19/worlds-largest-floating-offshore-wind-farm-fully-operational/#:~:text=The%2050%20MW%20Kincardine%20floating,largest%20operating%20floating%20wind%20farm>

¹⁷⁵ National News, Cop26: UK's oil city Aberdeen to become Europe's green energy capital, 2021, <https://www.thenationalnews.com/world/uk-news/2021/10/27/cop26-uks-oil-city-aberdeen-to-become-europes-green-energy-capital/>

¹⁷⁶ Scottish Renewables, Renewable Energy: Delivering for North East Scotland, 2021, https://www.scottishrenewables.com/assets/000/001/905/NE_factsheet_A4_2PP_MSP_-_WEB_original.pdf?1633508805

¹⁷⁷ Scottish Nationalist Party, <https://www.snp.org/net-zero-by-2045/#:~:text=Ambitious%2C%20legally%2Dbinding%20emissions%20reduction,by%202045%20at%20the%20latest>

¹⁷⁸ NESTRANS, Regional Transport Strategy for the North East of Scotland, 2021, https://www.nestrans.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/Nestrans-RTS_PUBLISHED.pdf

Insch, the only station in the transport appraisal study area to have a travel to work percentage higher than the national average (4%)¹⁷⁹. There is an opportunity to increase rail usage further by improving accessibility at the aforementioned stations, either to build on the higher than average usage at Insch or bring other stations at least in line with the national average.

Increasing Sustainable Modal Shift

There is an opportunity to increase the mode share of active travel across the transport appraisal study area, which would provide health benefits as well as contributing to improved air quality. Travel to work data indicates that 12% of work trips are made by active travel modes, which is higher than the national benchmark of 10%¹⁸⁰ in 2011. However, there is a higher proportion of people travelling very short distances (under 2km) to work in settlements within the transport appraisal study area. From the ten highest populated areas in the transport appraisal study area, eight have a proportion of people travelling under 2km for work by any mode greater than the national average (17%), including Elgin (42%), Inverurie (26%), Forres (26%), Nairn (28%), Lossiemouth (32%) and Buckie (32%). Only Westhill (15%) and Portlethen (16%) are below the national average and only by 1-2%. Whilst a proportion of these trips are already undertaken by sustainable modes, there is an opportunity to increase this further.

Digital Connectivity

Technology advancements provide a significant opportunity to reduce the need to travel, most notably by allowing the flexibility for homeworking. The opportunities brought forward by improving digital connectivity was highlighted during stakeholder engagement and public consultation, including the potential benefits of increased levels of working from home. Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire have high proportions of job roles in Professional, Scientific & Technical Activities (14% and 10% respectively), which are roles with the greatest potential for increased working from home with the correct digital connectivity in place.

Figure 52¹⁸¹ indicates the scope to increase digital connectivity in the region. All local authorities in the transport appraisal study area outside of Aberdeen City indicate download speeds almost half that achieved within Aberdeen City, with a lower provision of superfast broadband to properties. This suggests the digital network can be further improved in the area to facilitate more virtual working and appointments. Data provided in section 2.3.8 also demonstrates a gap in coverage across Moray and Highland in particular that currently limits the potential of homeworking in these areas.

¹⁷⁹ NRS, 2011 Census (Scotland) (Table QS703SC), 2011, <https://www.scotlandscensus.gov.uk/>

¹⁸⁰ NRS, 2011 Census (Scotland), 2011, <https://www.scotlandscensus.gov.uk/>

¹⁸¹ ThinkBroadband, Broadband Coverage and Speeds for UK Local Authorities and Regions – Q4 2021, 2021, <https://labs.thinkbroadband.com/local/councils>

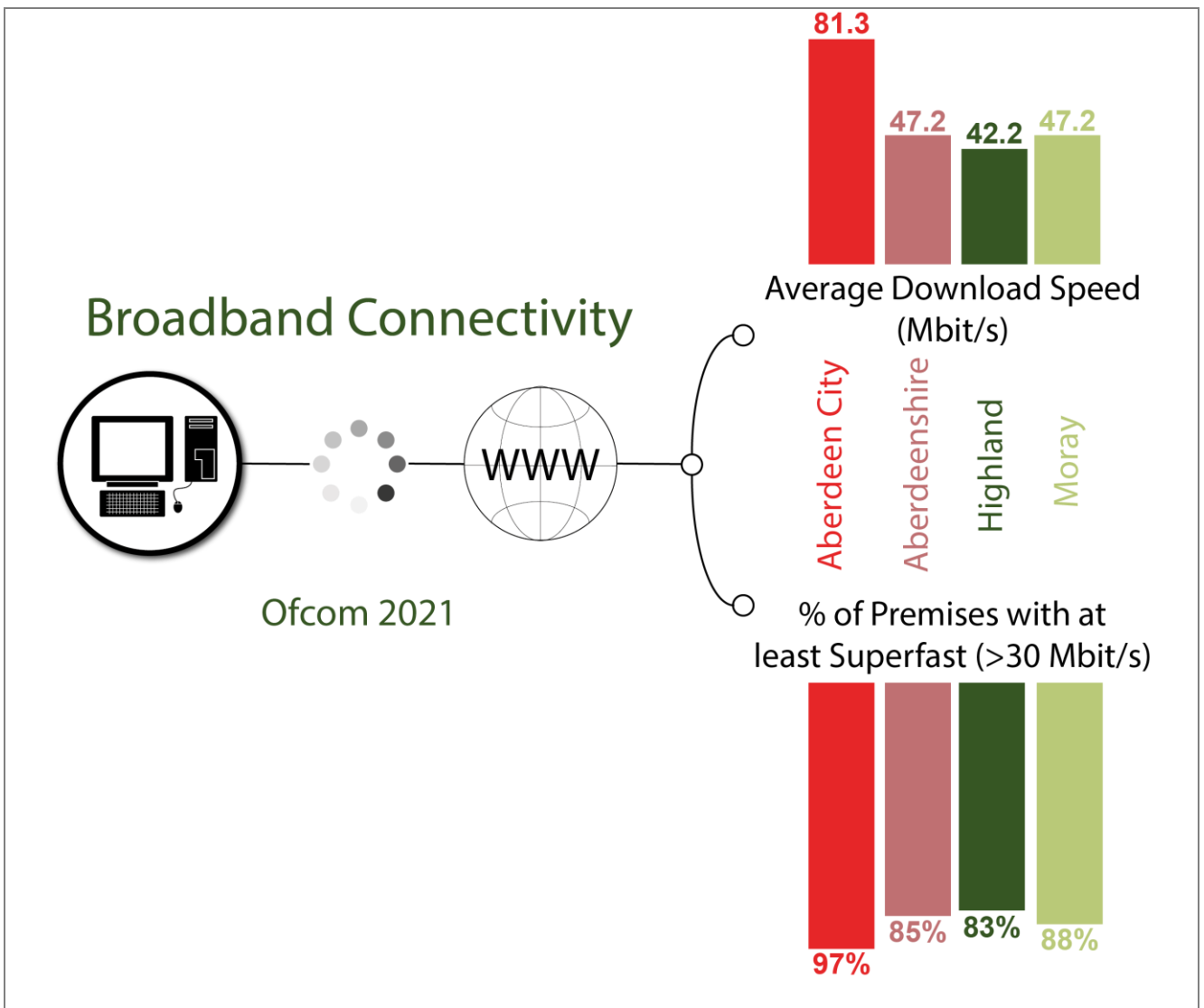


Figure 52: Broadband Connectivity across Scottish Local Authorities

The opportunity exists to enhance the digital connectivity in the LAs within the transport appraisal study area to provide greater opportunities to work from home, however it should be noted that a greater number of people worked from home in 2011 within the transport appraisal study area compared to the national average, according to Census data. Digital connections can also offer virtual learning and healthcare appointments that would further limit the need to travel across the transport appraisal study area.

Digital advancements could also have an impact on public transport demand. The potential for technology to increase the efficiency of collecting and using data was also highlighted by stakeholders, with opportunities to share data across modes and organisations to improve provision and better understand travel demand. Real time tracking of buses could instil confidence in services by providing updates to the user and enable users to plan their journey with greater certainty, potentially increasing mode share. Public consultation also suggests that applications or websites that allow the user to view journey times and real-time information (such as road closures, delays or

diversions) across travel modes would be welcome across the transport appraisal study area.

Post-COVID-19 Mode Choice

There is a major opportunity to build upon some of the positive results in travel behaviour brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic. Evidence has revealed an increase in the number of recreational trips made by active travel during the pandemic. In the NESTRANS region, survey work indicated increases in walking for leisure by approximately 33% once the pandemic restrictions had been relaxed in comparison to Pre-COVID-19 levels, and cycling for leisure increased by approximately 20%¹⁸². Additionally, throughout different periods of the pandemic, between approximately 20% and 33% of respondents reported walking and 15% to 33% used cycling to replace a journey they would normally use a different mode¹⁸³. An opportunity to build on this behaviour change is available, with potential for further trips such as commuting journeys to be made via active travel. Evidence has shown internal trips are a key contributor to total people movements across the transport appraisal study area, an example being that over 4,200 car trips per day have both an origin and destination within Elgin¹⁸⁴, which equates to 63% of all internal movements. The vast majority of these trips are within the range of active travel methods, especially with the development of e-bikes for greater range and accessibility, so there is an opportunity to reduce the reliance on private car.

There are also existing policy initiatives, such as *The Getabout Partnership*¹⁸⁵ in the north-east (Aberdeenshire and Aberdeen City) that already play a role in encouraging sustainable transport by creating a platform for active travel route finding and promotion, with opportunities to build upon this with further investment and promotion continually exists. This would present a significant contribution to the Climate Change Plan target of a 20% reduction in car kilometres by 2030¹⁸⁶.

¹⁸² Systra, North East Transport Behaviour and Attitude Surveys: Report on Key Trends Over 16 Survey Waves, 2022, https://www.nestrans.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/20220407_Nestrans_Tracking-Survey_W1-16-Report_Final_Clean.pdf

¹⁸³ Systra, North East Transport Behaviour and Attitude Surveys: Report on Key Trends Over 16 Survey Waves, 2022, https://www.nestrans.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/20220407_Nestrans_Tracking-Survey_W1-16-Report_Final_Clean.pdf

¹⁸⁴ NRS, 2011 Census (Scotland), 2011, <https://www.scotlandscensus.gov.uk/>

¹⁸⁵ Getabout, A-B in Aberdeen City and Shire, 2022, <https://www.getabout.org.uk/>

¹⁸⁶ Transport Scotland, A route map to achieve a 20 per cent reduction in car kilometres by 2030, 2022, <https://www.transport.gov.scot/publication/a-route-map-to-achieve-a-20-per-cent-reduction-in-car-kilometres-by-2030/>

3.5.3. Problems & Opportunities Summary

Key problems of note are:

Safety and Resilience: From the analysis of accident data, the rural sections of the A96 trunk road have overall PIA rates lower than or similar to the national average based on all trunk A-roads of the equivalent type. There are however selected urban sections of the A96 trunk road that show an accident rate higher than the national average, with specific locations in Forres and Keith. The rate of KSIs is also significantly higher in these two towns than the national average, nearly five times the national average in Keith and just above three times the national average in Forres. A number of rural sections of the A96 trunk road also have a rate of KSIs higher than the national average these being between Hardmuir and Forres, between Fochabers and Keith, between Keith and East of Huntly and between Kintore and Craibstone.

The A96 is affected by closures and delays due to accidents, maintenance and weather events. Recommended diversion routes can be lengthy, up to approximately 65 km depending on where the closure occurs. The economic impact of closures can be significant for HGVs and the movement of goods.

The rail network also demonstrates a certain level of unreliability. Services at Aberdeen, Inverness and Inverurie all have a PPM percentage worse than the national average Pre-COVID-19. This is likely to contribute to the relatively low levels of rail mode share.

Socio-Economic and Location of Services: Employment and key services tend to be focused in Aberdeen, Inverness and Elgin. Almost half of the total jobs in the transport appraisal study area are found within these three locations. Outside of the three most populous localities, people are more likely to travel over 10km to work, thus limiting the potential for active travel. Considering the travel distances to the three key economic centres, that also include major hospitals and a much greater density of education facilities, from other settlements in the transport appraisal study area, there is a significant challenge to limit the amount of travel by unsustainable modes.

Public Transport Accessibility: Evidence across the transport appraisal study area suggests that outside of Aberdeen, the level of public transport use is low in comparison to the rest of the country. Outside of Aberdeen City, the use of bus for commuting to work is significantly lower than the national average, as it is for rail, with only Inch having a mode share above national average. The Scottish Accessibility to Bus Indicator (SABI) demonstrates that across the transport appraisal study area, the accessibility to bus is low outside of the urban areas of Aberdeen and parts of Inverness. Rail station accessibility is also an issue, as raised by stakeholders and the public, with Inch, Nairn and Huntly noted for not being step-free stations that may limit patronage.

Large sections of the population in the transport appraisal study area cannot access key services such as hospitals with emergency departments, or higher education within two hours by public transport. Moray and Aberdeenshire both have low accessibility to these services which are often centralised in more urban areas such as Elgin or Aberdeen. As such, public transport is not an option for many trip purposes within the transport appraisal study area.

Competitiveness of Public Transport with Other Modes: Journey times are not competitive for bus in relation to train and car for longer trips across the transport appraisal study area. The cost of rail and some long-distance bus trips in commuter zones is high in relation to car fuel costs (as at March 2022). Public consultation has also revealed that the perception of delay and a lack of multimodal integration combined with the perceived high cost of fares, particularly for rail, makes public transport in the transport appraisal study area unattractive to users.

Travel Choice and Behaviour: The number of homes without access to a private vehicle in the transport appraisal study area is consistently less than the Scottish average. Aberdeenshire has a high level of access to a private vehicle, with approximately 90% of households in Aberdeenshire in the transport appraisal study area having access to at least one vehicle and over half have access to multiple vehicles. There is a greater availability of car in the rural areas across the transport appraisal study area. This combined with the travel to work mode shares, indicates a reliance on private vehicles for travel. Travel to work data suggests older people are more reliant on cars, so with the aging population in the transport appraisal study area, this is only likely to increase the use of cars further.

Health and Environment: Transport is a major contributor to CO₂ emissions, particularly in the Aberdeenshire and Highland LAs. Aberdeenshire and Highland Council areas in particular have a high transport contribution to total CO₂ emissions, over 35% for both these LAs. This is potentially an outcome of high dependence on cars for travel, long travel distances and the levels of road-based freight movements. The route of the A96 travels through the centre of towns including Elgin, Keith and Inverurie, which puts a relatively large proportion of the population in close proximity to potential noise pollution and pollutants from transport emissions that affect local air quality.

Key opportunities include:

Sustainable Economic Growth: There is an opportunity to support and enhance sustainable economic growth across the transport appraisal study area. The key industries in the region, including Food and Drink Production and Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing have a high proportion of goods movement, as evidenced through the relatively high proportion of HGVs on the A96. A shift to alternative sustainable transport modes would reduce the level of delays, and the economic and environmental impacts this causes, with trials being undertaken in recent years to increase the proportion of rail freight movements. Alternative fuelled vehicles would also reduce the transport emissions and the contribution to air quality issues from the road-based movement of goods.

The transport appraisal study area has shown growth in tourism spend in recent years with the rise of whisky tourism and the Speyside Whisky Trail a major component of the economy in this sector. There are opportunities to change the way in which visitors travel to and from the region, and around it. Walking and cycling tourism is one such opportunity and has the potential to create further economic growth by attracting new visitors to the region.

Improving Safety: There is the opportunity to reduce accidents and accident severities on the A96 trunk road. There are a number of sections of the road where KSI accident rates are high when compared to the national average for equivalent urban or rural trunk A-roads. Improving safety for roads users would contribute to meeting the targets set out in Scotland's Road Safety Framework to 2030 to achieve the 50% reduction in people killed or seriously injured (60% reduction for children). Reducing the level of car-based kilometres travelled would also contribute to a reduction in accidents numbers.

Health and Environment Impacts of Travel: Reducing the use of car travel throughout the transport appraisal study area, particularly for short trips that could be made without motorised transport at all, would help reduce the transport contribution to CO₂ emissions, an important requirement of the Scottish Government's Net Zero target. Fewer vehicle kilometres travelled would also improve the local air quality, with associated health benefits, in communities along the A96.

The transition to electric vehicles is underway and progressing rapidly, but could be enhanced along the A96 by increasing the quantity, and improving the quality and reliability of charging infrastructure. EVs would reduce carbon emissions and improve local air quality through the lower tailpipe emissions. Alternative fuelled vehicles for freight and buses would also reduce emissions, along with the electrification of rail. Energy production in the LAs that make up the transport appraisal study area is diversifying rapidly into renewable markets that provide cleaner energy that can help fuel EVs and a further electrified rail line.

Travel Choice and Behaviour: Travel choices throughout the transport appraisal study area would be increased through better integration of modes and the provision of more demand-responsive options. Physical accessibility at rail stations could also be improved to reduce the reliance on cars.

Active travel will continue to play a key role in the transition to sustainable and zero carbon travel by reducing the reliance on private vehicles. In smaller, more remote areas and towns there is the potential to increase active travel with connections by safe walking and cycling infrastructure.

Increasing digital connectivity and technology advancements in broadband and mobile connectivity provide opportunities to reduce the need to travel for example by allowing greater flexibility for homeworking. Average download speeds for the LAs across the transport appraisal study area are all in the bottom half for Scotland, suggesting significant potential to increase digital connectivity and reduce or avoid the need to travel. Other opportunities brought on by technology can help to integrate public transport and provide better information systems to improve the quality of journeys and enhance the travel experience.

3.5.4. Future Conditions

The problems and opportunities identified above are focused on current issues drawing on the findings from data analysis and engagement. Given the timescales for the delivery of potential interventions along the transport corridor, there is a need for 'horizon scanning' to better understand how potential future uncertainties could impact the operation and

management of the trunk road and wider transport network, a knowledge of which will support the identification of interventions that are resilient in the face of potential alternative futures.

The scenario planning process undertaken for STPR2, and the resultant scenarios that emerged from that work, were developed to reflect (as far as possible) major transport disruptors and uncertainties at the national level. Combined with the behavioural changes as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic that have affected, and continue to affect, travel choices means that there is in effect not a single 'benchmarked' set of future travel demands that can be established. Consideration will be given to future network conditions and uncertainties through the appraisal stages of the STAG process.

4. Transport Planning Objectives

4.1. A96 Corridor Review Objective Setting Process

Transport Planning Objectives (TPOs) are of central importance to the STAG process. In line with STAG, the TPOs are based on a comprehensive and evidenced understanding of problems and opportunities and lend themselves to inform a clear and transparent appraisal of transport options. The TPOs are a key element of the appraisal process from initial option identification and sifting, through to preliminary and detailed appraisal and subsequent monitoring/evaluation.

For the A96 Corridor Review TPOs have been aligned to those set at the national level in STPR2, supported by corridor specific sub-objectives. An overarching set of TPOs have been established as part of STPR2, which are closely aligned with the four priorities, 12 outcomes and 24 policies contained within NTS2. To reflect the nature of the corridor, the overarching TPOs have been amended slightly from the national-level STPR2 objectives.

A series of sub-objectives have been developed to align with the overall direction of the TPOs (and hence the STPR2 national objectives), but with a particular focus on the specific evidence-based problems and opportunities for the corridor. The A96 Corridor Review TPOs and sub-objectives are presented in Table 9.

Table 9: A96 Corridor Review TPOs and Sub-Objectives

A96 Corridor Review Transport Planning Objectives (TPOs)	A96 Corridor Review Sub-Objectives
<p>TPO1 – A sustainable strategic transport corridor that contributes to the Scottish Government’s net zero emissions target.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Reduce transport related emissions through a shift to more sustainable modes of transport.</i> • <i>Increase the active travel mode share for shorter everyday journeys.</i>
<p>TPO 2 – An inclusive strategic transport corridor that improves the accessibility of public transport in rural areas for access to healthcare, employment and education.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Increase public transport mode share by improving connections between sustainable modes of transport.</i> • <i>Reduce the reliance on private car for access to healthcare, employment and education.</i> • <i>Improve mobility and inclusion, recognising the specific needs of disadvantaged and vulnerable users.</i>

A96 Corridor Review Transport Planning Objectives (TPOs)	A96 Corridor Review Sub-Objectives
<p>TPO 3 – A coherent strategic transport corridor that enhances communities as places, supporting health, wellbeing and the environment.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Reduce demand for unsustainable travel by enhancing place-making within settlements along the A96.</i> • <i>Increase active travel mode share for both shorter and longer distance journeys.</i> • <i>Reduce real and perceived severance caused by the strategic transport network both between and within communities.</i> • <i>Protect or enhance the natural environment and heritage.</i>
<p>TPO 4 – An integrated strategic transport system that contributes towards sustainable inclusive growth throughout the corridor and beyond.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Increase sustainable access to labour markets and key centres for employment, education and training.</i> • <i>Increase the mode share of freight by sustainable modes.</i> • <i>Increase competitiveness of key sectors by improving journey time reliability for commercial transport.</i>
<p>TPO 5 – A reliable and resilient strategic transport system that is safe for users.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Reduce the accident rates and severity of transport related casualties in line with reduction targets.</i> • <i>Improve resilience to disruption (from climate change events and maintenance activities) through adaptation of the corridor's trunk road and rail infrastructure.</i>

Table 10 demonstrates the alignment of the objectives developed for the A96 Corridor Review with the identified problems and opportunity themes in the transport corridor.

Table 10: Mapping of Problem and Opportunity Themes to Transport Planning Objectives

A96 Corridor Review TPOs	A96 Corridor Review Sub-Objectives	Problem Themes						Opportunity Themes			
		Safety and Resilience	Socio-Economic and Location of Services	Public Transport Accessibility	Competitiveness of Public Transport with Other Modes	Travel Choice and Behaviour	Health and Environment	Sustainable Economic Growth	Improving Safety	Health and Environment Impacts of Travel	Travel Choice and Behaviour
TPO1 – A sustainable strategic transport corridor that contributes to the Scottish Government’s net zero emissions target.	Reduce transport related emissions through a shift to more sustainable modes of transport.										
	Increase the active travel mode share for shorter everyday journeys.										
TPO 2 – An inclusive strategic transport corridor that improves the accessibility of public transport in rural areas for access to healthcare, employment and education.	Increase public transport mode share by improving connections between sustainable modes of transport.										
	Reduce the reliance on private car for access to healthcare, employment and education.										
	Improve mobility and inclusion, recognising the specific needs of disadvantaged and vulnerable users.										
TPO 3 – A coherent strategic transport corridor that enhances communities as places, supporting health, wellbeing and the environment.	Reduce demand for unsustainable travel by enhancing place-making within settlements along the A96.										
	Increase active travel mode share for both shorter and longer distance journeys.										
	Reduce real and perceived severance caused by the strategic transport network both between and within communities.										
	Protect or enhance the natural environment and heritage.										
TPO 4 – An integrated strategic transport system that contributes towards sustainable inclusive growth throughout the corridor and beyond.	Increase sustainable access to labour markets and key centres for employment, education and training.										
	Increase the mode share of freight by sustainable modes.										
	Increase competitiveness of key sectors by improving journey time reliability for commercial transport.										
TPO 5 – A reliable and resilient strategic transport system that is safe for users.	Reduce the accident rates and severity of transport related casualties in line with reduction targets.										
	Improve resilience to disruption (from climate change events and maintenance activities) through adaptation of the corridor’s trunk road and rail infrastructure.										

5. Approach to Option Generation and Sifting

5.1. Option Development

As set out earlier, the A96 Corridor Review is following the STAG process and is multimodal such that it covers a range of transport assets within the defined A96 Corridor Review transport appraisal study area. In this context, and consistent with STPR2, options considered will include:

- Any transport project that plays a significant part in supporting the four NTS2 priorities and related outcomes;
- Projects or groups of projects related to transport networks owned, operated and funded directly by Transport Scotland; and
- The inter-urban bus and active travel networks, and principal corridors within urban areas inside the transport appraisal study area.

Within these overarching definitions, the interventions considered within the A96 Corridor Review may include:

- Demand management measures, including use of technology and innovation, behavioural change;
- Asset management and safety measures;
- Strategic measures to increase travel by active travel modes;
- Public transport improvements, including interchanges, road space re-allocation, technology and ticketing; and
- Targeted infrastructure improvements on the transport networks owned, operated and funded directly by Transport Scotland.

5.2. Approach to Generation and Sifting

In keeping with the principles of STAG, the Initial Appraisal: Case for Change has been developed to provide a robust method to generate, 'clean' and sift options; ensuring a broad range of options across all modes are considered.

The approach to the generation of interventions for the A96 Corridor Review, is summarised in Figure 53.



Figure 53: Approach to Option Generation and Sifting

The process of option generation for the A96 Corridor Review was informed by, and structured around, the Sustainable Investment Hierarchy as defined in NTS2 and shown in Figure 54.



Figure 54: The Sustainable Investment Hierarchy¹⁸⁷

5.2.1. Generation of Long List of Initial 'Options'

A long list of initial transport options was generated based on a range of sources, including a review of options identified from local and regional studies and via the stakeholder engagement and public consultation activities. Options were also generated by the Jacobs AECOM A96 Corridor Review project team through a workshop. Options were identified across all modes and encapsulate many of the main themes identified from the Problems and Opportunities. Some of these options were well developed and had a clearly defined output, others were suggestions and ideas, and others were comments of priorities or otherwise. All of these ideas/suggestions/options were collated and considered at this stage.

From the review of relevant studies, stakeholder engagement activities and consultant team, there were 380 options generated. From the online survey, where respondents could

¹⁸⁷ National Transport Strategy (NTS2), Transport Scotland, 2020, www.transport.gov.scot/media/47052/national-transport-strategy.pdf

put forward up to five suggestions, this resulted in approximately 10,700 suggestions to be considered. In total, the number of suggestions processed exceeds 11,000.

5.2.2. Option Cleaning

Although upwards of 11,000 individual suggestions were put forward, this included a number that either required further definition, were duplicated options or were options that were broadly similar. As such, an exercise was undertaken to 'clean' this long list. All suggestions from the online survey were analysed, reviewed, and duplicates removed.

This cleaning exercise showed that there were a very high number of options generated by the public that were identified as duplicate options. For example, there were in excess of 3,000 options generated by the public relating to dualling of the A96 and approximately 1,200 relating to bypassing towns on the A96. The large number of duplicate submissions were subsequently removed thereby significantly lowering the total number of options retained as inputs into the subsequent sifting process.

Those options submitted by the public and not already captured from the option generation workshops were retained. Options that required further definition were developed, and similar options were consolidated. Following the option cleaning exercise, 227 options were retained in the long list of interventions to be sifted specific to the A96 Corridor Review.

5.2.3. Option Sifting

Each of the options included in the long list have been assessed using an Option Sifting methodology developed to drive consistency in the sifting of options across modes, and was based on to the STPR2 methodology. Options were assessed against the range of criteria shown in Figure 55, to ensure that any options removed from this stage of the process were done so on a robust and transparent basis.

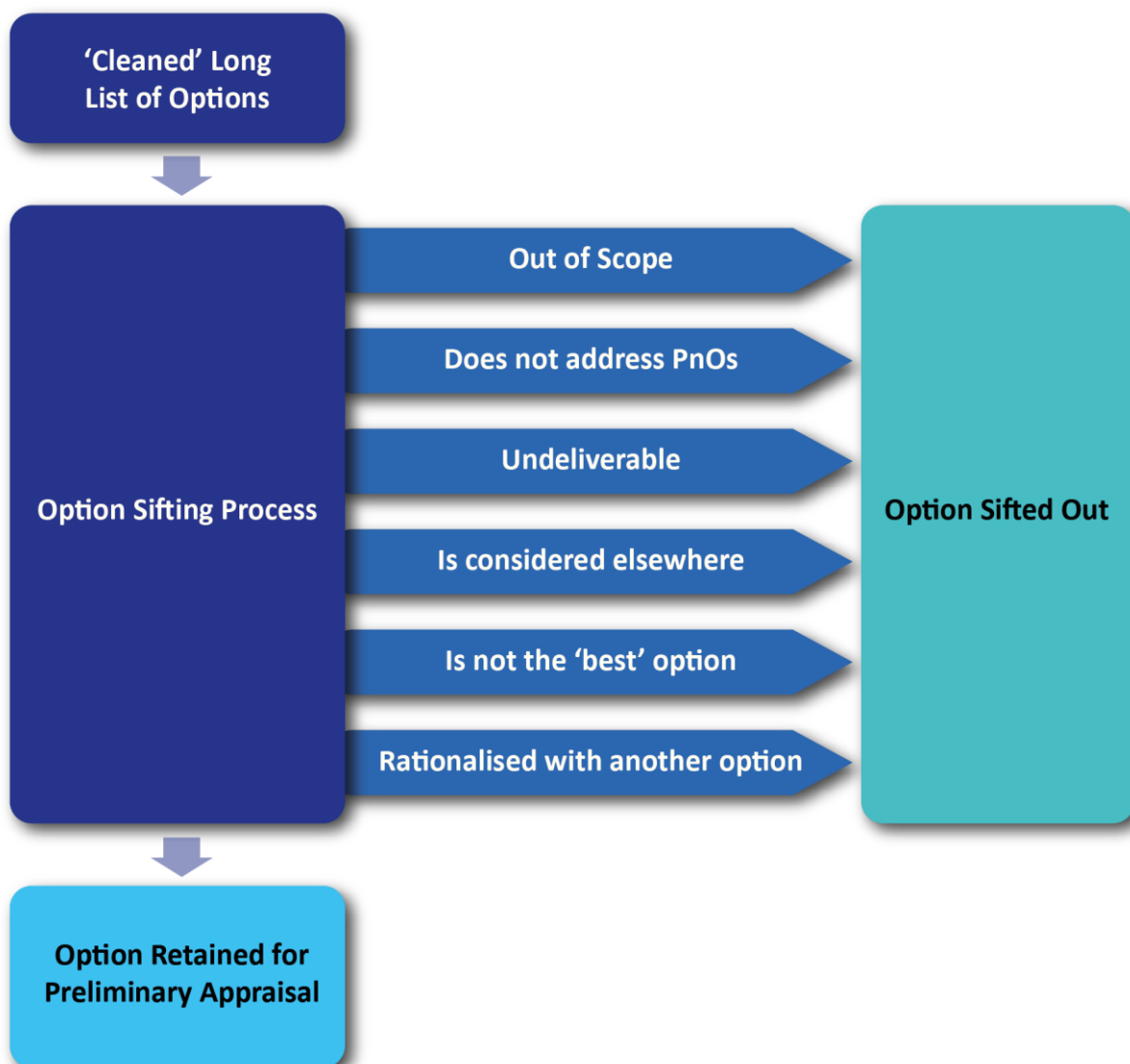


Figure 55: Option Sifting Methodology

Based on the methodology above, options were either:

- Sifted in for further consideration; or
- Sifted out from the process. If appropriate, these will be passed to other areas of Transport Scotland / Scottish Government, or the appropriate local/regional transport authorities and partnerships for consideration out with the A96 Corridor Review.

5.2.4. Options sifted out

Options were sifted out at this stage for one of the following reasons:

- Option is out of scope, and/or;

- Option does not address the problems / opportunities in the region, and/or;
- Deliverability concerns, and/or;
- The option is being progressed elsewhere, including through STPR2 at a national level, and/or;
- The problems/ opportunities are better addressed through another option, and/or;
- The option is rationalised with another, similar option.

The definition of those interventions and projects that are Out of Scope for the A96 Corridor Review is contained in Appendix C. A full list of options is provided in Appendix D

There were 50 options initially retained from the sifting process. Of those that remained, options that shared common traits, despite being slightly different so were not identified as duplicates earlier in this process, were rationalised with each other to form the final list of retained options. For example, options having the same mode or intention but in different locations along the corridor would be rationalised to form one corridor-wide intervention.

For the A96 Corridor Review, 211 options were sifted out or rationalised at this stage.

5.2.5. Options sifted in

Following the sifting exercise, 16 options specific to the A96 Corridor Review remain in the process. Table 11 lists the options that have been retained to progress to the next stages of appraisal.

Table 11: List of Retained Options

Mode of Transport	Option	Description
Active Travel	Active Communities	Deliver networks of high-quality active travel routes and placemaking improvements within key communities along the A96 corridor such as Kintore, Inverurie, Huntly, Fochabers, Elgin and Forres.
Active Travel	Active Connections	Deliver high quality active travel linkages for people walking, wheeling and cycling between settlements along the A96 corridor, which would combine to form a continuous traffic-free path all the way from Inverness to Aberdeen, either directly adjacent to, or close to, the A96.
Bus	Bus Priority Measures and Park & Ride	Implement schemes targeted at delivering faster and more reliable journey times for bus passengers, coupled with the provision of new bus Park & Ride sites where appropriate.
Freight	Introduce Rail Freight Terminals	Facilitate the introduction, the development and operation of rail freight terminals by the private sector at Inverness, Georgemas Junction, Keith and Elgin, to facilitate freight movements to / from these locations by rail.
Multimodal	Improved Public Transport Passenger Interchange Facilities	Improve public transport passenger facilities, including accessibility and quality enhancements at bus stations and railway stations.
Multimodal	Active Hubs	The creation of a strategy for the delivery of active hubs within communities across the length of the A96 corridor.
Public Transport	Investment in Demand Responsive Transport (DRT) and Mobility as a Service (MaaS)	Improve access to travel opportunities in locations with low bus network connectivity or where conventional fixed route services may not be suitable or viable. In these areas, flexible services, such as Demand Responsive Transport (DRT) or Community Transport (CT), may be able to provide improved public transport links.
Rail	Linespeed, Passenger and Freight Capacity Improvements	Three distinct improvements to the railway between Aberdeen and Inverness; linespeed improvements to cut journey times, the provision of passing loops to enable a more frequent passenger service and the provision of freight facilities to enable intermodal freight to operate.

Mode of Transport	Option	Description
	on Aberdeen to Inverness Rail Line	
Rail	Improved Parking Provision at Railway Stations	Enhance parking facilities at railway stations between Aberdeen and Inverness with the aim of encouraging the use of existing low carbon infrastructure for medium and long distance travel along the corridor.
Road	A96 Full Dualling (plus Targeted Trunk Road Improvements)	Full dualling of the A96 between Hardmuir to Craibstone to address road safety concerns and provide resilience and reliability improvements for a key connection between Inverness and Aberdeen.
Road	Targeted Road Safety Improvements	Improving the safety performance of the A96 trunk road to address both real and perceived road safety concerns (with potential measures ranging from minor improvements through to partial dualling).
Road	Elgin Bypass	Improve the safety, resilience, and reliability of the A96 within the vicinity of Elgin through the provision of a bypass of the town.
Road	Keith Bypass	Improve the safety, resilience, and reliability of the A96 within the vicinity of Keith through the provision of a bypass of the town.
Road	Inverurie Bypass	Improve the safety, resilience, and reliability of the A96 within the vicinity of Inverurie through the provision of a bypass of the town.
Road	Forres Bypass	Improve the safety, resilience, and reliability of the A96 in Forres through the provision of a bypass within the vicinity of the town
Technology	A96 Electric Corridor	Provision of alternative refuelling infrastructure and facilities along the A96 corridor, its interfacing local roads as well as, where appropriate, strategic economic and transport hubs. This option will directly facilitate the dispensation of alternative sources of fuel for various modes of sustainable transport although it is recognised that the option is likely to focus on road vehicles.

Figure 56 summarises the 16 retained options, grouped according to the Sustainable Travel Hierarchy as set out in NTS2.

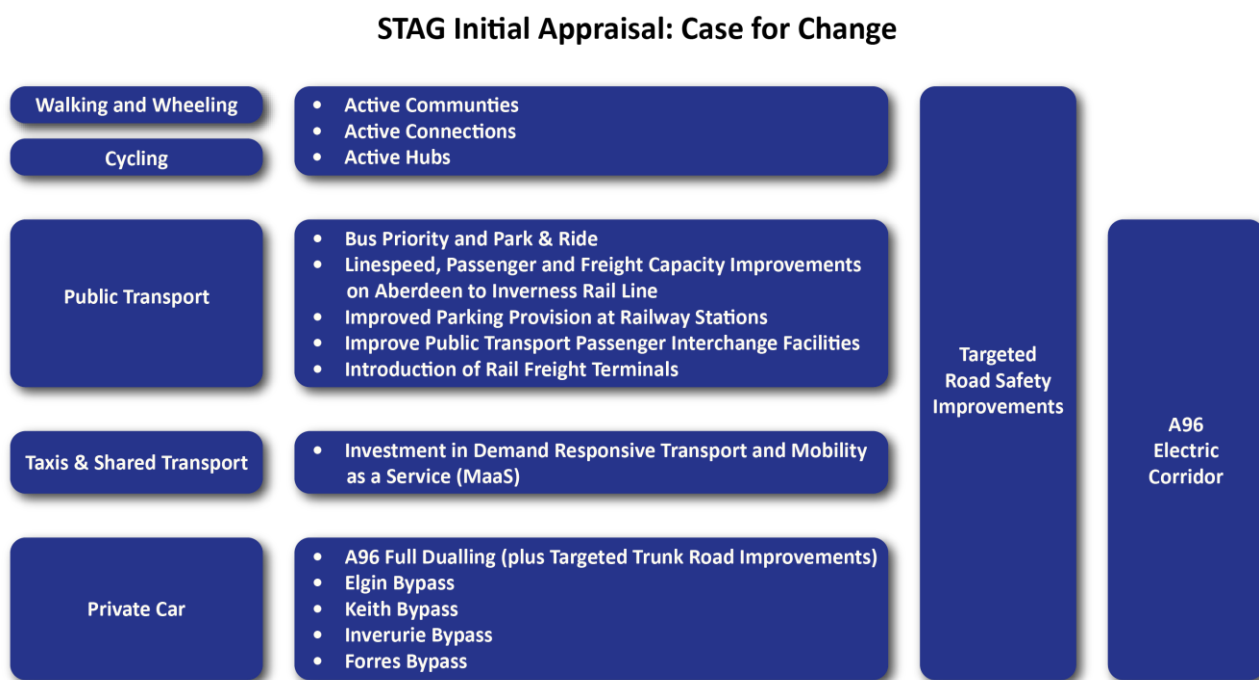


Figure 56: Retained Options Grouped to the Sustainable Travel Hierarchy

5.2.6. Next Steps

The process has followed the principles of STAG and has been objective-led throughout, and the generation and development of options has had a focus on the ability to address one or more of the identified problems and opportunities and hence meet the TPOs. The options developed through the generation/sifting process have also taken due consideration of the feedback that has been received through the engagement process including the virtual workshops and the online survey.

As noted in Chapter 1, the Cooperation Agreement reaffirmed that the current plan is to fully dual the A96 route between Inverness and Aberdeen. The outcome of the STAG process to this point has, objectively, also led to the list of retained options that includes the option for 'A96 Full Dualling plus Targeted Trunk Road Improvements'.

The final short list of options for the A96 Corridor Review will now be taken forward for more detailed development and appraisal through the next stages of the STAG process. This includes an assessment of the likely impacts of options against the:

- Transport Planning Objectives;
- STAG criteria [i.e. Environment, Climate Change, Health Safety & Wellbeing, Economy, Equality and Accessibility];

- Established policy directives; and
- Feasibility, affordability and public acceptability of options.

Appendix A. Report Figures

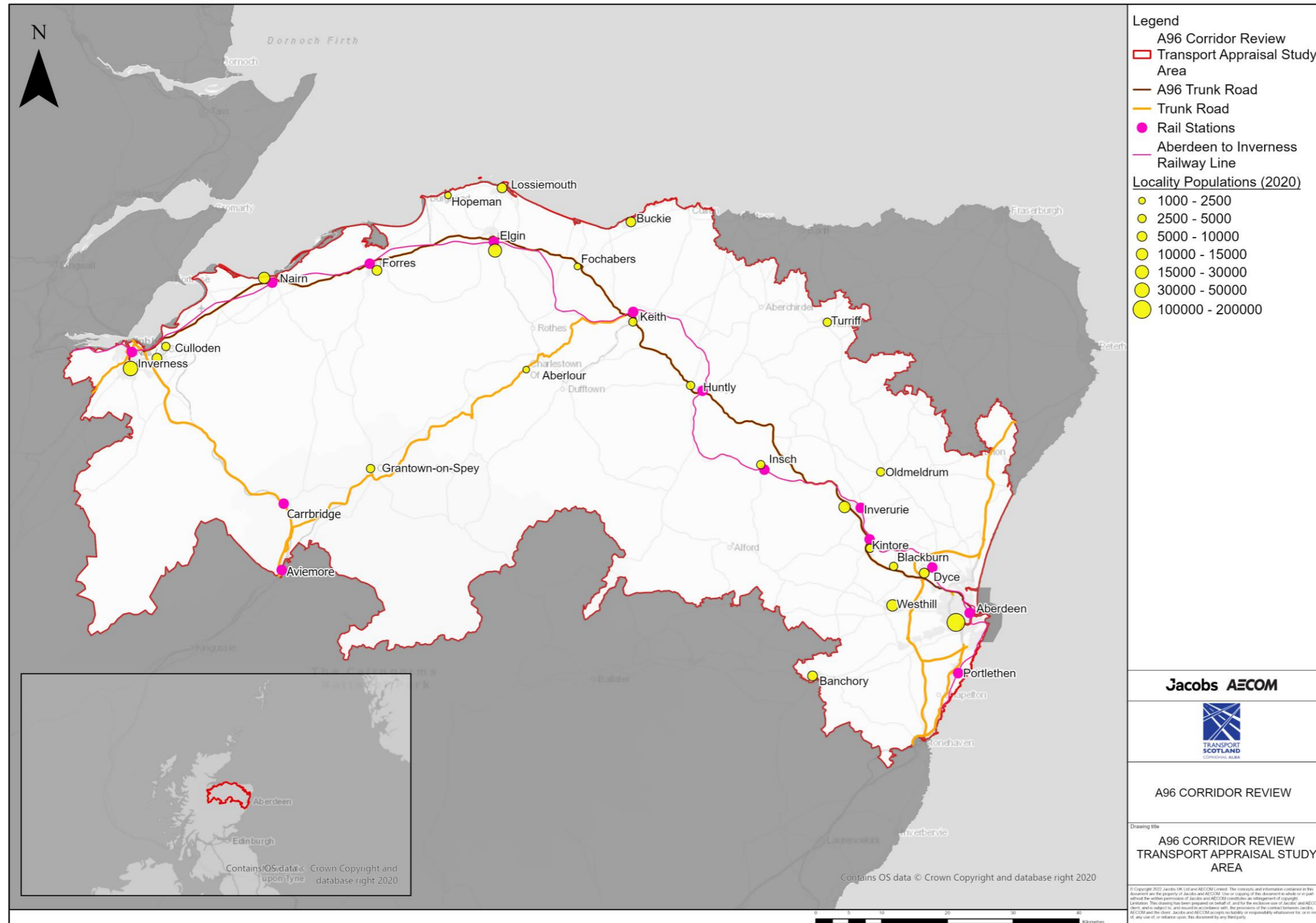


Figure A 1: A96 Corridor Review Transport Appraisal Study Area

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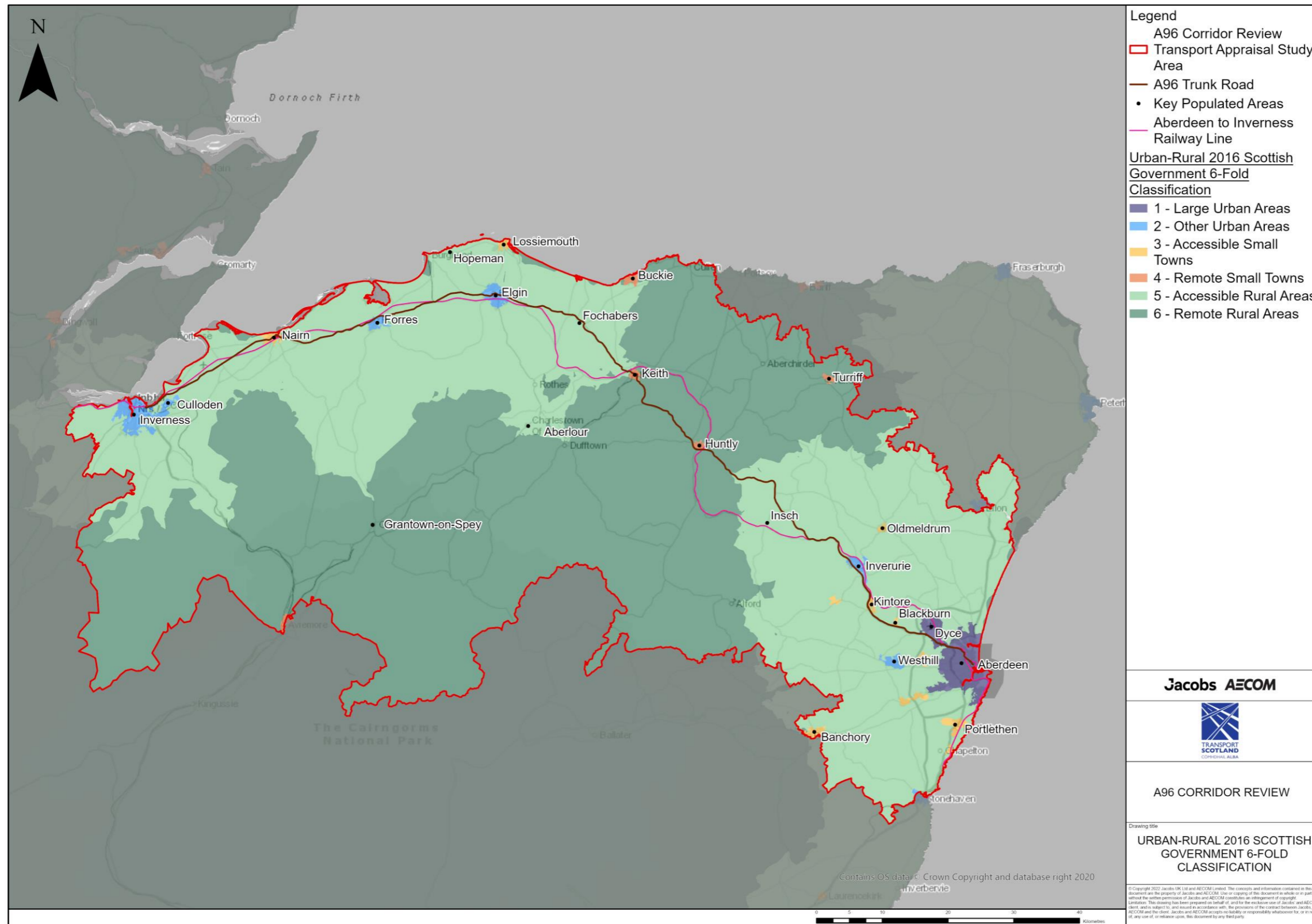


Figure A 2: Urban-Rural 2016 Scottish Government 6-Fold Classification

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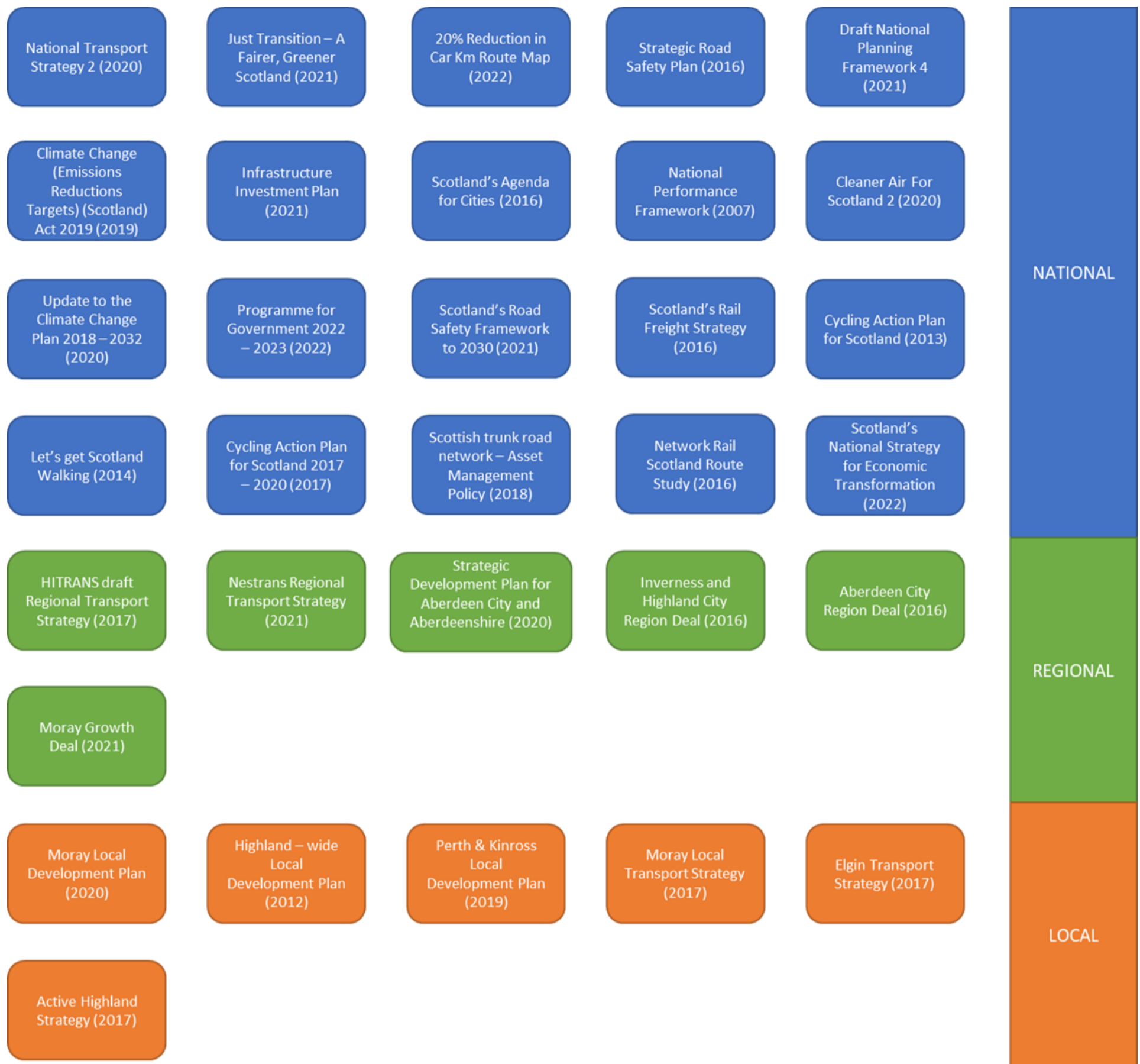


Figure A 3: Overview of Policy, Strategy and Legislation Context

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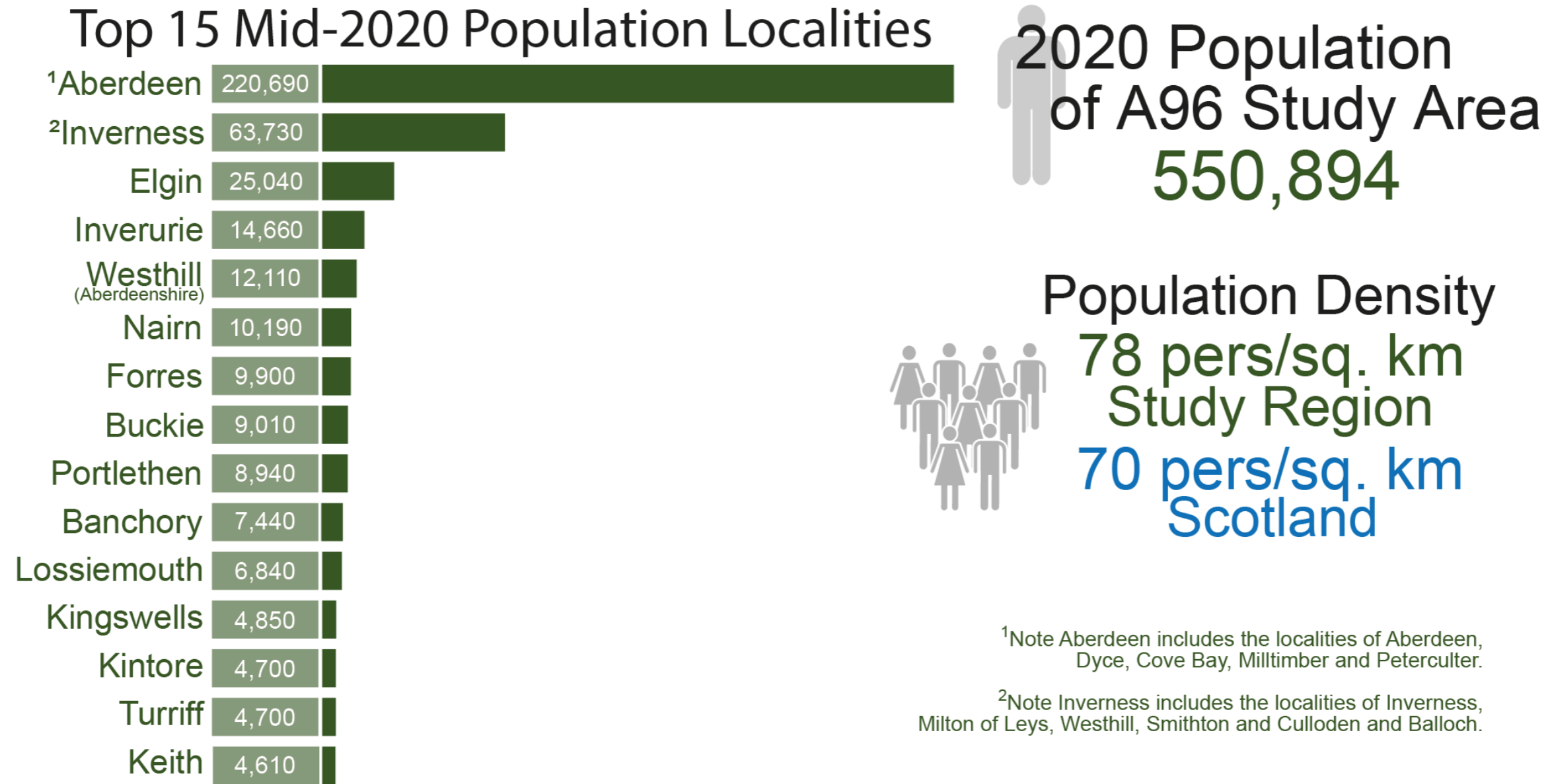


Figure A 4: Transport Appraisal Study Area Largest Settlements by Population 2020, 2020 Population and Population Density

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Top 15 Mid-2020 Population Localities – Change from 2012

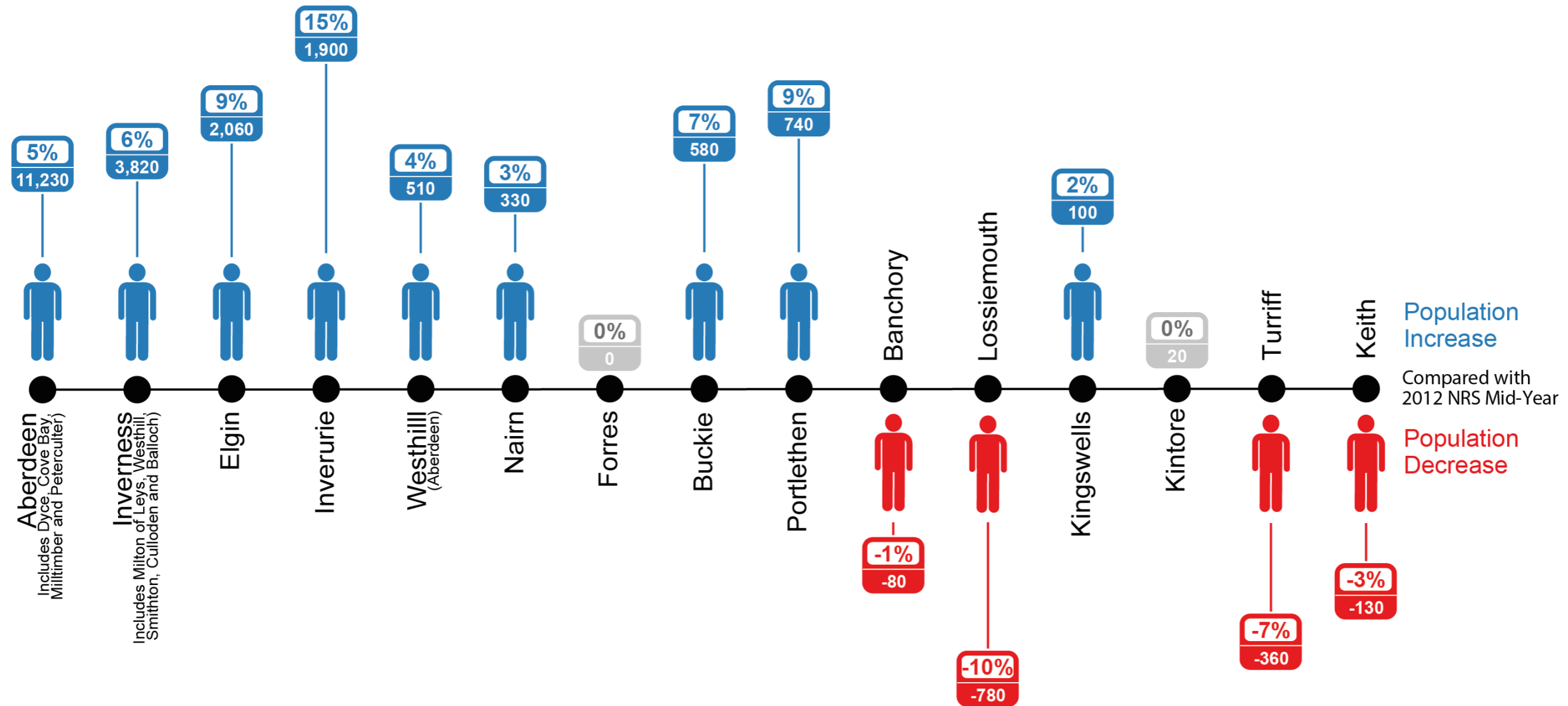


Figure A 5: Top 15 Settlements Population Change

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Travel to Work Mode Share 2011

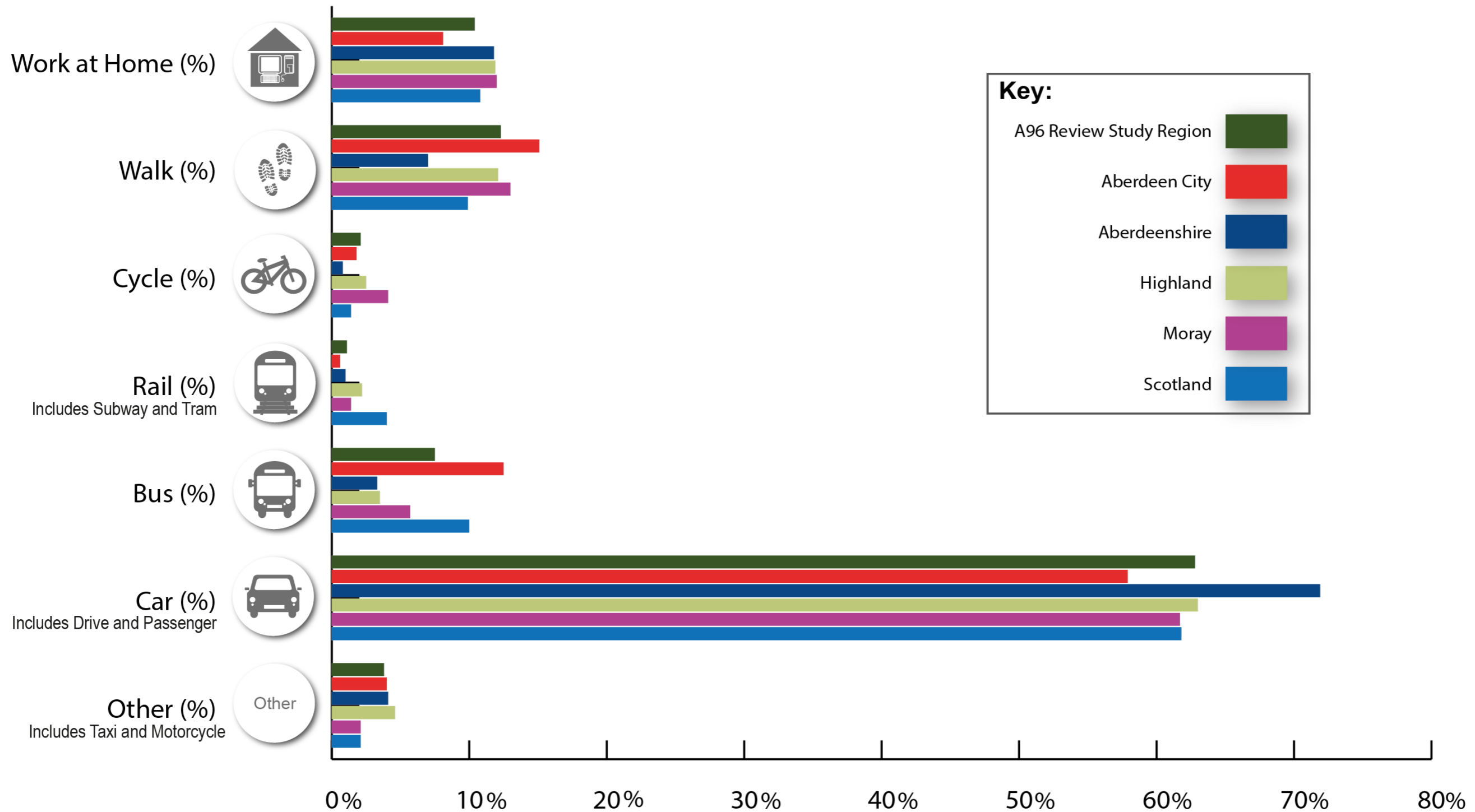


Figure A 6: Travel to Work Mode Share

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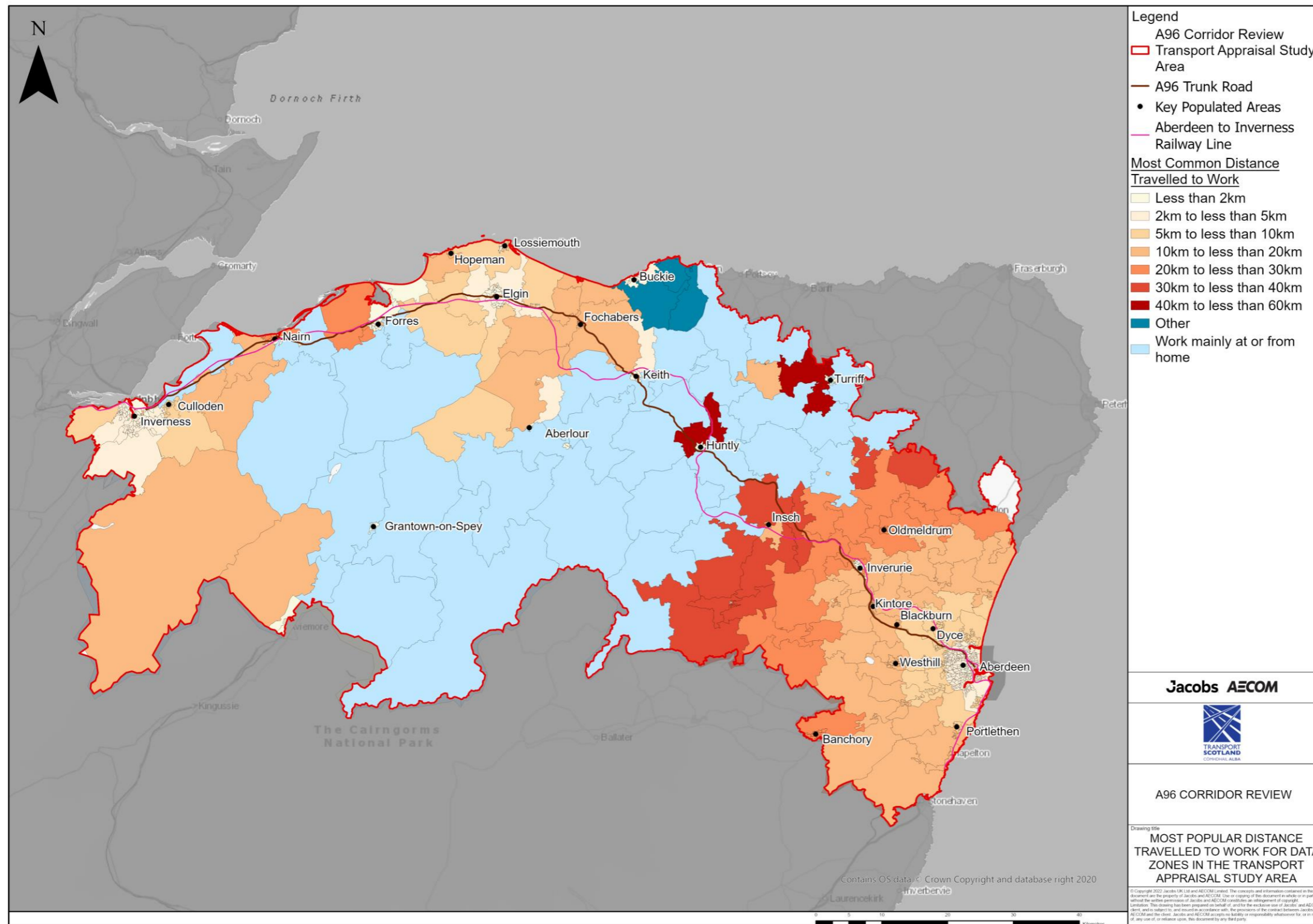


Figure A 7: Most Popular Distance Travelled to Work for Data Zones in the Transport Appraisal Study Area

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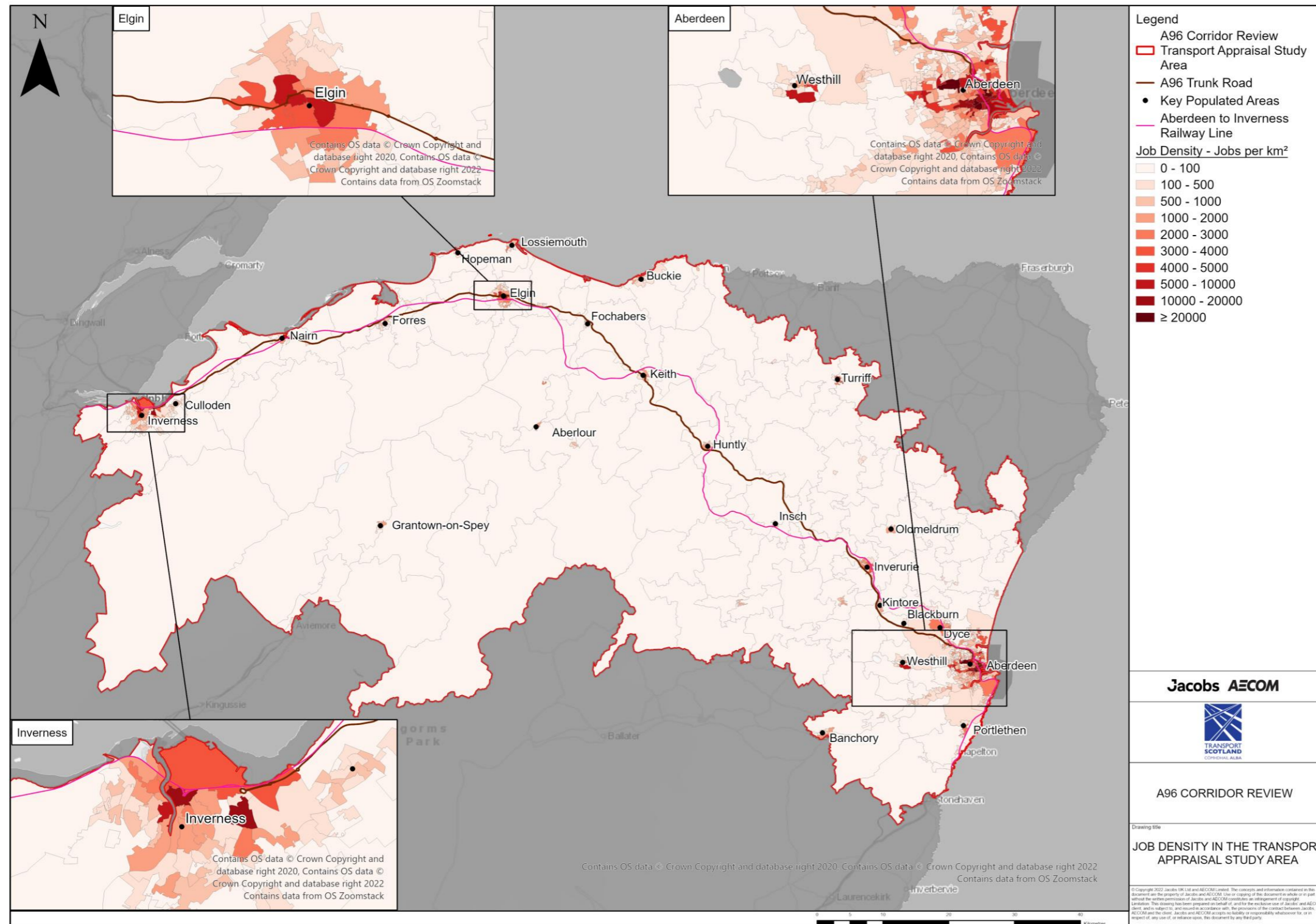


Figure A 8: Job Density in the Transport Appraisal Study Area

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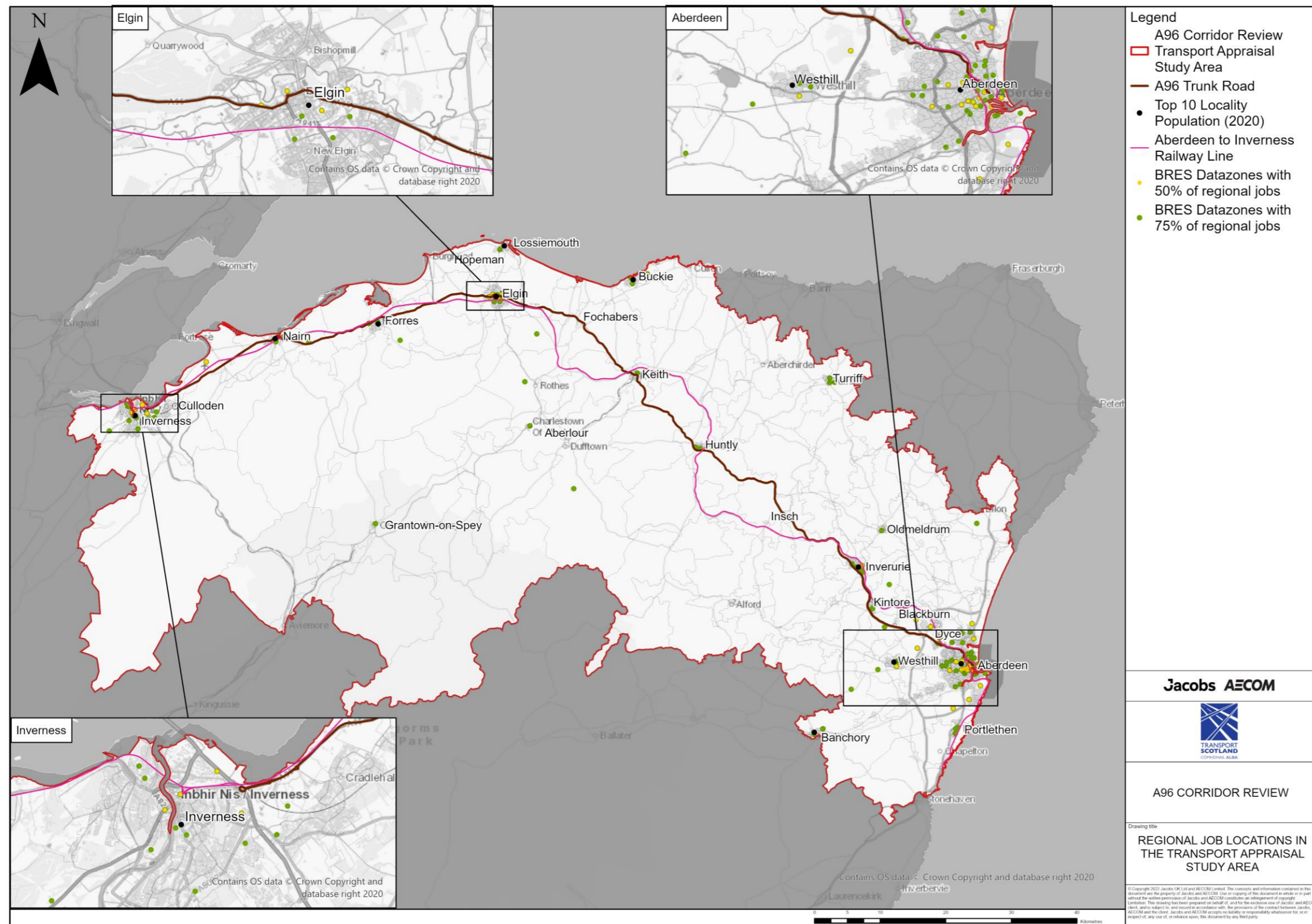


Figure A 9: Regional Job Locations in the Transport Appraisal Study Area
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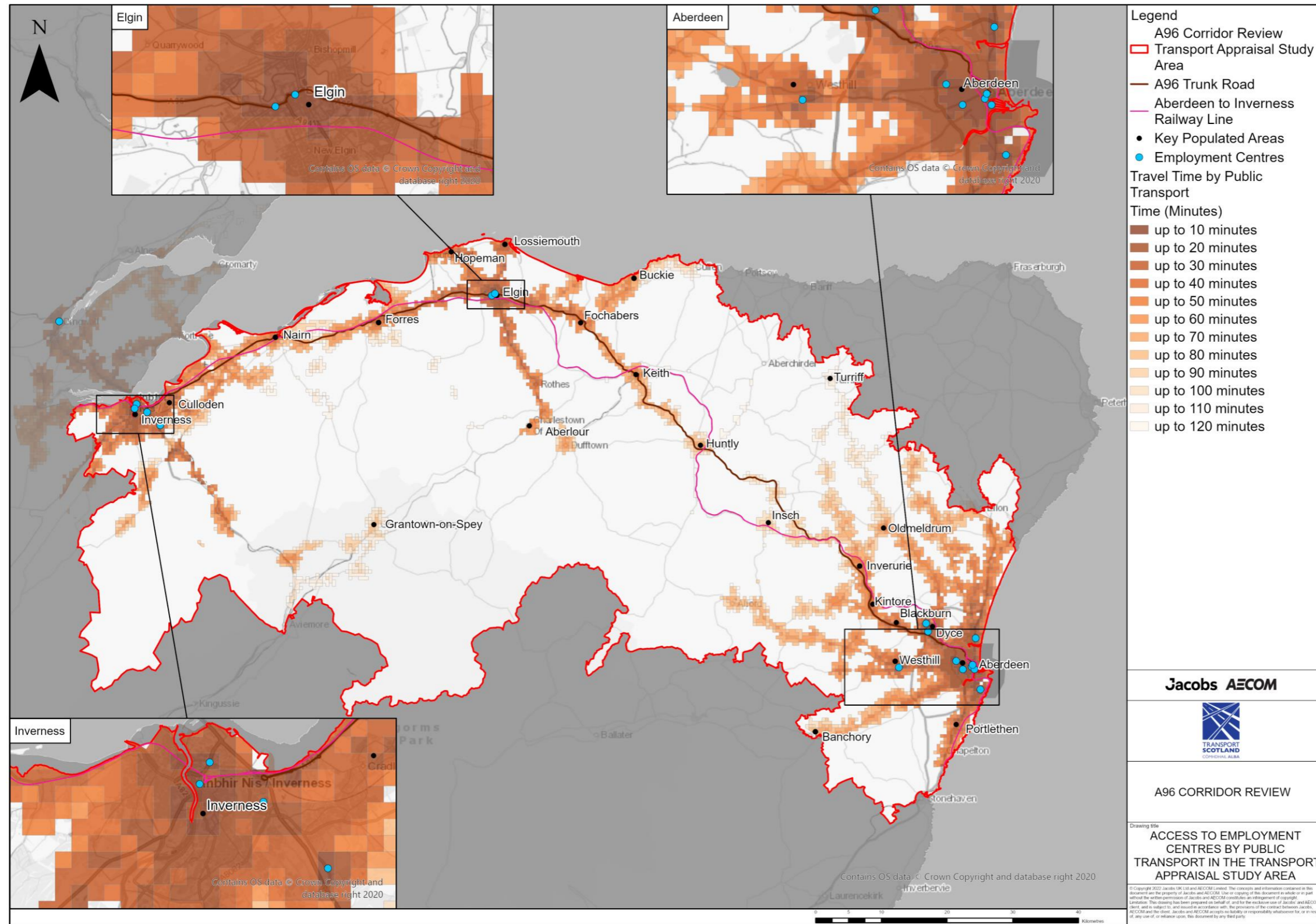


Figure A 10: Access to Employment Centres by Public Transport in the Transport Appraisal Study Area

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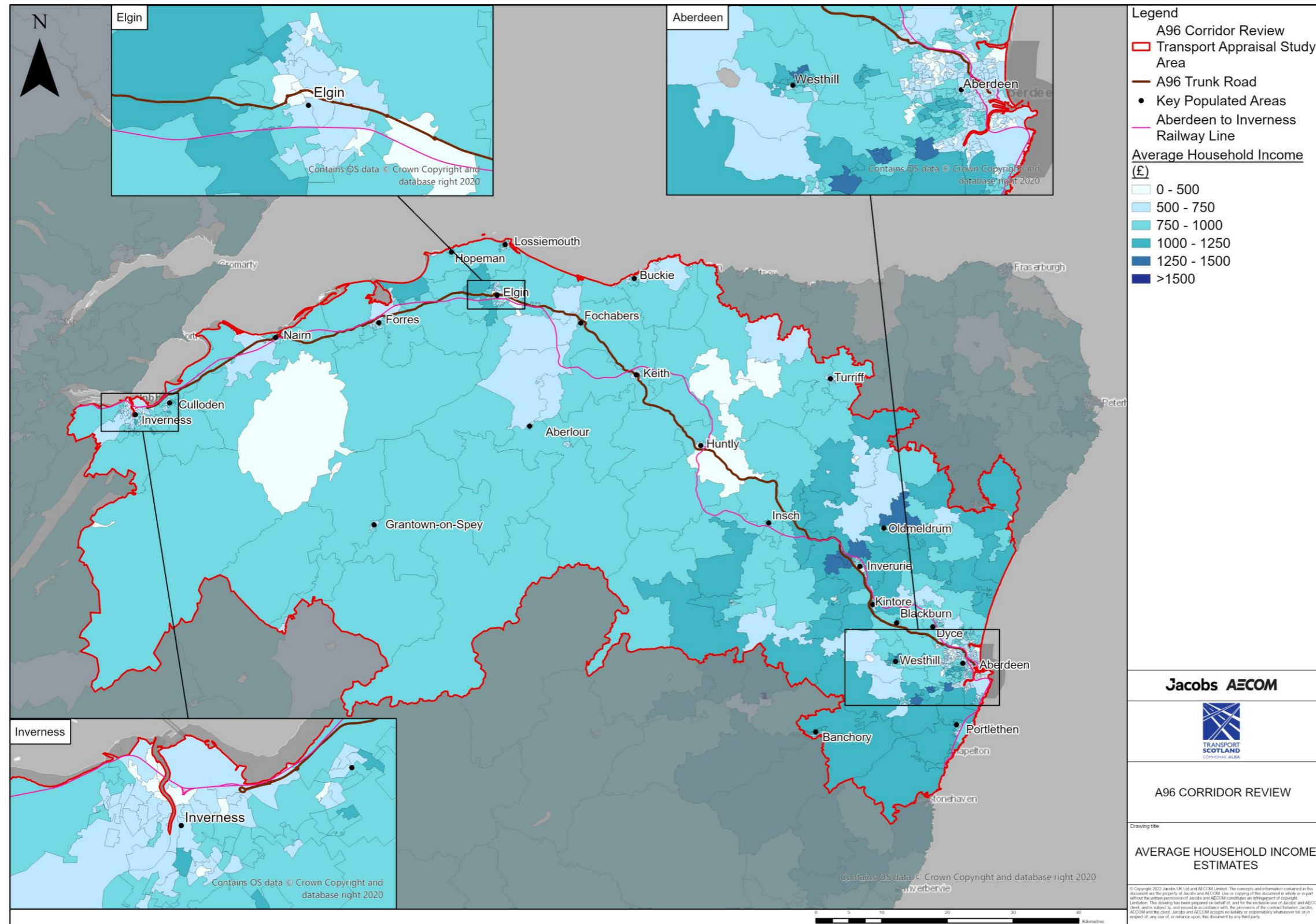


Figure A 11: Average Household Income Estimates
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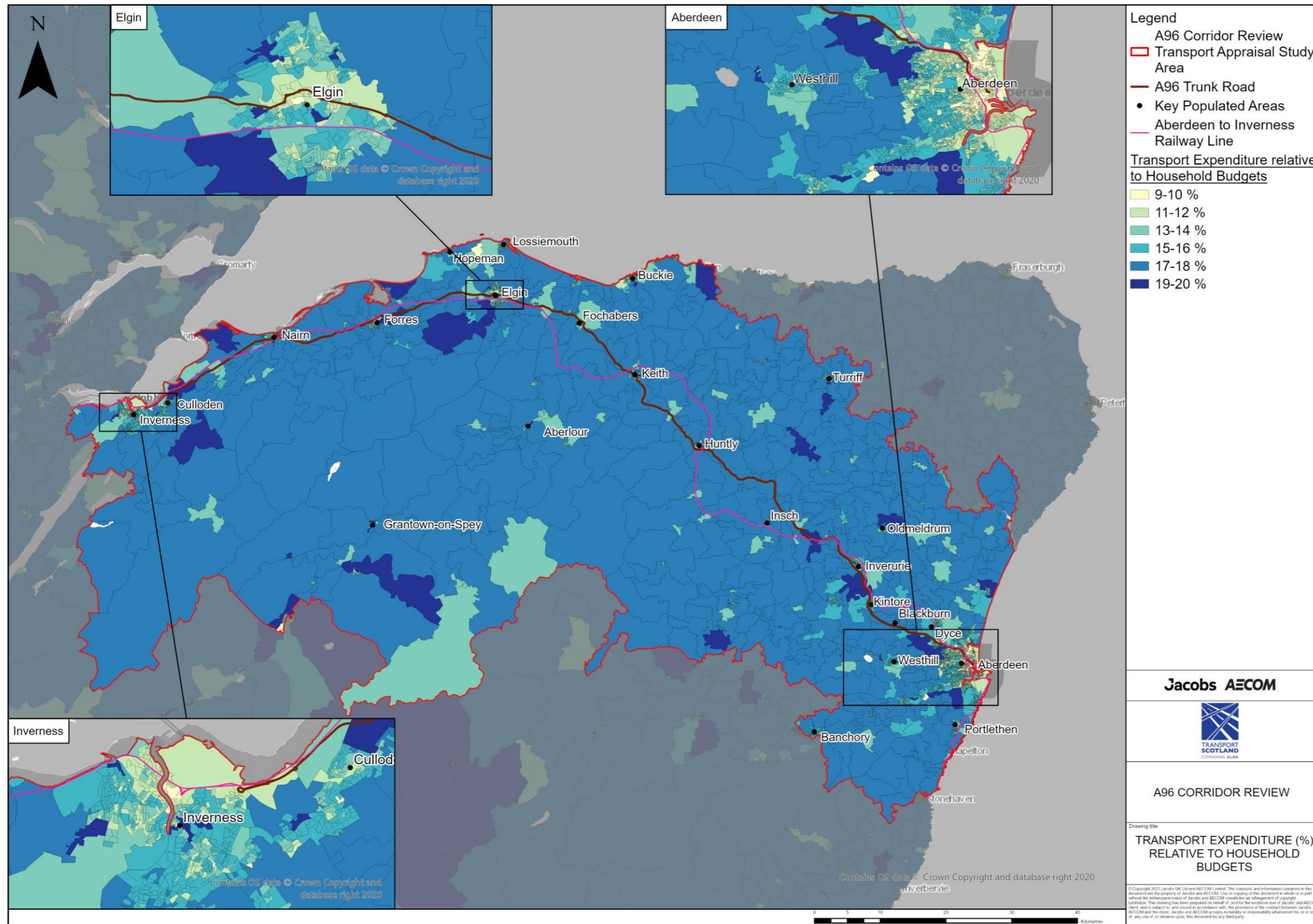


Figure A 12: Transport Expenditure (%) relative to Household Budgets
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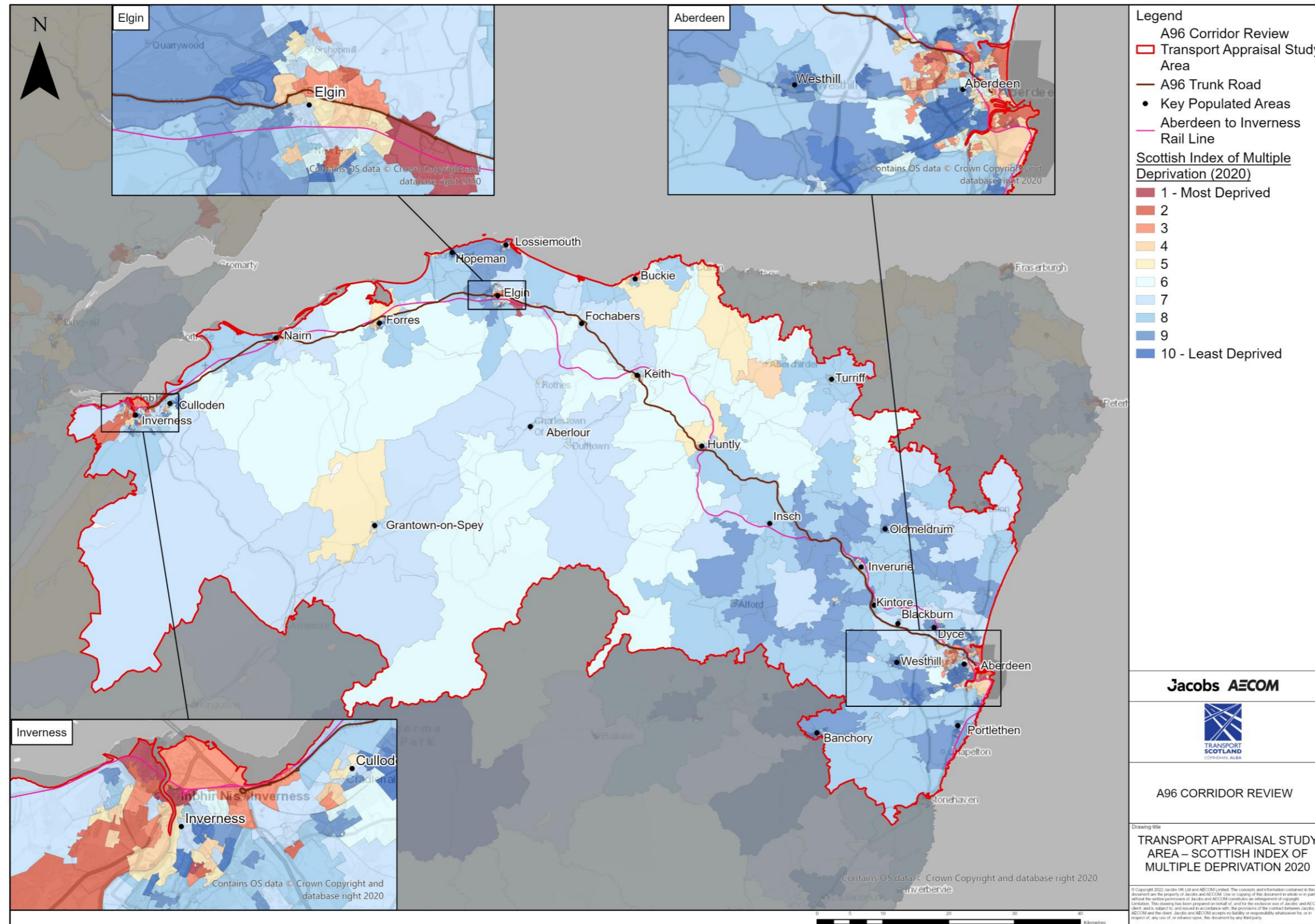


Figure A 13: Transport Appraisal Study Area – Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation 2020

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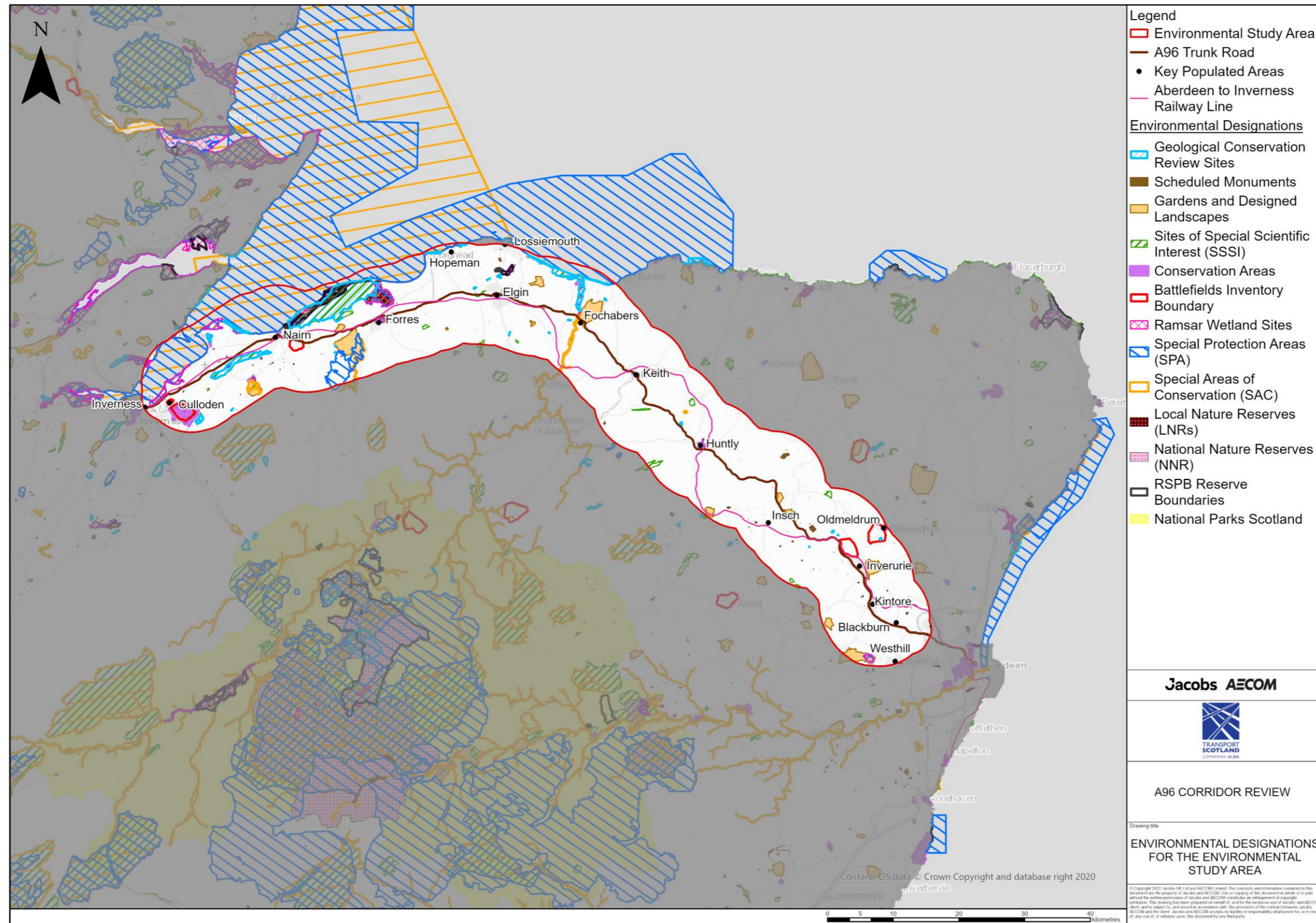


Figure A 14: Environmental Designations for the Environmental Study Area

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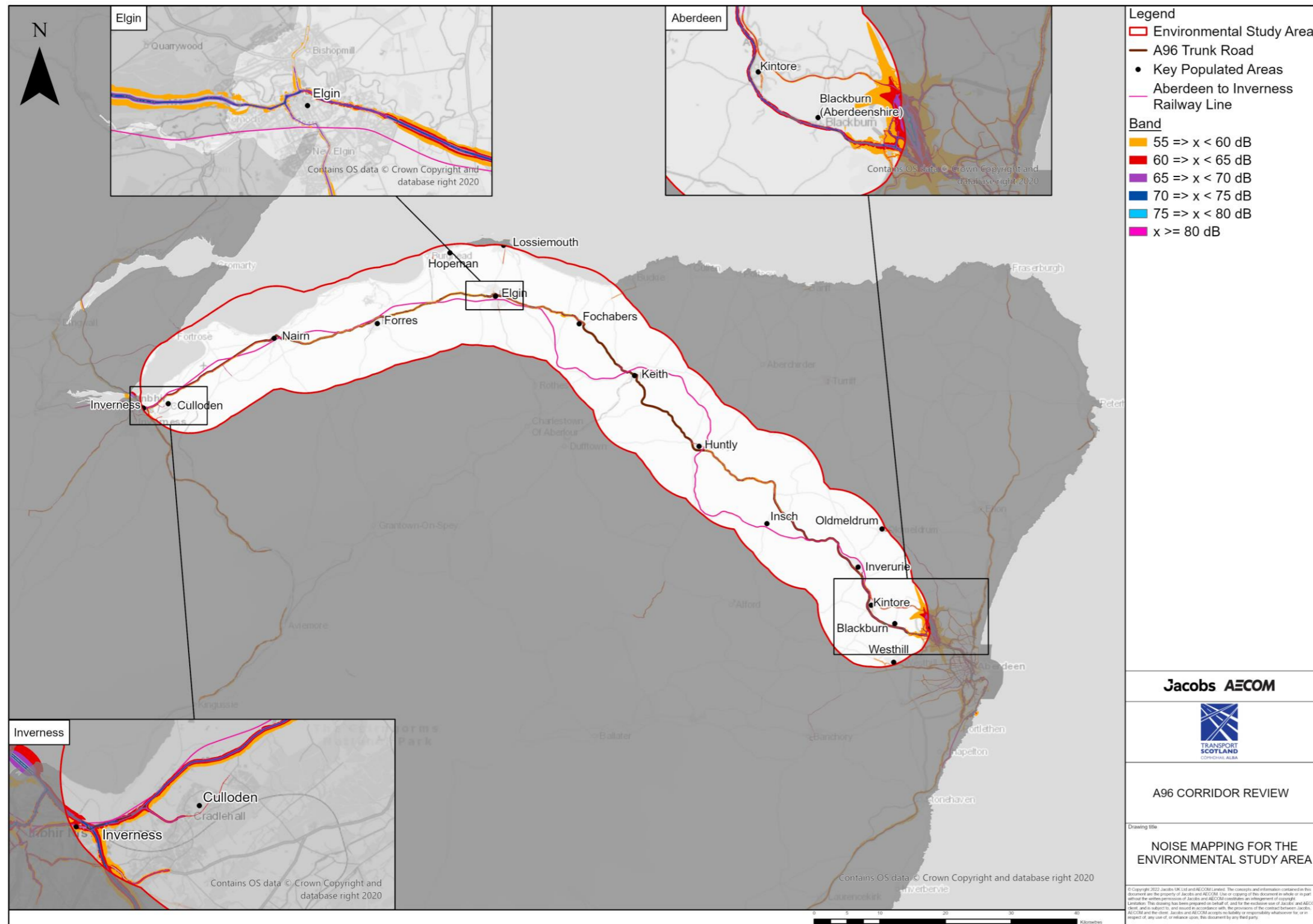


Figure A 15: Noise Mapping for the Environmental Study Area

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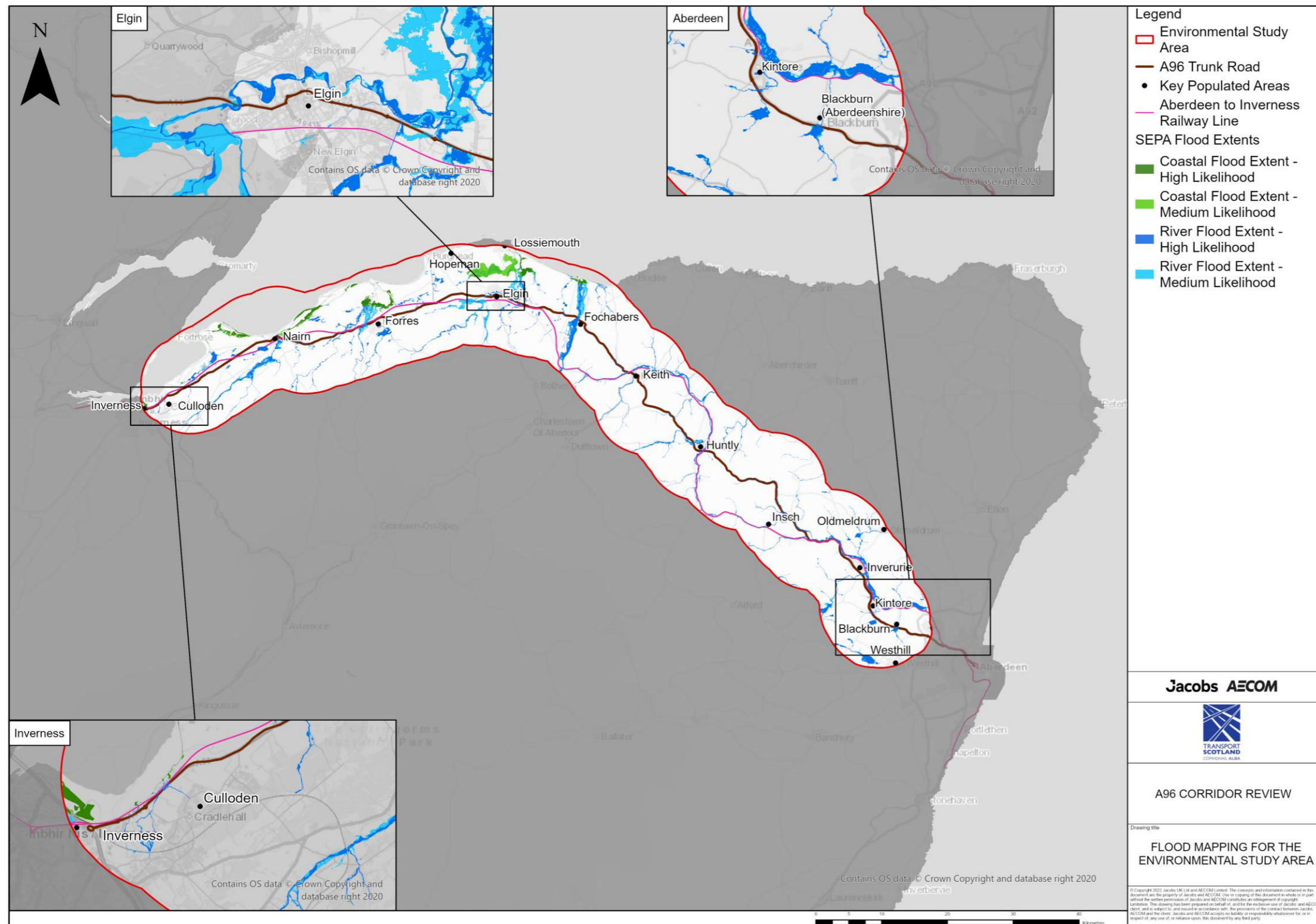


Figure A 16: Flood Mapping for the Environmental Study Area

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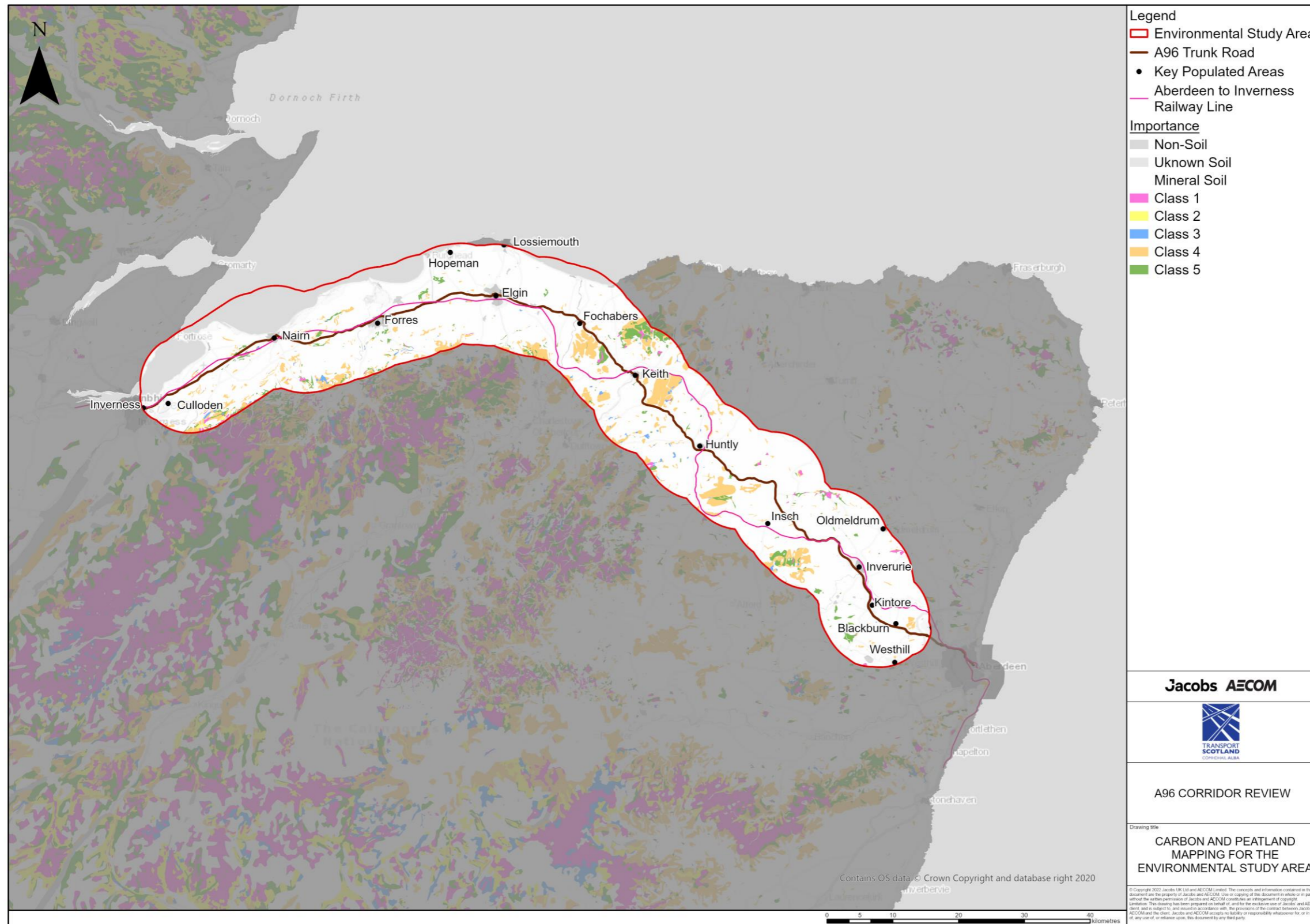


Figure A 17: Carbon and Peatland Mapping for the Environmental Study Area

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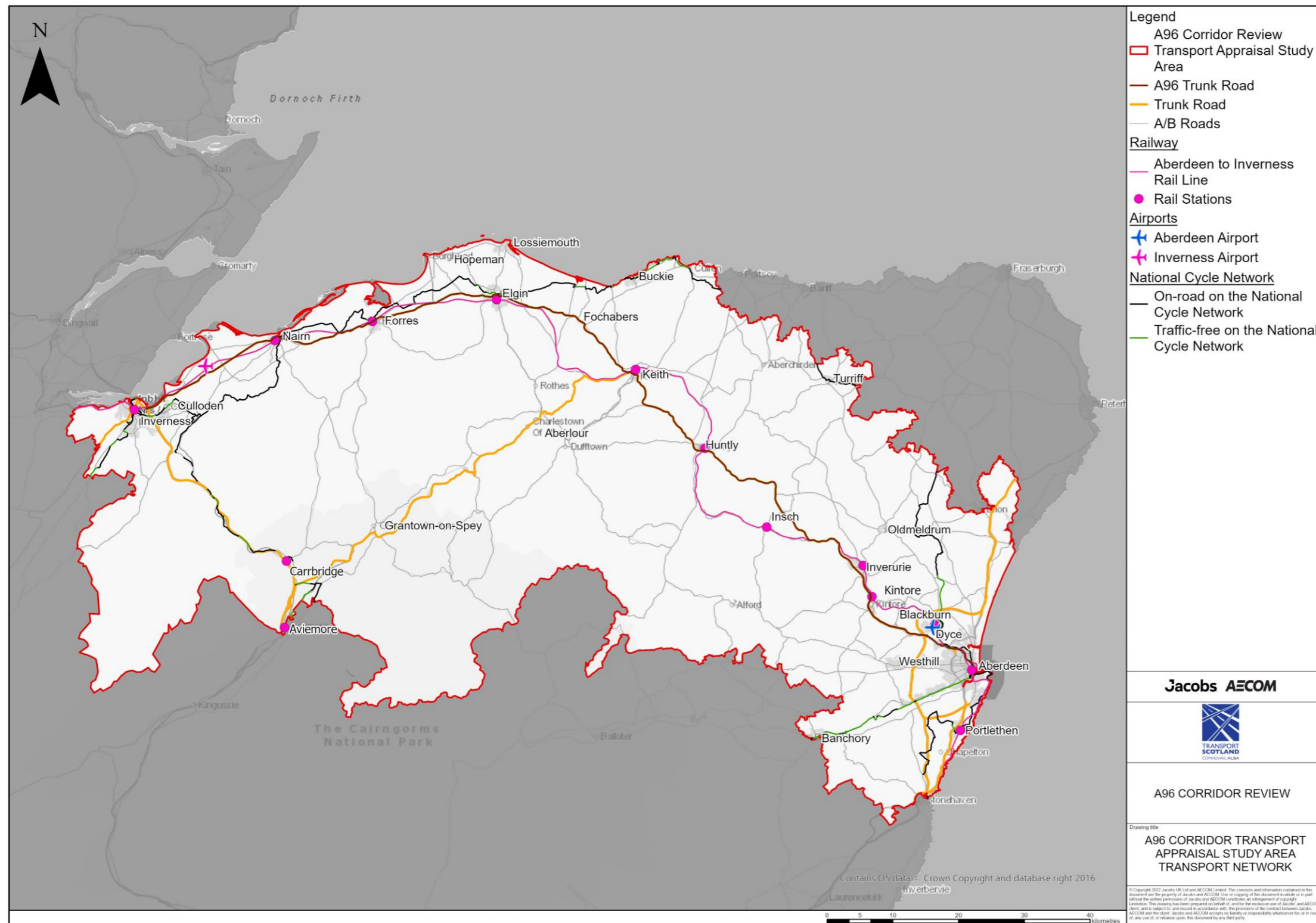


Figure A 18: A96 Corridor Review Transport Appraisal Study Area Transport Network

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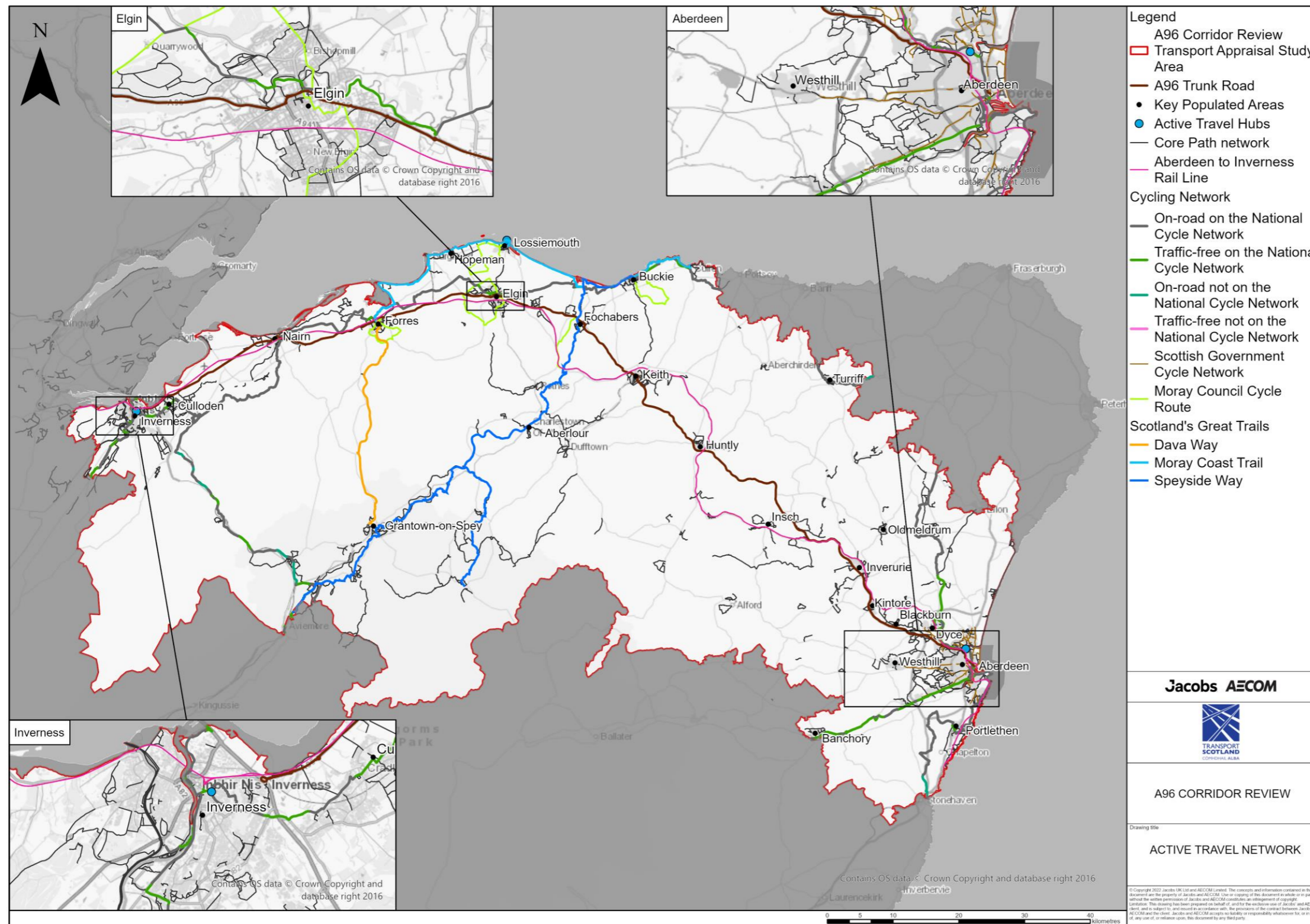


Figure A 19: Active Travel Network
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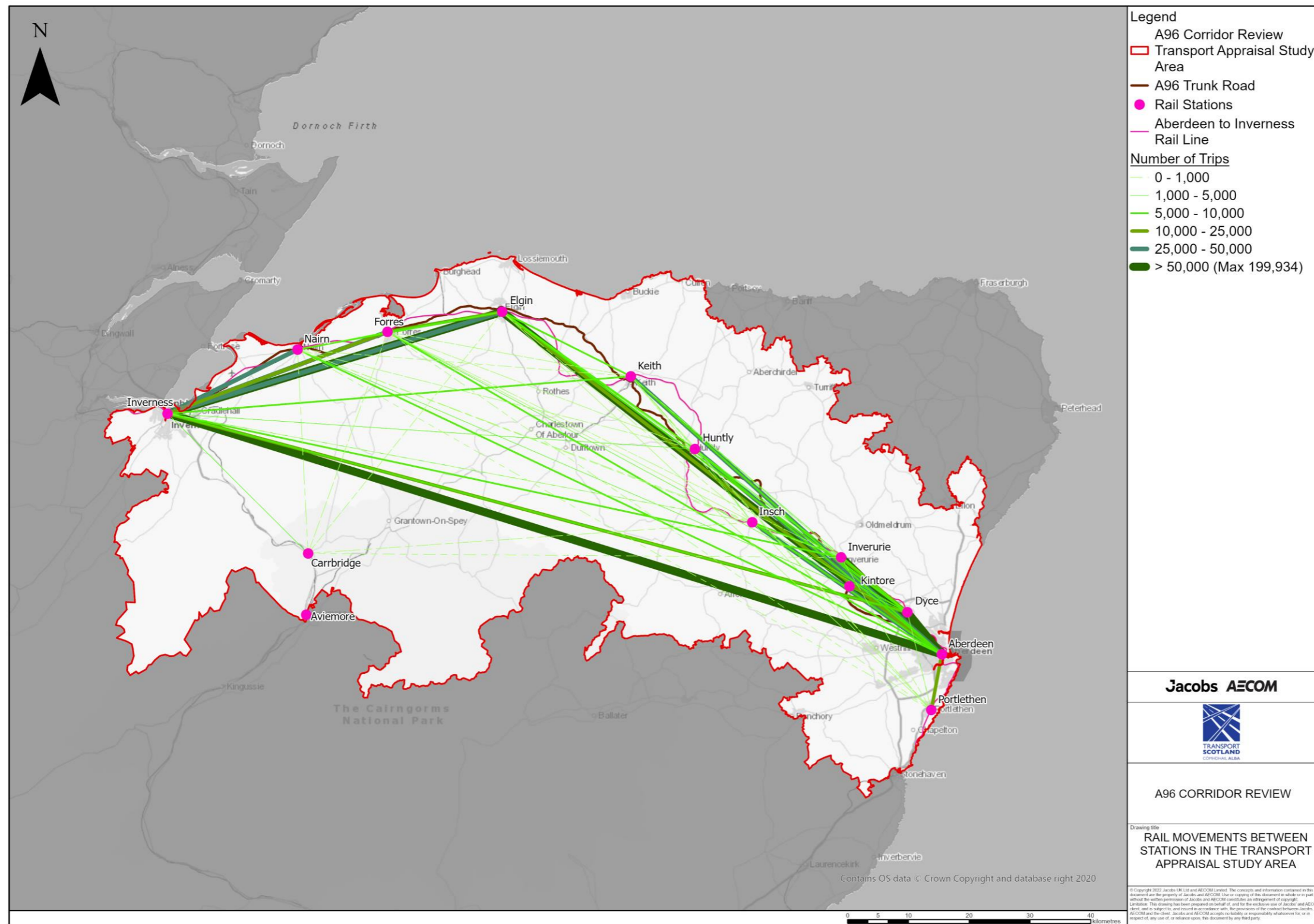


Figure A 20: Rail Movements between Stations in the Transport Appraisal Study Area

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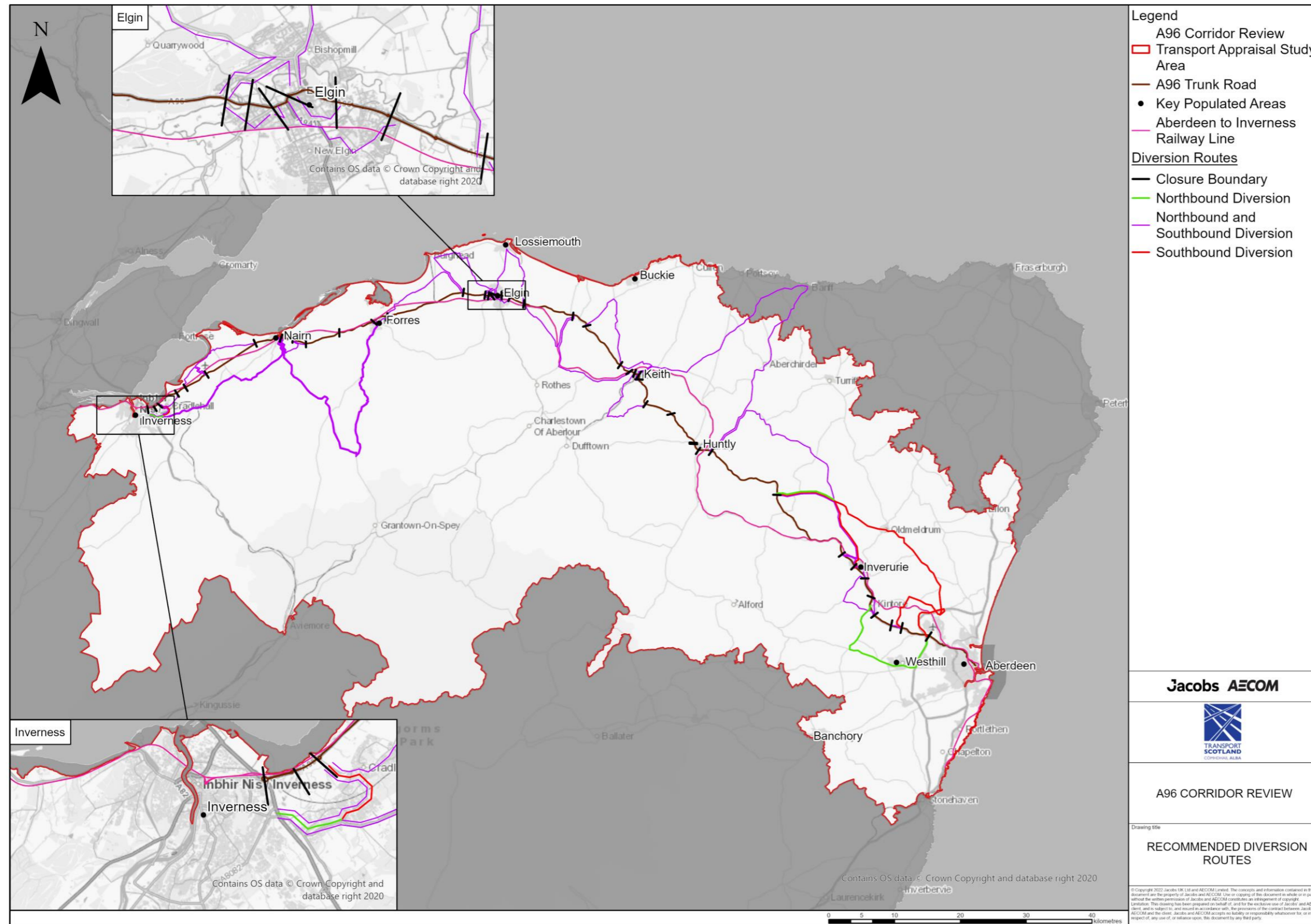


Figure A 21: Recommended Diversion Routes
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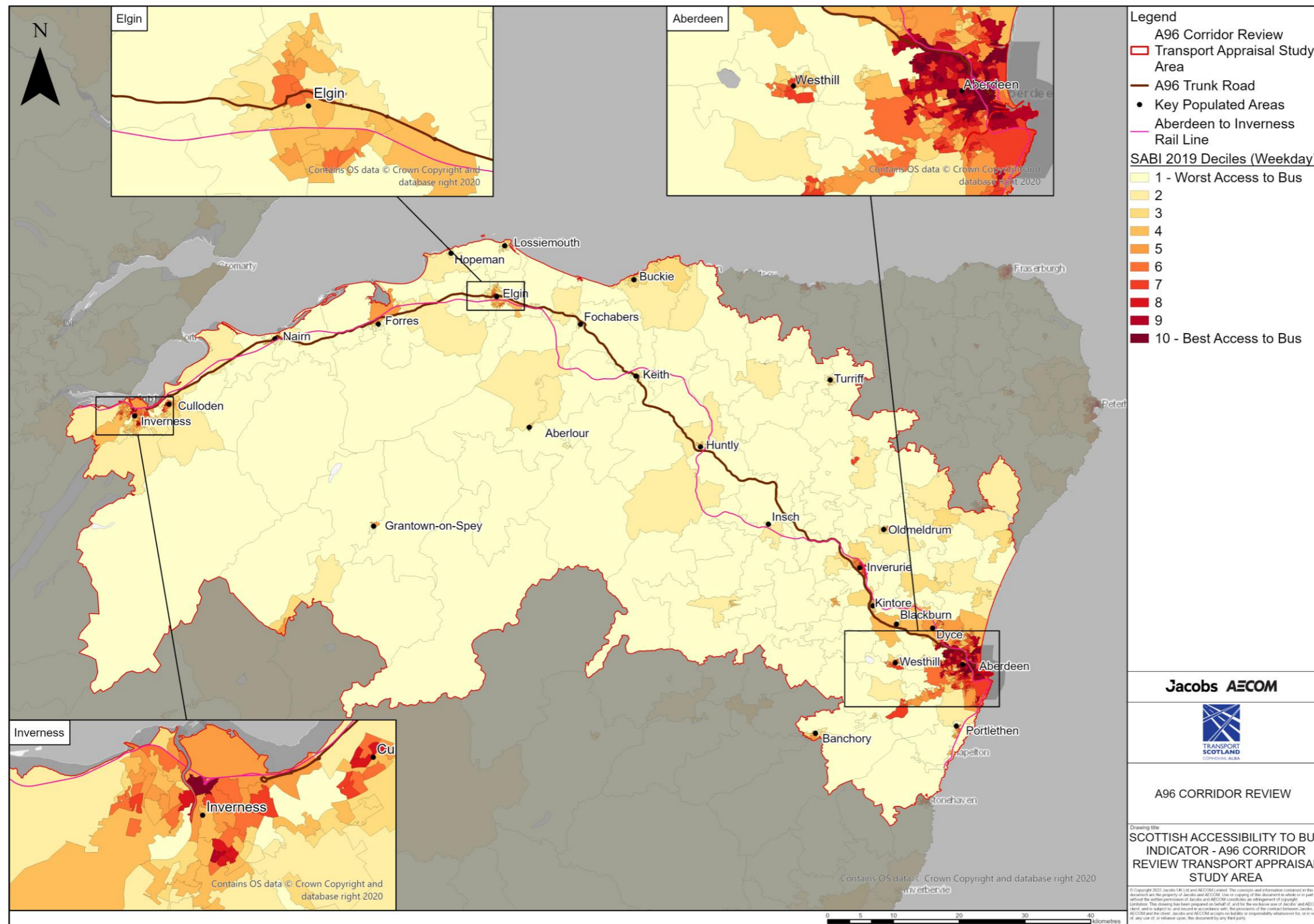


Figure A 22: Scottish Accessibility to Bus Indicator – A96 Corridor Review Transport Appraisal Study Area

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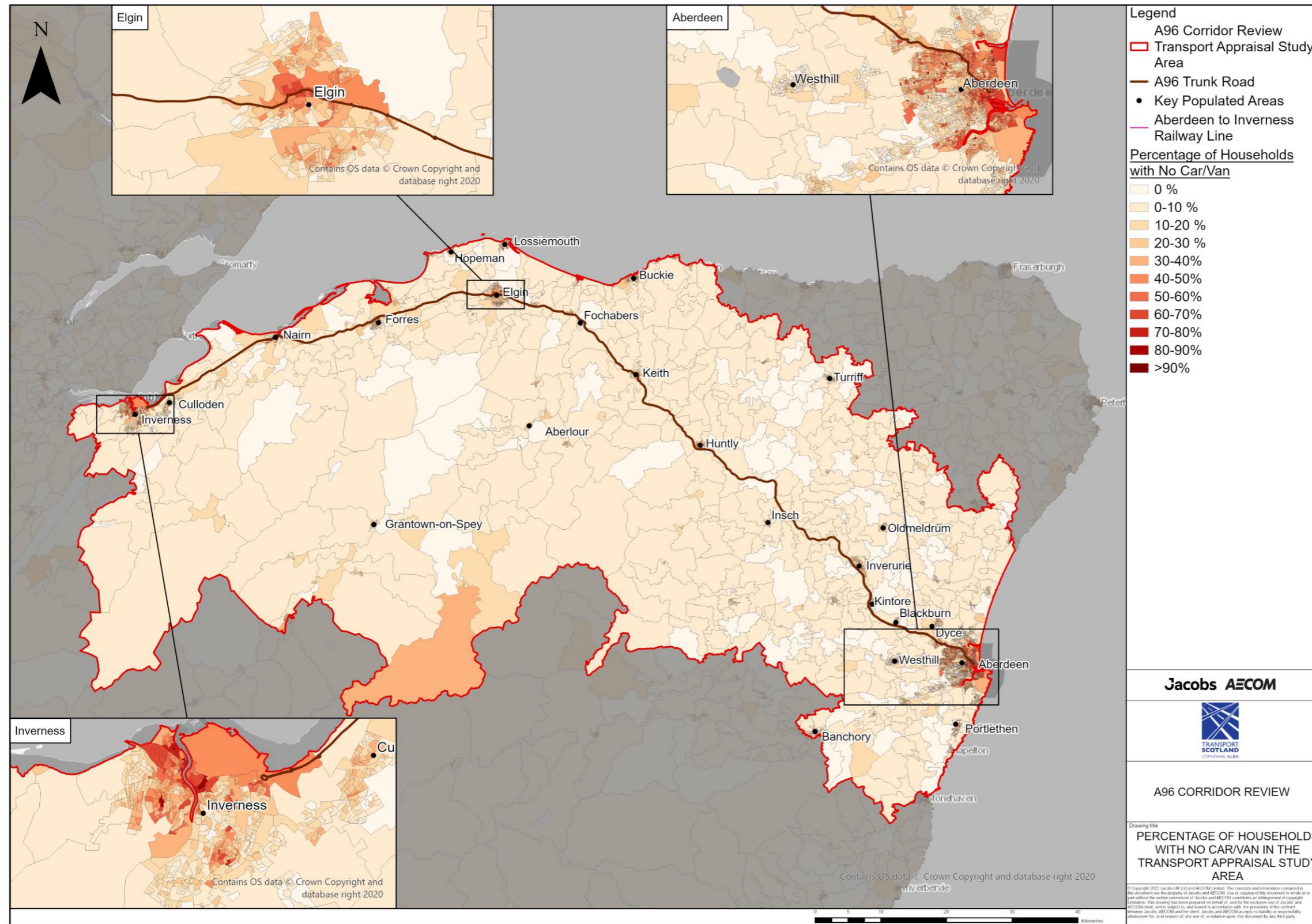


Figure A 23: Percentage of Households with no car/van in the Transport Appraisal Study Area

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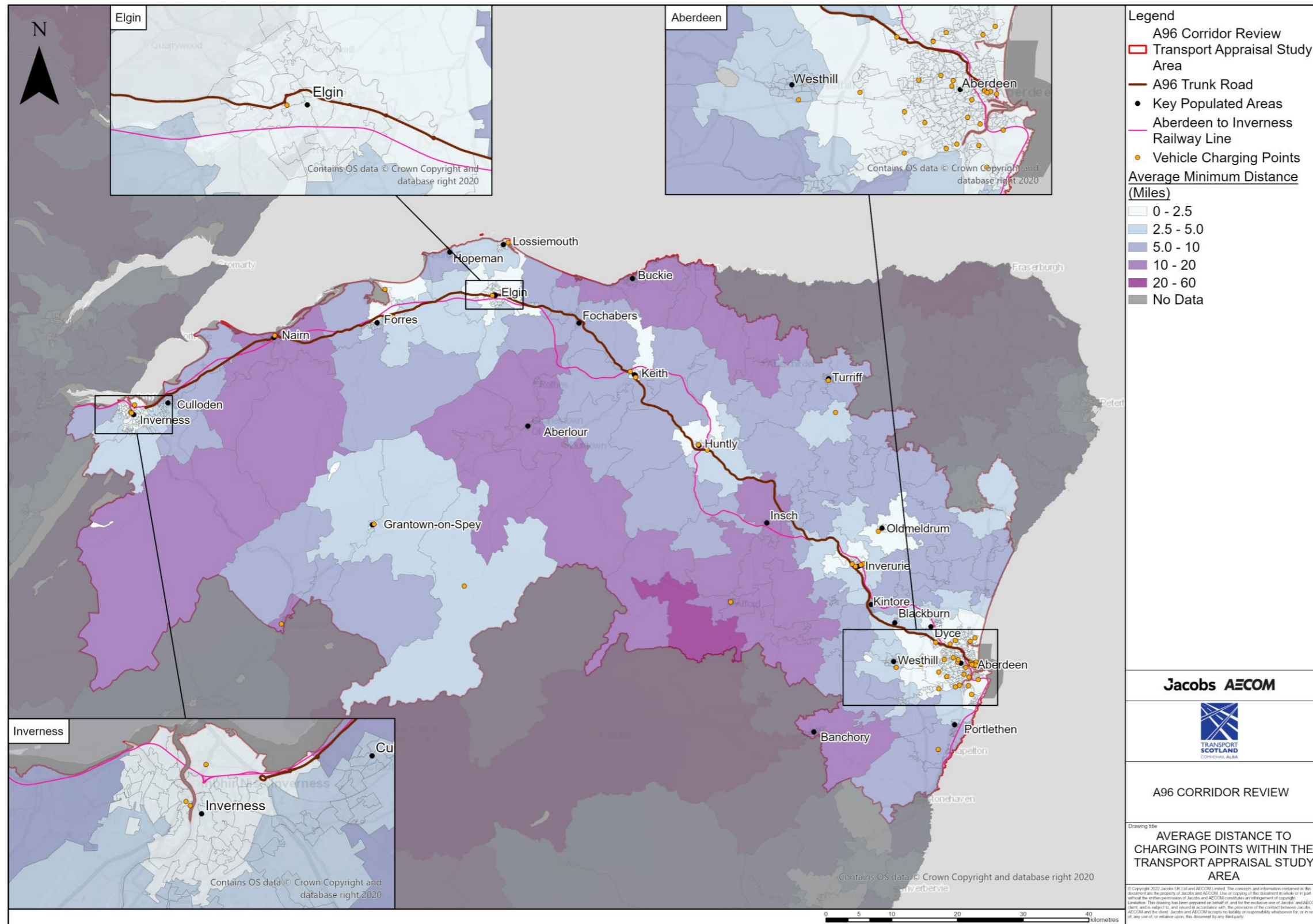


Figure A 24: Average Distance to Charging Points within the Transport Appraisal Study Area

(Click image to go back to main report)

Appendix B. Road Closures

Section of Closure	Approx. Length of Closure (km)	Diversion		
		Direction	Approx. Length (km)	No. of Incidents Resulting in Closure (2016-2021)
A96 Chapel of Stoneywood to Little Clinterty Roundabout	4.4	NB	20.6	11
		SB	18.0	
A96 Little Clinterty Roundabout to Kinellar Roundabout	1.5	NB & SB	1.5	3
A96 Kinellar Roundabout to Broomhill Roundabout	3.0	NB	44.4	4
		SB	18.0	
A96 Broomhill Roundabout to Tavelty Junction	3.5	NB & SB	3.5	6
A96 Tavelty Junction to Inverurie Roundabout	3.0	NB & SB	11.5	3
A96 Inverurie Roundabout to Blackhall Roundabout	2.5	NB & SB	3.5	4
A96 Blackhall Roundabout to Drimmies Junction	2.6	NB & SB	3.5	0
A96 Drimmies Junction to Colpy Junction A920	16.0	NB & SB	21.0	13
A96 Colpy Junction A920 to Junction A97 east of Carvichen	14.0	NB	41.0	6
		SB	43.6	
A96 Junction A97 east of Huntly to the George V Avenue Roundabout, Huntly	2.0	NB & SB	65.0	9
A96 George V Avenue Roundabout to Jct A920 at Milton	1.3			
A96 Jct A920 at Milton near Huntly	0.1			
Jct A920 at Milton to B9022 Junction	6.0			
A96 B9022 Junction, Huntly to Junction B9115 at Newtack	9.7			
A96 Junction B9115 at Newtack to junction with Seafield Walk at Keith	4.5	NB & SB	15.5	4
A96 Seafield Walk, Keith to A95 Banff Road, Keith	0.9	NB & SB	1.0	0

Section of Closure	Approx. Length of Closure (km)	Diversion		
		Direction	Approx. Length (km)	No. of Incidents Resulting in Closure (2016-2021)
A96 A95 Banff Road, Keith to Junction with B9014 in Keith	0.8	NB & SB	7.5	3
A96 Dufftown Junction B9014 to Junction A96 / A95 at Keith	0.8			
A96 Junction A96/A95 to Junction B9016 near Keith	2.1	NB & SB	20.5	3
A96 Junction B9016 to Junction with A98 at Fochabers	4.5	NB & SB	17.5	3
A96 Junction with A98 to Junction B9015 at Coul Brae Roundabout, Mosstodloch	2.6	NB & SB	20.5	1
A9 B9015 at Coul Brae Roundabout, Mosstodloch to Junction B9103 near Elgin	7.5	NB & SB	14.0	4
A96 Junction B9103 to Reiket Lane, Elgin	2.1	NB & SB	17.0	3
A96 Reiket Lane, Elgin to Pansport Roundabout, Elgin	1.3	NB & SB	3.5	0
A96 Pansport Roundabout, Elgin to Northfield Roundabout, Elgin	1.2	NB & SB	1.7	0
A96 Northfield Roundabout to Dr Gray's Roundabout, Elgin	0.4	NB & SB	0.6	0
A96 Dr Gray's Roundabout, Elgin to Wittet Drive, Elgin	0.5	NB & SB	0.8	3
A96 Wittet Drive, Elgin to Morrison Road, Elgin	0.7	NB & SB	2.5	1
A96 Morrison Road, Elgin to Junction with B9013 at Newton	3.3	NB & SB	22.0	
A96 Junction with B9013 at Newton to Findhorn Roundabout, Forres	12.5	NB & SB	16.5	5
A96 Findhorn Roundabout, Forres to Grshop Roundabout, Forres	2.3	NB & SB	2.5	3
A96 Greshop Roundabout, Forres to Brodie	5.3	NB & SB	48.0	3

Section of Closure	Approx. Length of Closure (km)	Diversion		
		Direction	Approx. Length (km)	No. of Incidents Resulting in Closure (2016-2021)
A96 Brodie to Auldearn	9.3	NB & SB	52.0	4
A96 Auldearn to Jct A939 at Nairn	3.5	NB & SB	6.5	1
A96 Junction B9101 to Junction B9111 at Auldearn	2.2	NB & SB	2.5	1
A96 Junction A939 at Nairn to Delnies	4.2	NB & SB	28.0	6
A96 Delnies to Inverness Airport Junction	9.0	NB & SB	13.2	8
A96 Inverness Airport Junction to Castle Stuart	4.0	NB & SB	6.2	7
A96 Castle Stuart to Balloch	1.4	NB & SB	28.0	
		NB & SB	29.4	
A96 Balloch to Smithton Roundabout	3.5	NB & SB	4.3	10
A96 Smithton Roundabout to Retail Park Roundabout	0.9	NB & SB	7.4	11
A96 Retail Park Roundabout to Raigmore Interchange	0.8			

Appendix C. Out of Scope

Subject	A96 Corridor Review – Out of Scope Options & Projects Not Under Consideration	Project Name	A96 Corridor Review
		Project No.	B2356702
Date	19/05/22	Status	S3
Document Number	B2356702-JAC-GEN-SCHW_00-FN-TR-0008		
Originator	EB	Checker	HK
Reviewer	HK	Approver	TD

1. Introduction

The purpose of this note is to set out the current (as at May 2022) position regarding what interventions and projects are out of scope for the A96 Corridor Review. A number of the interventions or projects listed below are out of scope as they cannot be directly delivered or facilitated by Transport Scotland or within the direct powers of Scottish Ministers.

This note will be reviewed regularly to ensure it reflects the current position of Transport Scotland and Scottish Ministers.

2. Out of Scope Options

The following options are out of scope:

- All matters reserved to UK Ministers.

Roads and Car Parks

- Local roads are out of scope, unless:
 - they provide access to major airports - Major airports are currently defined as Aberdeen and Inverness;
 - they provide access to nationally significant National Planning Framework (NPF4) sites;
 - amendments are required to support or facilitate changes to the strategic road network including the provision of bus priority or active travel.
- Reclassification of roads from local road to trunk road or vice versa is out of scope.
- Car parking is out of scope unless specifically associated with a strategic intervention.

Public Transport

- Enhanced passenger security or safety on public transport.
- Any public transport project or option that is revenue based.
- Options related to the operational aspects of transport provision, such as but not limited to, vehicle design and rolling stock layouts are out of scope.

Water Transport

- All water based transport, including on canals and estuaries.

Aviation

- Options related to air services, including operation / expansion of airports and new flights / changes to existing flights are out of scope. This includes Inter-Island and Island – Mainland air services.

Funding, Fares and Subsidies

- Revenue funding for public transport is out of scope, including concessionary travel, free public transport, reduced public transport fares or changes to existing concessionary travel schemes and Road Equivalent Tariff (RET).
- Options related to Air Discount Scheme are out of scope.
- Any proposals to consider the 'ring-fencing' of local authority budgets for transport and/or simplification of funding mechanisms (e.g. fewer challenge funds) is not in scope.
- Local authority funding of transport related services.

Digital

- The delivery of digital connectivity / 5G or subsequent successors is out of scope.

Legislation, Regulatory and Governance

- Options which require legislative change.
- Workplace Parking Levies (Note - there is already provision for local authorities to undertake this in the Transport Act).
- Changes to transport regulation.
- Day to day operational matters for transport providers and operators.
- Changes in vehicle regulation and vehicle excise duty are out of scope.
- Planning led initiatives (e.g. changes to the statutory planning process) are out of scope.

Maintenance

- Revenue funded routine and cyclic maintenance measures, for all modes and assets are out of scope.

Alternative Fuels and Decarbonisation

- The low carbon energy or alternative fuel delivery pathways for Scotland will be led by the energy sector and are therefore not in scope. Decarbonisation of the transport system is however in scope.

Complementary Measures

- Enforcement measures as a standalone option are out of scope; but if captured as part of specific projects e.g. bus priority, this can be in scope.
- Options related to training, skills development, or employment practises.
- Cycle parking as a standalone option is out of scope but if captured as part of a specific option, e.g. mobility hubs/interchange facilities, can be in scope.

3. Committed Projects and Planning

- Projects that may be deemed as Committed will be dealt with on a case by case basis, dependant on their development status, but are generally considered to be out of scope.
- With specific reference to the Cooperation Agreement and shared policy programme, the following applies:
 - The A96 Dualling Inverness to Nairn (including Nairn Bypass) is out of scope as it has received ministerial consent.
 - The bypasses of Elgin, Keith and Inverurie, targeted road safety improvements and the A96 "Electric Highway" will be appraised through the STAG process as committed interventions.
- Growth Deal projects will be dealt with on a case by case basis but are generally considered to be committed if they have a Scottish Government approved strategic business case.
- Where investment is required to mitigate the impact of development on the strategic transport network, it is expected that the cost of the mitigation measures required to ensure the continued safe and effective operation of the network will require to be met by the developer. This is also the case for NPF4 national developments. That is, this does not negate the need, in line with Scottish Planning Policy, for development proposals that have the potential to affect the performance or safety of the strategic transport network to be fully assessed by the promotor of the site to determine their impact or appraised by Planning authorities through the Development Planning process.

- Where A96 Corridor Review options may have overlap with the (current) draft STPR2 final recommendations, if they are considered to be at a national-level then STPR2 represents the most appropriate mechanism under which to progress these options.

Appendix D. Full List of Options

Table D 1: List of retained options with IDs

Option ID	Final Rationalised Option Title
3	Linespeed, Passenger and Freight Capacity Improvements on Aberdeen to Inverness Rail Line
6	Introduce Rail Freight Terminals
54	Investment in DRT and MaaS
61	Targeted Road Safety Improvements
64	Active Communities
76	Improved Public Transport Passenger Interchange Facilities
96	Development of the A96 Electric Corridor
129	Active Hubs
150	Active Connections
174	Bus Priority Measures and Park and Ride
193	Improved Parking Provision at Railway Stations
409	Elgin Bypass
410	Keith Bypass
411	Inverurie Bypass

Option ID	Final Rationalised Option Title
414	A96 Full Dualling (plus Targeted Trunk Road Improvements)
418	Forres Bypass

Table D 2: Full list of options sifted out/rationalised

In Table D 2, where the sifting rationale states 'Out of Scope', reference should be made to Appendix C that sets out the interventions and projects that are identified as being Out of Scope for the A96 Corridor Review.

Option ID	Original Submission	Mode of Transport	Sifting Rationale Notes
1	Upgrade cycle route (NCN route 1) between Aberdeen - Inverness.	Active Travel	Another option is considered to better address the same problem / opportunity. The NCN route between Inverness and Aberdeen diverts via Maud, Turriff and Banff and is not an optimal connection for long distance active travel between many communities in the A96 corridor. A better option is Option ID 150 which is the rationalised final option for Active Connections that looks at introducing a long distance, connected active travel network through the A96 Corridor.
9	Improve Bus/Rail interchange facilities at Elgin, Dingwall and Thurso.	Public Transport	Option has been rationalised with another option. The in-scope locations would be considered as part of Option ID 174 Improved Public Transport Passenger Interchange Facilities.
10	Reintroduce a bus service to Inverness Airport from Elgin.	Bus	Option is Out of Scope for the A96 Corridor Review as it refers to operational aspects of transport provision.
11	Implement express coach service facilities between Aberdeen and Inverness.	Bus	Option is Out of Scope for the A96 Corridor Review as it refers to operational aspects of transport provision.
12	New Local Rail Stations on existing local routes - New stations between Aberdeen & Inverurie	Rail	Options already being progressed are Out of Scope for the A96 Corridor Review. As identified in STPR2 Final Recommendation 13, Aberdeen Rapid Transit is the intervention identified to serve these corridors.

Option ID	Original Submission	Mode of Transport	Sifting Rationale Notes
	- New stations between Aberdeen and Stonehaven (e.g. Newtonhill)		
13	Improve Strategic Inter-City Rail Connections - Physical and operational improvements to reduce journey times between and Aberdeen to Inverness - Increased capacity for rail services on North-East routes	Rail	Another option is considered to better address the same problem / opportunity. The in scope aspects of this option would be covered within Option ID 3 Linespeed, Passenger and Freight Capacity Improvements on Aberdeen to Inverness Rail Line is the better defined option for the same opportunity.
14	Rail enhancements / rolling stock Improvements to provide an end-to-end travel time of approximately 1hr 45mins.	Rail	Option has been rationalised with another option. Rail enhancements to reduce end-to-end journey times forms part of Option ID 3 Linespeed, Passenger and Freight Capacity Improvements on Aberdeen to Inverness Rail Line.
18	Dual carriageway bypasses and dualling of heavily trafficked sections of the A96 plus targeted trunk road improvements.	Road	Other options are considered to better address the same problems and/or opportunities. Bypasses are considered individually for towns; Option IDs 409 (Elgin), 410 (Keith), 411 (Inverurie), and 418 (Forres). Trunk road improvements and targeted dualling would be considered separately in option 61 Targeted Road Safety Improvements. These options are better defined to consider merits of each of these alone.
22	Bike hire schemes (including E Bikes) within settlements.	Active Travel	Option has been rationalised with another option. Hiring facilities for bikes or e-bikes would be considered as part of Option 129 Active Hubs.

Option ID	Original Submission	Mode of Transport	Sifting Rationale Notes
23	Road user charging/Parking Charges.	Behaviour Change	Options already being progressed are Out of Scope for the A96 Corridor Review. The recently published 'Reducing car use for a healthier, fairer and greener Scotland – A Route Map to Achieve a 20% Reduction in Car Kilometres by 2030', states that research into equitable options for demand management to discourage car use will be commissioned. Car parking is Out of Scope unless specifically associated with a strategic intervention.
30	Provision of targeted overtaking opportunities.	Road	Option has been rationalised with another option. Targeted overtaking opportunities are considered within Option ID 61 Targeted Road Safety Improvements.
31	Junction improvements to provide enhanced provision for active modes.	Active Travel	Option has been rationalised with other options. Active travel enhancements at junctions across the A96 Corridor Review study area would be considered as part of Option ID 150 Active Connections for rural sections and Option ID 64 Active Communities for urban areas.
32	Introduce a direct bus service from across the corridor to Aviemore to connect with HML services to the central belt.	Bus	Option is Out of Scope for the A96 Corridor Review as it relates to revenue funding for public transport.
33	Improved provision for bikes on public transport.	Multimodal	Option is Out of Scope for the A96 Corridor Review as it refers to operational aspects of transport provision.

Option ID	Original Submission	Mode of Transport	Sifting Rationale Notes
36	Public transport fleet improvements - quality & capacity.	Public Transport	Option is Out of Scope for the A96 Corridor Review as it refers to operational aspects of transport provision that include vehicle design and rolling stock layouts.
39	Priority vehicle lanes.	Road	Another option is considered to better address the same problem / opportunity. Rather than priority vehicle lanes that can encourage car sharing, it is considered that a better option would be one that encourages a mode shift to public transport or active travel, in line with the Sustainable Travel Hierarchy. Option ID 174 Bus Priority Measures and Park and Ride considers bus lanes so is considered to represent a better option for the opportunity.
40	Facilities for pedestrian and cyclist crossings in rural sections.	Active Travel	Option has been rationalised with another option. Crossing facilities in rural sections of the A96 would be considered as part of Option 150 Active Connections.
42	Short sea shipping for freight between Inverness & Aberdeen (coastal route).	Freight	Option is Out of Scope for the A96 Corridor Review as it relates to water based transport.
51	Expansion of 20mph limits and zones.	Road	Options already being progressed are Out of Scope for the A96 Corridor Review. This option is put forward as STPR2 Final Recommendation 10 and considered at a national level. This is deemed the most appropriate mechanism to progress this option under.
52	Increasing active travel to school.	Active Travel	Option has been rationalised with another option. In-scope methods of increasing active travel to schools, such as cycle lanes on strategic roads, would be considered as part of Option ID 64 Active Communities.

Option ID	Original Submission	Mode of Transport	Sifting Rationale Notes
53	Infrastructure to provide access for all at railway stations.	Rail	Options already being progressed are Out of Scope for the A96 Corridor Review. This is already covered at the Scotland-wide level through the "Access for All" programme.
57	Rail decarbonisation.	Rail	Options already being progressed are Out of Scope for the A96 Corridor Review. This option is put forward as STPR2 Final Recommendation 25 and considered at a national level. This is deemed the most appropriate mechanism to progress this option under.
62	Trunk road climate change adaptation and resilience.	Road	Options already being progressed are Out of Scope for the A96 Corridor Review. This option is put forward as STPR2 Final Recommendation 31 and considered at a national level. This is deemed the most appropriate mechanism to progress this option under.
63	Trunk road renewal for reliability, resilience and safety.	Road	Options already being progressed are Out of Scope for the A96 Corridor Review. This option is put forward as STPR2 Final Recommendation 32 and considered at a national level. This is deemed the most appropriate mechanism to progress this option under.
65	Speed management plan.	Road	Options already being progressed are Out of Scope for the A96 Corridor Review. This option is put forward as SPTR2 Final Recommendation 38 and considered at a national level. This is deemed the most appropriate mechanism to progress this option under.

Option ID	Original Submission	Mode of Transport	Sifting Rationale Notes
66	Bus service connecting Elgin/Forres area with Aviemore to connect to HML for faster JT to central belt.	Bus	Option is Out of Scope for the A96 Corridor Review as it refers to operational aspects of transport provision.
72	Behavioural change campaigns to encourage sustainable travel (corridor wide).	Behaviour Change	Options already being progressed are Out of Scope for the A96 Corridor Review. STPR2 Final Recommendation 6 Behaviour Change Initiatives includes providing information, promotional activities and community events to encourage people to use sustainable modes.
79	Provide direct, supported or shuttle public transport services between rural areas and key services such as major hospitals, education places etc.	Public Transport	Option is Out of Scope for the A96 Corridor Review as it relates to revenue funding for public transport.
83	Superfast broadband for all domestic/commercial premises in the wider corridor to support home / digital working.	Technology	Option is Out of Scope for the A96 Corridor Review and outwith the transport sector. The delivery of digital connectivity / 5G or subsequent successors is Out of Scope.
86	Policy Interventions to lock in the changes to active travel brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic.	Active Travel	Option is Out of Scope for the A96 Corridor Review. The option would require legislative change.
87	Rail gauge enhancements to increase the amount of rail freight.	Rail	Option has been rationalised with another option. This would be a consideration in Option ID 3 Linespeed, Passenger and Freight Capacity Improvements on Aberdeen to Inverness Rail Line.

Option ID	Original Submission	Mode of Transport	Sifting Rationale Notes
88	Reopen Strathspey railway to allow more direct connection to/from south.	Rail	Options already being progressed are Out of Scope for the A96 Corridor Review. The A95 Gaich to Craggan Section Improvements scheme considers the proposed extension of the railway network between Strathspey and Grantown-on-Spey.
89	Where bypass is provided at Inverurie, utilise the existing A96 route as a form of BRT to improve bus mode share towards Aberdeen.	Bus	Option has been rationalised with another option. This measure would be considered within Option ID 174 Bus Priority Measures and Park and Ride.
90	Reduce severance created by the A96 in urban areas such as Elgin by improving active travel crossing connections and provision.	Active Travel	Option has been rationalised with another option. Crossing facilities to reduce severance in urban sections and communities along the A96 would be considered as part of Option ID 64 Active Communities.
91	Better onward links to key destinations, particularly employment and hospital sites, through public transport or active travel schemes such as bike hire or cycle parking for 'local' trips.	Multimodal	Option has been rationalised with other options. The public transport components of this option have been rationalised to form part of Option ID 174 Bus Priority Measures and Park and Ride, or Option ID 3 Linespeed, Passenger and Freight Capacity Improvements on Aberdeen to Inverness Rail Line. The active travel components of this option have been rationalised into Option ID 150 Active Connections and Option ID 64 Active Communities.

Option ID	Original Submission	Mode of Transport	Sifting Rationale Notes
97	A95 Improvements/Dualling to connect the north-east with the A9 and increased capacity in this direction towards the Central Belt. Opportunity for freight removal (whisky and timber) from A96 as a result of Moray industries.	Road	Options already being progressed are Out of Scope for the A96 Corridor Review. STPR2 Final Recommendation 30 Trunk Road and Motorway Network Safety Improvements includes potential dualling and other improvements such as overtaking opportunities, realignment and widening for the A95 trunk road.
98	A96 50mph limit with ANPR enforcement.	Road	Options already being progressed are Out of Scope for the A96 Corridor Review. A review of speed limits is considered within STPR2 Final Recommendation 38 Speed Management Plan. This is deemed the most appropriate mechanism to progress this option under.
99	Assess current diversion routes to establish if there are any local road upgrades which could help reduce the lengths.	Road	Option is Out of Scope for the A96 Corridor Review. Local roads are Out of Scope unless they are specifically required to support/facilitate strategic road network changes for bus priority or active travel provision.
123	Targeted junction improvements including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prohibition of right turn manoeuvres • Provision for grade-separated junctions • Upgrade direct accesses / side roads • Rationalise junctions/side roads to reduce number of junctions (incl. rerouting) • Provision for right-turn ghost islands 	Road	Option has been rationalised with another option. Junction improvements for safety forms part of Option ID 61 Targeted Road Safety Improvements.

Option ID	Original Submission	Mode of Transport	Sifting Rationale Notes
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General improvements to alignment, cross section, SSD etc. 		
128	Assess signage on active travel routes to improve signing towards public transport areas such as rail stations, bus stations, transport hubs.	Active Travel	Another option is considered to better address the same problem / opportunity. Signing towards public transport interchanges would not have as significant benefits as improving the infrastructure on approach to these areas. Option ID 64 Active Communities is therefore a better option for the identified problem and/or opportunity.
136	Improvements for safe stopping locations e.g. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provision of new layby locations • Upgrades to existing laybys (e.g. to Type A and SSD approach/exit) • Provision of new rest areas • Upgrades to existing rest areas 	Freight	Options already being progressed are Out of Scope for the A96 Corridor Review. This option would be considered within STPR2 Final Recommendation 36 Strategy for Improving Rest and Welfare Facilities for Hauliers at a national level. This is deemed the most appropriate mechanism to progress this option under.
137	Accident reduction measures at Threapland Junction rationalisation.	Road	Options that have already been considered elsewhere are Out of Scope for the A96 Corridor Review.
139	Improve accessibility on the A96 e.g. roads for all compliant laybys, roads for all compliant bus stops, roads for all compliant crossing facilities.	Road	Option is Out of Scope for the A96 Corridor Review where it relates to existing infrastructure as this is day to day operational matters for transport providers and operators. For any new infrastructure, Transport Scotland Roads for All

Option ID	Original Submission	Mode of Transport	Sifting Rationale Notes
			– Good Practice Guide for Roads (2013) would be considered as part of the development and assessment process.
141	Car share schemes / Car hire schemes to reduce car ownership and single occupancy journeys.	Behaviour Change	Options already being progressed are Out of Scope for the A96 Corridor Review. STPR2 Final Recommendation 6 Behaviour Change Initiatives includes schemes such as car sharing and car hire.
142	HGV speed limit increase - 40mph to 50mph (as per trial on A9 trunk road).	Freight	Options already being progressed are Out of Scope for the A96 Corridor Review. STPR2 Final Recommendation 38 Speed Management Plan considers a review of speed limits for HGVs at a national level. This is deemed the most appropriate mechanism to progress this option under.
146	Hybrid working schemes for employees who travel more than 20 miles to work where possible.	Behaviour Change	Option is Out of Scope for the A96 Corridor Review. Options relating to training, skills development or employment practices.
147	Low emission zones in towns/communities.	Behaviour Change	The option is not considered to address one or more of the problems and/or opportunities identified as part of this Initial Appraisal: Case for Change. There are no AQMAs that lie within any of the communities along the extent of the A96 Corridor Review.
152	Provide smart and integrating ticketing corridor wide but particularly for onward trips within the larger settlements (including Aberdeen).	Public Transport	Options already being progressed are Out of Scope for the A96 Corridor Review. STPR2 Final Recommendation 23 Smart, Integrated Public Transport Ticketing considers this on a national level and is considered the most appropriate mechanism to progress this option under.

Option ID	Original Submission	Mode of Transport	Sifting Rationale Notes
153	Improve town/village and town/town AT connections.	Active Travel	Another option is considered to better address the same problem / opportunity. Improving connections between non-specified towns and villages is not as well defined as Option ID 150 Active Connections which is the rationalised option for a connected long-distance active travel network.
165	Targeted active travel safety improvements e.g. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Closure of at-grade NMU crossings on A96 • Provision for grade-separated underpasses/overbridges for NMUs on A96 • Improvements to controlled NMU crossings in towns/communities 	Active Travel	Other options are considered to better address the same problem / opportunity. This would be considered in urban sections of the A96 Corridor as part of Option ID 64 Active Communities, and in rural sections through Option ID 150 Active Connections.
168	Improve accessibility for active travel users - improvements to new and existing routes to gradients, crossings, tactile paving etc.	Active Travel	Other options are considered to better address the same problem / opportunity. This would be considered in urban sections of the A96 Corridor as part of Option ID 64 Active Communities, and in rural sections through Option ID 150 Active Connections.
170	Include options to support optimisation of existing assets: addressing road surface and access in this specific location to ensure impact of extreme weather e.g. snow/ice is reduced and can be more easily cleared - ensuring better/safer use of existing road, social	Road	Options already being progressed are Out of Scope for the A96 Corridor Review. Option is considered within the STPR2 Final Recommendation 32 Trunk Road and Motorway Renewal for Reliability, Resilience and Safety. This is deemed to be the most appropriate mechanism with which to progress this option.

Option ID	Original Submission	Mode of Transport	Sifting Rationale Notes
	value of access and connectivity and reducing diversions.		
176	Decarbonisation of bus facilities; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Electric buses • Hydrogen buses • Hybrid buses • All require engagement with private sector 	Bus	Option is Out of Scope for the A96 Corridor Review as it refers to operational aspects of transport provision.
177	New bus routes / improved facilities; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New routes (e.g. to employment / education / healthcare) • New infrastructure (e.g. stops) • Increased frequency of services 	Bus	Another option is considered to better address the same problem / opportunity. Only the improved passenger facilities aspect of this option is in scope. Option ID 76 Improved Public Transport Passenger Interchange Facilities is deemed to be a better option to consider these facilities at relevant locations across the corridor. New routes and improved frequency of services are Out of Scope as they relate to revenue funding for public transport.
179	Cheaper bus service provision; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Different ticket types, concessions etc to incentivize bus travel 	Bus	Option is Out of Scope for the A96 Corridor Review as it relates to revenue funding for public transport.

Option ID	Original Submission	Mode of Transport	Sifting Rationale Notes
182	Improvements to bus infrastructure; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New shelters • New bus stops • Real-time info for services (i.e. “5 mins to arrive”) • Relocation of shelters / stops to safer locations 	Bus	<p>Option has been rationalised with another option. The in-scope aspects of this option relating to passenger facilities would all be considered within Option ID 76 Improved Public Transport Passenger Interchange Facilities.</p> <p>New shelters and bus stops are not in scope as they relate to local authority funding of transport related services.</p>
183	Improve walking, cycling and public transport access to protected sites (biodiversity and cultural heritage) (corridor wide).	Multimodal	<p>Active travel access routes are considered to be better addressed by another option. Option ID 150 Active Connections would consider long-distance active travel routes that could include access to protected sites.</p> <p>The public transport aspect of this option is Out of Scope as it would relate to revenue funding for public transport.</p>
186	Improved accessibility provision for buses; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Roads for All compliant bus stop locations and onward connections • Improvement to buses themselves (provision for accessible users) 	Bus	<p>Option has been rationalised with another option. The aspects of this option that are in scope relate to accessibility of passenger facilities and would be considered within Option ID 76 Improved Public Transport Passenger Interchange Facilities.</p> <p>Accessibility to buses themselves would require vehicle fleet improvements which is Out of Scope as an operational aspect of transport provision.</p>

Option ID	Original Submission	Mode of Transport	Sifting Rationale Notes
187	Incentivise car share/public and active transport connections e.g. lanes/priority parking or access at destinations, reduced bus/train tickets or free electric bike hire.	Multimodal	Other options are considered to better address the same problem / opportunity. The in-scope incentives are considered to be better addressed through Option ID 174 Bus Priority Measures and Park and Ride and Option ID 129 Active Hubs. Incentives to reduce public transport ticket costs are Out of Scope as this relates to revenue funding for public transport.
198	Cheaper rail service provision - Different ticket types, concessions etc to incentivize rail travel.	Rail	Option is Out of Scope for the A96 Corridor Review as it relates to revenue funding for public transport.
201	As part of electric corridor, connect to existing renewable energy generation/hydrogen strategies and provision.	Technology	Option has been rationalised with another option. This would be considered as part of Option ID 96 Development of the A96 Electric Corridor.
208	Improvements to mobile signal / connectivity throughout the corridor (i.e. 4G min, 5G aspirational).	Technology	Option is Out of Scope for the A96 Corridor Review and outwith the transport sector. The delivery of digital connectivity / 5G or subsequent successors is Out of Scope.
213	Provide high quality bike storage within settlements on the A96.	Active Travel	Option has been rationalised with another option. Cycle parking as a standalone option would be Out of Scope but is included as part of Option ID 129 Active Hubs.
241	Average Speed Cameras on Trunk and Local Roads.	Road	Options already being progressed are Out of Scope for the A96 Corridor Review. Average speed cameras (on trunk roads; local roads are Out of Scope) are covered in STPR2 Final Recommendation 38 Speed Management Plan. This is

Option ID	Original Submission	Mode of Transport	Sifting Rationale Notes
			deemed the most appropriate mechanism to progress this option under.
242	Reallocation of roadspace in bypassed settlements.	Multimodal	Option has been rationalised with other options. Reallocation to active travel measures would be considered as part of Option ID 64 Active Communities. Reallocation for public transport would be considered in Option ID 174 Bus Priority Measures and Park and Ride.
243	First mile / last mile freight hubs for deliveries on edge of settlements.	Freight	Options already being progressed are Out of Scope for the A96 Corridor Review. This option would be considered within STPR2 Final Recommendation 27 Behaviour Change and Modal Shift for Freight. This is deemed the most appropriate mechanism to progress this option under.
256	On the A96 itself, there are minimal delays to bus services between Inverurie and Craibstone, except for some delays exiting Inverurie onto the A96. An intervention suggested through the A96 multimodal study is a stand-alone junction improvement (slip lane) at	Bus	Option has been rationalised with another option. This option would be considered a part of Option ID 174 Bus Priority Measures.

Option ID	Original Submission	Mode of Transport	Sifting Rationale Notes
	Port Elphinstone to enable all traffic to exit Elphinstone Road easier onto the A96 eastbound.		
260	Create Rail/bus park and ride facilities as part of the corridor proposals to reduce urbanised congestion.	Multimodal	Option has been rationalised with another option. This option would be considered a part of Option ID 174 Bus Priority Measures.
289	Retrofitting of detrunked A96 with improved active travel infrastructure, led by Active Travel Masterplans where available: Inverness; Nairn.	Active Travel	Option has been rationalised with another option. Reallocation of roadspace to active travel measures would be considered as part of Option ID 64 Active Communities.
373	More sustainable freight opportunities, including rail freight and more H2 / EV freight vehicles.	Freight	Other options are considered to better address the same problem / opportunity. Sustainable freight opportunities are better addressed through Option ID 3 Linespeed, Passenger and Freight Capacity Improvements on Aberdeen to Inverness Rail Line and Option ID 6 Introduce Rail Freight Terminals.
388	Inclusion of PV into highway boundary to power lighting and telematics. Also link to the winter maintenance.	Technology	Option has been rationalised with another option. This would be considered as part of Option ID 96 Development of the A96 Electric Corridor.
389	Heat carriageways using green energy winter maintenance.	Technology	Options already being progressed are Out of Scope for the A96 Corridor Review. STPR2 Final Recommendation 32 Trunk Road and Motorway Network Renewal for Reliability, Resilience and Safety considers new maintenance practices.

Option ID	Original Submission	Mode of Transport	Sifting Rationale Notes
			This is deemed the most appropriate mechanism to progress this option under.
424	Improved ITS technology.	Technology	Options already being progressed are Out of Scope for the A96 Corridor Review. STPR2 Final Recommendations 33, 34 and 35 Enhancing Intelligent Transport Systems would consider this intervention at a national level. This is deemed the most appropriate mechanism to progress this option under.
431	Improve active travel facilities in towns and communities, particularly connections with public transport.	Active Travel	Option has been rationalised with other options. Active travel improvements in towns would be considered as part of Option ID 64 Active Communities and new active travel facilities within Option ID 129 Active Hubs.
547	Ensure that already dualled section, between Blackburn and Aberdeen receives same NMU provision as rest of the corridor - results of multimodal ACC study could help inform this.	Active Travel	Option has been rationalised with another option. This route will be considered as part of Option ID 150 Active Connections.
573	Active Travel Behaviour Change Measures: Bike hire and storage, information, PTP, Interchange opportunities.	Behaviour Change	Option has been rationalised with another option. Aspects of this option would be considered within Option ID 129 Active Hubs.

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577	Free bus travel to/from rail stations with rail tickets.	Bus	Option is Out of Scope for the A96 Corridor Review as it relates to revenue funding for public transport.
582	Removal of constraints on the rail network to the passage of wind turbine components.	Rail	Option is Out of Scope for the A96 Corridor Review as it is a matter that relates to the wider UK rail network and would likely be led by Network Rail.
586	Charging facilities for eBikes at rest areas. E.g. Craibstone Park and Ride.	Active Travel	Option has been rationalised with another option. This would be considered within Option ID 129 Active Hubs.
597	Make using the roads by active travel more attractive. Trees give shelter / stability to soil, people and animals, and enhance biodiversity. Plus it's simply more enjoyable to go along them when roads look nice with trees and flowers along them. Some AT routes should have lighting, to enable people (commuters in particular, but also people visiting town later in the evening or afternoon mid-winter) to cycle home safely. This concerns women and children in particular.	Active Travel	Other options are considered to better address the same problem / opportunity. In urban sections this would be considered as part of Option ID 64 Active Communities. In rural sections, Option ID 150 Active Connections would consider these aspects.
599	Needs traffic lights wider paths and crossings at Raigmore junction.	Active Travel	Options already being progressed are Out of Scope for the A96 Corridor Review. This option is being covered as part of the Raigmore Interchange Non-Motorised User Improvements in conjunction with The Highland Council.

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604	Segregated route between Craibstone and Blackburn for NMUs. Incorporate rest facilities and junction improvements at Tyrebagger (A96/B979) junction.	Active Travel	Option has been rationalised with another option. This route and junction improvements will be considered as part of Option ID 150 Active Connections.
615	Elgin Bus Station: Re-design junction layout and bus station forecourt.	Bus	Option has been rationalised with another option. This would be considered a part of Option ID 174 Bus Priority Measures and Park and Ride.
619	Include a new link road to the east of Inverurie, with a connection to the B9001.	Road	Another option is considered to better address the same problem / opportunity. Option ID 411 Inverurie Bypass is considered to be a better option. It is expected that development of any bypass options taken forward would include, as a minimum, new junctions to connect with the existing A96 trunk road. The need for intermediate junctions along the route, at connections with local roads, would be subject to further and more detailed assessment on a case-by-case basis. Any new junctions would be designed to current standards.
PS3156	Dual the section from Inverness to East of Nairn, including a Nairn Bypass.	Road	Options already being progressed are Out of Scope for the A96 Corridor Review. The A96 Dualling Inverness to Nairn (including Nairn Bypass) Scheme has received ministerial consent.
PS915	Train or tram link directly to Aberdeen Airport and TECA.	Rail	Options already being progressed are Out of Scope for the A96 Corridor Review. Following on from the Bute House Agreement that confirms the development of a programme of public transport improvements in North East Scotland will

Option ID	Original Submission	Mode of Transport	Sifting Rationale Notes
			be undertaken, as identified in STPR2 Final Recommendation 13 Aberdeen Rapid Transit (ART) is the intervention identified to serve these corridors.
PS2404	Loop train line round other side of Dyce to the Airport.	Rail	Options already being progressed are Out of Scope for the A96 Corridor Review. Following on from the Bute House Agreement that confirms the development of a programme of public transport improvements in North East Scotland will be undertaken, as identified in STPR2 Final Recommendation 13 Aberdeen Rapid Transit (ART) is the intervention identified to serve these corridors.
PS3726	All junctions to consist of slip roads and underpasses to improve mainline operation.	Road	Another option is considered to better address the same problem / opportunity. Option ID Option ID 61 Targeted Road Safety Improvements would be a better option to address this. The need for grade separated junctions would be considered on a case-by-case basis and may be identified as part of targeted road safety interventions and/or as part of any bypass option.
PS4019	Restrict access to agricultural vehicles during peak times.	Freight	Option is Out of Scope for the A96 Corridor Review. The option would require legislative change.
PS4145	Construct motorway rather than dual carriageway to speed up journey times safely.	Road	Another option is considered to better address the same problem / opportunity. Option ID 414 Full Dualling (plus Targeted Trunk Road Improvements) is considered to be a better option.
PS4199	Flyovers for agricultural traffic.	Freight	Another option is considered to better address the same problem / opportunity. Option ID 61 Targeted Road Safety Improvements would be a better option to address this. The

Option ID	Original Submission	Mode of Transport	Sifting Rationale Notes
			need for flyovers would be considered on a case-by-case basis and may be identified as part of targeted road safety interventions and/or as part of any bypass option. However, it would not be viable to consider such an intervention along the entire length of the current A96 route.
PS4571	Provide effective exits from the bypasses that give quick access to local parking, charging points and services to benefit the adjacent communities. Then provide clear quick routes back on to the A96 to avoid clogging up local roads.	Road	Option is Out of Scope for the A96 Corridor Review. Local roads are Out of Scope unless they are specifically required to support/facilitate strategic road network changes for bus priority or active travel provision. It is expected that development of any bypass options taken forward would include, as a minimum, new junctions to connect with the existing A96 trunk road. Any new junctions would be designed to current standards and would maintain effective connections.
PS5031	Better connected rail/air services to all of the North East with the inclusion of a rail line from Dyce to Fraserburgh, that loops to connect to the mainline at Keith for onward travel to Inverness. This maximises the opportunities provided by the new station opening at Inverness Airport.	Rail	Options already being progressed are Out of Scope for the A96 Corridor Review. Following on from the Bute House Agreement that confirms the development of a programme of public transport improvements in North East Scotland will be undertaken, a feasibility study examining a freight and passenger railway connecting Dyce, Ellon, Peterhead, and Fraserburgh is being progressed.
PS5365	Use the roadway to house some renewable technologies like solar farms/panels, wind farms and hydro energy.	Road	Option has been rationalised with another option. This would be considered as part of Option ID 96 Development of the A96 Electric Corridor.

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PS7173	Pedestrianise Forres High Street between Nairn Rd roundabout and Anderson's school, giving priority to cyclists and pedestrians.	Road	Option has been rationalised with another option. This would be considered as part of Option ID 64 Active Communities.
PS7175	Direct links from main towns such as Nairn to Raigmore and ARI.	Multimodal	Option is Out of Scope for the A96 Corridor Review as it is presumed the submission refers to public transport availability. Therefore, the option is determined to be Out of Scope as it relates to revenue funding for public transport.
PS7253	Improved information about public transport through means more accessible to those without the capability to use the internet or smartphones. More on paper and more people available to help (e.g. at rail stations).	Public Transport	Option is Out of Scope for the A96 Corridor Review as it refers to operational aspects of transport provision.
PS8177	Reduce HGV speed limits and do not allow overtaking for them or vehicles with trailers.	Freight	Options already being progressed are Out of Scope for the A96 Corridor Review. Reducing HGV speeds is considered under STPR2 Final Recommendation 38 Speed Management Plan. Overtaking restrictions for HGVs would be Out of Scope as it would require legislative change.
PS8264	Safety is a major priority. Elgin bus station doesn't open at night, therefore there is no safe place to wait or a dry shelter.	Bus	Option is Out of Scope for the A96 Corridor Review as it relates to operational aspects of transport provision.

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PS9292	Tram links through towns.	Mass Transit	Another option is considered to better address the same problem / opportunity. Trams represent mass transit and the population number and density in towns along the A96 is not likely to make tram a feasible option. Therefore, Option ID 174 Bus Priority Measures and Park and Ride is considered to represent a better option for the opportunity.
PS10280	In the short term add signs before dual carriageway sections aimed at improving road user behaviour, including to be courteous to fellow motorists and allow people to legally overtake if consistently driving below the speed limit on single-carriageway sections, thus causing platoons.	Behaviour Change	Options already being progressed are Out of Scope for the A96 Corridor Review. STPR2 Final Recommendation 7 Changing Road User Behaviour would cover driver education programmes like this on a national level. This is deemed the most appropriate mechanism to progress this option under.
PS10590	More LPG filling stations and encouragement to use this as an interim step from petrol vehicles. Many people cannot currently afford electric cars and there are environmental/resource implications for producing the required number of batteries. Whilst LPG produces CO2 it is very low in pollutants and the environmental cost of car production or conversion is very much lower than for electric cars.	Road	The option is not considered to address one or more of the problems and/or opportunities identified as part of this Initial Appraisal: Case for Change. LPG will not contribute to decarbonising the transport system as well as other alternative fuelled vehicles such as EVs will.

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PS11069	Provide a dual carriageway from Elgin to A9 at Aviemore.	Road	The option is not considered to address one or more of the problems and/or opportunities identified as part of this Initial Appraisal: Case for Change. General connectivity between Elgin and Aviemore by road has not been identified as a problem and data analysis indicates the level of travel demand between these locations is relatively low.
PS12767	Create wildlife bridges and proper fencing etc. to reduce roadkill on A96. This would also reduce the hazard of people swerving onto the opposing lane to avoid animals.	Road	The option is not considered to address one or more of the problems and/or opportunities identified as part of this Initial Appraisal: Case for Change. Accident statistics do not indicate that animal crossings are a significant cause of accidents on the A96 so this option is not considered to address any problem or opportunity.
PS12796	Better signposts.	Road	Option has been rationalised with another option. This would be considered within Option ID 61 Targeted Road Safety Improvements and would be subject to further and more detailed assessment on a case-by-case basis.
PS13040	Make pedestrians use overpass and underpass and not the road crossing in Elgin.	Active Travel	Another option is considered to better address the same problem / opportunity. This would be considered as part of Option ID 64 Active Communities.
PS13900	Move Elgin bus station to the railway station, reopen Elgin's original railway station.	Public Transport	Options being progressed elsewhere are Out of Scope for the A96 Corridor Review. Relocation of the bus station is included as part of the Levelling-Up Fund application on behalf of Moray Council.

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PS13904	Restore coaches on long distance bus routes particularly Elgin to Inverness.	Bus	Option is Out of Scope for the A96 Corridor Review as it refers to operational aspects of transport provision.
PS13921	Schedule earlier and later trains to and from Aberdeen.	Rail	Option is Out of Scope for the A96 Corridor Review as it refers to operational aspects of transport provision.
PS13963	Introduce road pricing on the A96.	Road	Options already being progressed are Out of Scope for the A96 Corridor Review. The recently published 'Reducing car use for a healthier, fairer and greener Scotland – A Route Map to Achieve a 20% Reduction in Car Kilometres by 2030', states that research into equitable options for demand management to discourage car use will be commissioned.
PS13971	High quality off line single carriageway with no private accesses and only key junctions that tie back into exiting A96.	Road	Other options are considered to better address the same problem / opportunity. Limiting private accesses would have a safety benefit for the A96. This would be better achieved through the provision of bypasses. This refers to Option ID 409 Elgin Bypass, Option ID 410 Keith Bypass, Option ID 411 Inverurie Bypass and Option ID 418 Forres Bypass. For rural sections, Option ID 61 Targeted Road Safety Improvements would be a better option to address this.
PS14000	Design sections of new road with driver interest in mind (as with most of the A9) avoiding bland grass embankments or cuttings which block views.	Road	The option is not considered to address one or more of the problems and/or opportunities identified as part of this Initial Appraisal: Case for Change. However, it is expected that development of any new road options would include a landscape and visual impact assessment to consider potential impacts. The need for landscaping would be

Option ID	Original Submission	Mode of Transport	Sifting Rationale Notes
			subject to further and more detailed assessment on a case-by-case basis.
PS14191	Invest heavily in the surrounding road network along the length of the A96 corridor to facilitate commercial use of the network of B and unclassified roads. This is to include upgrading of all bridges and culverts to allow heavy vehicles to use most direct routes and widening.	Road	Option is Out of Scope for the A96 Corridor Review. Local roads are Out of Scope unless they are specifically required to support/facilitate strategic road network changes for bus priority or active travel provision. However, as part of targeted road safety interventions and/or any new road infrastructure the need for upgrading bridges or culverts would be subject to further and more detailed assessment on a case-by-case basis. It should be noted that it would not be viable to consider such an intervention along the entire length of the current A96 route.
PS14362	Upgraded A96 to use the shortest distance principle (less energy to go from A to B). Keep the road as level as possible, steep inclines such as those build into the AWPR result in poor average fuel consumption. The current A96 trajectory performs pretty well.	Road	Option has been rationalised with another option. This would be considered within Option ID 61 Targeted Road Safety Improvements. A wide range of factors are considered and can affect the chosen alignment for new road infrastructure. Improvements to the alignment of the existing A96 trunk road would be subject to further and more detailed assessment on a case-by-case basis.
PS14392	Incentives for people to be able to afford and run electric cars.	Technology	Option is Out of Scope for the A96 Corridor Review as it relates to changes in vehicle regulation and vehicle excise duty.
PS14400	Introduce rail car-carrying (perhaps also light goods vehicle carrying)	Multimodal	Option is Out of Scope for the A96 Corridor Review as it relates to revenue funding for public transport.

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	services morning, midday and early evening in both directions.		
PS14413	Add extra carriages to trains at peak times or run extra local services at peak times.	Rail	Option is Out of Scope for the A96 Corridor Review as it refers to operational aspects of transport provision and/or relates to revenue funding for public transport.
PS14463	Rail links Aberdeen towards Peterhead.	Rail	Options already being progressed are Out of Scope for the A96 Corridor Review. Following on from the Bute House Agreement that confirms the development of a programme of public transport improvements in North East Scotland will be undertaken, a feasibility study examining a freight and passenger railway connecting Dyce, Ellon, Peterhead, and Fraserburgh is being progressed.
PS14481	All buses and trains to be disabled friendly with no high steps.	Public Transport	Option is Out of Scope for the A96 Corridor Review as it refers to operational aspects of transport provision.
PS14711	Make access to public transport station's contactless.	Public Transport	Another option is considered to better address the same problem / opportunity. The option is considered to refer to contactless payment options and barriers introduced at all stations. Option ID 76 Improved Public Transport Passenger Interchange Facilities would consider these alongside other aspects to improve stations and interchange points so represents a better option.
PS14891	Promote tourism attractions just off the main routes enhancing the driving experience from A to B.	Behaviour Change	The option is not considered to address one or more of the problems and/or opportunities identified as part of this Initial Appraisal: Case for Change.

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PS14961	Detailed survey of all traffic and parking in Elgin, including park & ride potential.	Multimodal	Another option is considered to better address the same problem / opportunity. The in-scope aspects of this option relate to park and ride potential in Elgin. This is better defined within Option ID 174 Bus Priority Measures and Park and Ride to consider relevant park and ride locations.
PS15005	Upgrade the A947 to provide a better route between Oldmeldrum and Aberdeen. This would reduce commuter traffic between Aberdeen and Oldmeldrum passing through Inverurie and using B9170.	Road	Option is Out of Scope for the A96 Corridor Review. Local roads are Out of Scope unless they are specifically required to support/facilitate strategic road network changes for bus priority or active travel provision.
PS15064	Route around North East of Balloch hill for less complications on the environment resulting in lesser environmental impact.	Road	Option has been rationalised with another option. Route choice in this specific location would be considered as part of Option ID 410 Keith Bypass.
PS15066	Re-direct the road by Newmachar and Oldmeldrum to join existing route near Colpy.	Road	Option is Out of Scope for the A96 Corridor Review. Local roads are Out of Scope unless they are specifically required to support/facilitate strategic road network changes for bus priority or active travel provision.
PS15079	Light rail connection from Banff to Keith or Huntly.	Mass Transit	The option is not considered to address one or more of the problems and/or opportunities identified as part of this Initial Appraisal: Case for Change. The number of trips between Banff and Keith/Huntly are not considered to be significant.
PS15219	Ensuring that the needs of more vulnerable and disadvantaged users are	Active Travel	Another option is considered to better address the same problem / opportunity. Option ID 129 Active Hubs would

Option ID	Original Submission	Mode of Transport	Sifting Rationale Notes
	taken into account for active travel. Examples include supporting local community bike hubs, availability of trikes, e-bikes and adaptive cycles so that new cycle/walking routes will be accessible to all those who would like to travel by bike.		consider the provision of facilities for vulnerable and disadvantaged users along with connection to other modes of transport.
PS15336	Traffic light timing review for A96 junctions with Lochloy Road, Leopold Street and Albert Street.	Road	Options that have already been considered elsewhere are Out of Scope for the A96 Corridor Review. A review of traffic signals in Nairn has previously been investigated through the A96 Nairn Town Centre Signal Option Testing project.
PS15364	Straighten the road to remove bends and make road safer.	Road	Another option is considered to better address the same problem / opportunity. Option ID 61 Targeted Road Safety Improvements would consider a range of measures that may include improvements to the alignment of the existing A96 trunk road.
PS15404	Higher speed limits.	Road	Options already being progressed are Out of Scope for the A96 Corridor Review. This would be reviewed under STPR2 Final Recommendation 38 Speed Management Plan.
PS15416	Restrict HGV times on the roads e.g. 8-10 am and 4-6 pm to allow freer movement of transport.	Freight	Option is Out of Scope for the A96 Corridor Review. The option would require legislative change.
PS15420	Reserve an inductive charging lane for public transport, carpooling or electric cars along the whole length of the A96.	Technology	Other options are considered to better address the same problem / opportunity. This option is effectively providing priority vehicle lanes with additional charging infrastructure. These lanes can encourage car sharing, whereas a better

Option ID	Original Submission	Mode of Transport	Sifting Rationale Notes
			option would be one that considers encouraging a mode shift to public transport or active travel in line with the Sustainable Travel Hierarchy. Option ID 174 Bus Priority Measures and Park and Ride considers bus lanes so is deemed to represent a better option for the opportunity. Option ID 96 Development of the A96 Electric Corridor is also deemed to be a better option to consider charging infrastructure throughout the study area, including within communities as well as along the A96 corridor.
PS15617	Free public transport for health and education employees.	Public Transport	Option is Out of Scope for the A96 Corridor Review as it relates to revenue funding for public transport.
PS15626	Find a less circuitous bus route into the centre of Aberdeen by reopening George Street.	Bus	Option is Out of Scope for the A96 Corridor Review. Aberdeen City Centre and George Street are not within the geographic scope of the defined extents of the A96 Corridor Review.
PS15678	Add more direct trains to Edinburgh/Glasgow from Aberdeen/Inverness via Elgin so passengers can remain on the same train throughout.	Rail	Option is Out of Scope for the A96 Corridor Review as it relates to revenue funding for public transport.
PS15713	Improve maintenance of the route and winter resilience.	Road	Option is Out of Scope for the A96 Corridor Review. Revenue funded routine and cyclic maintenance measures, for all modes and assets are Out of Scope.
PS15751	Better training for bus drivers so that timetables are adhered to more closely instead of arriving early or rushing to	Bus	Option is Out of Scope for the A96 Corridor Review as it relates to training, skills development, or employment practises.

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	keep to time. This would save fuel as well as being safer.		
PS15917	Penalties for larger/slow moving vehicles (e.g. caravans, lorries) who do not pull over to allow traffic to pass.	Road	Option is Out of Scope for the A96 Corridor Review. The option would require legislative change.
PS15985	Heavily subsidise the purchase cost of electric vehicles.	Technology	Options already being progressed are Out of Scope for the A96 Corridor Review. Scottish Government through Energy Saving Trust provides financial support, including domestic and business chargepoint funding and interest-free loans for electric vehicles.
PS15998	Implement a national tax system that supports employers to (partially) reimburse the use of public transport by their employees, or gives people tax benefits when using public transport for work / commuting.	Behaviour Change	Option is Out of Scope for the A96 Corridor Review. The option would require legislative change.
PS16004	Involvement with charging point design companies (or maybe being innovative & offering a prize) to develop accessible charging points to allow more disabled/elderly people to move to using electric vehicles.	Technology	Another option is considered to better address the same problem / opportunity. Option ID 96 Development of the A96 Electric Corridor is deemed to be a better option to consider the accessibility of charging points.

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PS16013	Police should run a strong high profile campaign to promote good use of stopping distances between cars. A hard hitting advert would be good.	Behaviour Change	Options already being progressed are Out of Scope for the A96 Corridor Review. STPR2 Final Recommendation 7 Changing Road User Behaviour covers campaigns like this at a national level. This is deemed the most appropriate mechanism to progress this option under.
PS16022	Reduce the taxes faced by the private motorist.	Road	Option is Out of Scope for the A96 Corridor Review. Changes in vehicle excise duty and matters reserved to UK Ministers are Out of Scope.
PS16024	Cheaper public transport prices to encourage more to use the services.	Public Transport	Option is Out of Scope for the A96 Corridor Review as it relates to revenue funding for public transport.
PS16027	Reduce fuel costs for rural residents.	road	Option is Out of Scope for the A96 Corridor Review. All matters reserved to UK Ministers are Out of Scope.
PS16034	Stop HGVs parking on cycleways - especially overnight where cycle paths run alongside laybys - to stop cyclists having to dismount and use the roadway.	Active Travel	Option is Out of Scope for the A96 Corridor Review. Enforcement measures as a standalone option are Out of Scope.
PS16194	More research on/engagement with freight users to plan ways to move freight onto rail.	Freight	Options already being progressed are Out of Scope for the A96 Corridor Review. This is considered under STPR2 Final Recommendation 27 Behaviour Change and Modal Shift for Freight.
PS16271	Real time information on travel planning. Figuring out timetables is difficult and a simple travel planning app would make this a viable alternative by holding all information in	Technology	Options that have already been considered elsewhere are Out of Scope for the A96 Corridor Review. Travel planning applications are already provided from Traveline and transport operators.

Option ID	Original Submission	Mode of Transport	Sifting Rationale Notes
	one place. It could also plan journeys for the user.		
PS16384	Nationalise bus services to run hand in hand with rail and ferry.	Bus	Option is Out of Scope for the A96 Corridor Review as it would require legislative change and relates to revenue funding for public transport.
PS16406	Work up transport-reduction schemes e.g. with local employers, education providers, etc. Use the corridor to pilot innovative transport schemes as potential demonstrators e.g. road pricing with subsequent income used to subsidise additional 'non-commercial' public transport.	Behaviour Change	Options already being progressed are Out of Scope for the A96 Corridor Review. The recently published 'Reducing car use for a healthier, fairer and greener Scotland – A Route Map to Achieve a 20% Reduction in Car Kilometres by 2030', states that research into equitable options for demand management to discourage car use will be commissioned. In relation to innovative transport schemes, Option ID 54 Investment in DRT and MaaS is considered a better option to address the same problem / opportunity for public transport.
PS16595	Effective ATRs along A96 corridor and connecting to it.	Active Travel	Another option is considered to better address the same problem / opportunity. ATRs is considered in this context to mean Active Travel Routes but this is not certain. Option ID 150 Active Connections is considered to be a better defined option for this opportunity.
PS17354	Run buses on a grid formation in the cities and towns in an integrated network.	Bus	Option is Out of Scope for the A96 Corridor Review as it refers to operational aspects of transport provision.

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PS17383	Dual the A9 North of Inverness.	Road	Option is Out of Scope for the A96 Corridor Review as it does not relate to the study corridor.
PS17579	Expand bus service from Ellon to Inverurie to include Sundays.	Bus	Option is Out of Scope for the A96 Corridor Review as it relates to revenue funding for public transport.
PS17592	Extended bus service in the evenings.	Bus	Option is Out of Scope for the A96 Corridor Review as it relates to revenue funding for public transport.
PS17664	Increase taxation on fuel to fund cycling infrastructure.	Active Travel	Option is Out of Scope for the A96 Corridor Review. All matters reserved to UK Ministers are Out of Scope.
PS17730	Extend the motorway from Inverness to Thurso and from Aberdeen to Perth. Linking the motorway network to England and Europe.	Road	Option is Out of Scope for the A96 Corridor Review as it does not relate to the study corridor.
PS17772	Ban cyclists and caravans from A96.	Road	Option is Out of Scope for the A96 Corridor Review. The option would require legislative change.
PS17773	Compensation for people in the area to ensure that delivery costs are not excessive.	Freight	Option is Out of Scope for the A96 Corridor Review as it relates to Day to day operational matters for transport providers and operators.
PS17781	Manned stations with safe weather proof waiting areas outwith current very limited hours at only some stations.	Rail	<p>Another option is considered to better address the same problem / opportunity. Option ID 76 Improved Public Transport Passenger Interchange Facilities would consider safe, weatherproof waiting facilities.</p> <p>Staffing of stations is a day to day operational matter for transport providers and operators so Out of Scope.</p>

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PS17914	Be careful about what type of road surfaces are used on the road. The surface at Blackburn (Hatton of Fintray) roundabout is dangerous when wet or damp.	Road	Option has been rationalised with another option. Option ID 61 Targeted Road Safety Improvements would consider a range of measures including skid resistant surfacing.
PS18134	Tunnel under busy areas instead of commandeering valuable green belt.	Road	Other options are considered to better address the same problem / opportunity. The underlying problem is a lack of sustainable travel choices. Option ID 174 Bus Priority Measures and Park and Ride, Option ID 76 Improved Public Transport Passenger Interchange Facilities and Option ID 64 Active Communities are all considered better options to increase sustainable transport options and reduce car based trips.
PS18154	Skills drive for the freight and supply chain / logistics sector.	Freight	Option is Out of Scope for the A96 Corridor Review as it relates to training, skills development, or employment practises.
PS448	Improved rail and bus services locally and across the region.	Public Transport	Option is Out of Scope for the A96 Corridor Review. This option is assumed to mean high quality routes and vehicles. These are Out of Scope as an operational aspect of transport provision or would require revenue funding for public transport.
PS781	Introduce sound proofing barriers in residential areas.	Technology	Other options are considered to better address the same problem / opportunity. The underlying problem is a lack of sustainable travel choices. Option ID 174 Bus Priority Measures and Park and Ride, Option ID 76 Improved Public Transport Passenger Interchange Facilities and Option ID 64

Option ID	Original Submission	Mode of Transport	Sifting Rationale Notes
			Active Communities are all considered better options to increase sustainable transport options and reduce car based trips. However, it is expected that in the development of any new road options would include a noise and vibration assessment to consider potential impacts, and would be subject to further and more detailed assessment on a case-by-case basis.
PS1158	Put in a coastal train line.	Rail	The option is not considered to address one or more of the problems and/or opportunities identified as part of this Initial Appraisal: Case for Change. Rail connectivity between coastal towns within the A96 Corridor Review study area was not highlighted as a problem or opportunity.
PS1249	Do not allow hail and ride bus services on A96. They should only stop at designated bus stops. It presents the potential for an accident when a bus stops without being able to clear the carriageway.	Bus	Option is Out of Scope for the A96 Corridor Review as it refers to operational aspects of transport provision.
PS1309	Double decker buses for all buses travelling on the A96.	Bus	Option is Out of Scope for the A96 Corridor Review as it refers to operational aspects of transport provision.
PS1952	A process whereby school buses could pick up people at designated locations on non-bus routes, being hailed at the bus stop or booked for pickups for travel within the local area.	Bus	Another option is considered to better address the same problem / opportunity. Hailing or booking a service for a particular journey purpose is a similar format to that considered in Option ID 54 Investment in DRT and MAAS.

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PS2013	All bus routes to service railway stations.	Bus	Option is Out of Scope for the A96 Corridor Review as it refers to operational aspects of transport provision.
PS2252	Limitation on the size of non-freight vehicles. Local roads are not built for large campervans etc.	Road	Option is Out of Scope for the A96 Corridor Review. The option would require legislative change.
PS2509	Have a link road that leads from Oldmeldrum via Inverurie Road to the A96 near Thainstone.	Road	Another option is considered to better address the same problem / opportunity. Option ID 411 Inverurie Bypass is considered to be a better option. It is expected that development of any bypass options taken forward would include, as a minimum, new junctions to connect with the existing A96 trunk road. The need for intermediate junctions along the route, at connections with local roads, would be subject to further and more detailed assessment on a case-by-case basis. Any new junctions would be designed to current standards.
PS2679	Promotion of motorcycling as a way to reduce congestion.	Behaviour Change	Another option is considered to better address the same problem / opportunity. Option ID 174 Bus Priority Measures and Park and Ride is considered to be a better option for encouraging modal shift to reduce congestion.
PS2730	Dual Fraserburgh to Ellon.	Road	Option is Out of Scope for the A96 Corridor Review as it does not relate to the study corridor.
PS3170	Issue refunds to passengers for every train that doesn't arrive within 10 mins or is cancelled, if financial penalties were applied to the rail operator then the problems would be fixed quicker.	Rail	Option is Out of Scope for the A96 Corridor Review as it relates to revenue funding for public transport and a delay repay mechanism already exists.

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PS3474	Improve Aberdeen bus station.	Bus	Options already being progressed elsewhere are Out of Scope for the A96 Corridor Review. Aberdeen City Centre Masterplan considers enhancement of the existing bus station.
PS3649	Improve infrastructure for electric cars at commercial buildings e.g. insist all business premises have electric car points e.g. hotels.	Technology	Option has been rationalised with another option. EV infrastructure at commercial buildings would be considered as part of Option ID 96 Development of the A96 Electric Corridor.
PS4053	Do away with the three lane overtaking zones.	Road	The option is not considered to address one or more of the problems and/or opportunities identified as part of this Initial Appraisal: Case for Change. There is no evidence or feedback from stakeholders or the online consultation that has suggested the removal of existing overtaking zones.
PS4084	Improved passenger facilities on buses.	Bus	Option is Out of Scope for the A96 Corridor Review as it refers to operational aspects of transport provision.
PS4235	Re-route Blackhall to Inverurie across the A96.	Road	Another option is considered to better address the same problem / opportunity. Option ID 411 Inverurie Bypass is considered to be a better option. It is expected that development of any bypass options taken forward would include, as a minimum, new junctions to connect with the existing A96 trunk road. The need for intermediate junctions along the route, including grade separated connections with local roads, would be subject to further and more detailed assessment on a case-by-case basis. Any new junctions would be designed to current standards.

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PS4592	Better rail connectivity beyond Inverness.	Rail	Option is Out of Scope for the A96 Corridor Review. It is interpreted that beyond Inverness relates to the routes to the north and west. This does not relate to the study corridor.
PS4840	Force farm equipment to clean wheels prior to going in the road, it is a risk to life for motorcyclists.	Road	Option is Out of Scope for the A96 Corridor Review as enforcement measures as a standalone option are Out of Scope.
PS5269	More bus stops created for buses.	Bus	Option is Out of Scope for the A96 Corridor Review as it requires local authority funding of transport related services.
PS5272	Stop HGVs using overtaking lane on crawler lanes.	Road	Option is Out of Scope for the A96 Corridor Review as enforcement measures as a standalone option are Out of Scope.
PS5417	Nationalise all transport systems to enable concentration on providing a service.	Public Transport	Option is Out of Scope for the A96 Corridor Review as it would require legislative change and relates to revenue funding for public transport.
PS5424	Build Smithton to Inshes link Road.	Road	Options already being progressed are Out of Scope for the A96 Corridor Review. This is being progressed through the A9/A96 Inshes to Smithton project.
PS5639	Phase in a toll for fossil fuel vehicles on the new road.	Road	Option is Out of Scope for the A96 Corridor Review. The option would require legislative change.
PS6259	More staff on all public transport.	Public Transport	Option is Out of Scope for the A96 Corridor Review. Staffing is an operational aspect of transport provision.

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PS6636	Make public transport more reliable.	Public Transport	Other options are considered to better address the same problem / opportunity. For buses, Option ID 174 Bus Priority Measures and Park and Ride would look to improve reliability of bus journey times. For rail, Option ID 3 Linespeed, Passenger and Freight Capacity Improvements on Aberdeen to Inverness Rail Line would consider options such as passing loops which would improve capacity and reliability.
PS6709	Restrict the number of private vehicles per family.	Behaviour Change	Option is Out of Scope for the A96 Corridor Review. The option would require legislative change.
PS6887	Entirely remove agricultural vehicles from all trunk roads in Scotland.	Road	Option is Out of Scope for the A96 Corridor Review. The option would require legislative change.
PS7020	Upgrade the trains between Aberdeen and Inverness.	Rail	Option is Out of Scope for the A96 Corridor Review as it refers to operational aspects of transport provision that includes vehicle design and rolling stock layout.
PS7121	Stop concessionary travel at peak periods to allow people to get to work reliably.	Rail	Option is Out of Scope for the A96 Corridor Review as it relates to revenue funding for public transport.
PS7706	Introduce earlier bus services.	Bus	Option is Out of Scope for the A96 Corridor Review as it relates to revenue funding for public transport.
PS7787	Direct public transport link from Nairn to Inverness Airport.	Public Transport	Options that have already been considered elsewhere are Out of Scope for the A96 Corridor Review. The soon to be completed Dalcross station will provide a direct public transport link from Nairn to Inverness Airport.

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PS8220	Limit agricultural vehicles to a maximum of 3 miles.	Road	Option is Out of Scope for the A96 Corridor Review. The option would require legislative change.
PS8600	Improve the integration of public transport modes so it competes with the car, not against each other.	Public Transport	Another option is considered to better address the same problem / opportunity. Option ID 76 Improved Public Transport Passenger Interchange Facilities would consider public transport integration.
PS8713	Legislation requiring cyclists to use cycle pathways, where provided.	Active Travel	Option is Out of Scope for the A96 Corridor Review. The option would require legislative change.
PS9201	Permit the start of no further housing developments feeding on to the A96 to control pressure on the existing infrastructure and render the upgrading unnecessary.	Behaviour Change	Option is Out of Scope for the A96 Corridor Review as it directly relates to planning led initiatives.
PS9386	Improve passenger safety on public transport and at stations.	Public Transport	Option is Out of Scope for the A96 Corridor Review as it relates to enhanced passenger security or safety on public transport.
PS9593	Running a metro style railway around Inverness and its suburbs.	Rail	Another option is considered to better address the same problem / opportunity. The option would likely not be optimal for travel times into the city due to the number of stops in a short distance on the corridor to the east. A better option exists to instead improve bus journey times and reliability. Option ID 174 Bus Priority Measures and Park and Ride is therefore considered to represent a better option.
PS9850	Implementing a Mega Bus service.	Bus	Option is Out of Scope for the A96 Corridor Review as it relates to revenue funding for public transport.

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PS9927	Driver education and retesting across the country.	Behaviour Change	Option is Out of Scope for the A96 Corridor Review as it is related to training, skills development, or employment practises.
PS10031	Improve local roads and facilities in rural areas that benefit all road users.	Road	Other options are considered to better address the same problem / opportunity. In scope local improvements for active travel would be considered under Option ID 64 Active Communities and improvements for public transport would be best considered under Option ID 174 Bus Priority Measures and Park and Ride.
PS10658	Give tax breaks to encourage companies to use rail to move goods.	Freight	Option is Out of Scope for the A96 Corridor Review. The option would require legislative change and refer to matters reserved to UK Ministers.
PS11400	More parking should be provided in the central areas of rural towns to support business growth in the centre of towns rather than the ongoing growth of decentralised shopping - e.g. Huntly.	Road	Option is Out of Scope for the A96 Corridor Review. Car parking is Out of Scope unless specifically associated with a strategic intervention.
PS11895	Regular and continuous police patrolling and monitoring.	Behaviour Change	Option is Out of Scope for the A96 Corridor Review. Enforcement measures as stand-alone options are Out of Scope.
PS12896	Explore the possibility of providing tube like trains from major towns / suburbs like Westhill/Banchory/Cults/Alford etc. to Aberdeen.	Rail	Options already being progressed are Out of Scope for the A96 Corridor Review. Following on from the Bute House Agreement that confirms the development of a programme of public transport improvements in North East Scotland will be undertaken, as identified in STPR2 Final

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			Recommendation 13 Aberdeen Rapid Transit (ART) is the mass transit intervention being developed for the area.
PS12904	Better education for all road users about being a good and safe driver so that if they are holding up traffic, they pull in to let others pass.	Behaviour Change	Options already being progressed are Out of Scope for the A96 Corridor Review. STPR2 Final Recommendation 7 Changing Road User Behaviour covers driver awareness campaigns and education on a national level.
PS13709	Affordable long term parking charges at both airports.	Road	Option is Out of Scope for the A96 Corridor Review. Car parking is Out of Scope unless specifically associated with a strategic intervention.
PS13887	More stops on existing train lines e.g. Retail/Business park just outside Inverness.	Rail	Other options are considered to better address the same problem / opportunity. Option ID 174 Bus Priority Measures and Park and Ride and Option ID 76 Improved Public Transport Passenger Interchange Facilities are considered to be better options for improving access to key destinations by public transport.