

Falkirk Local Development Plan 3  
Topic Papers

March 2024

# Transport



Falkirk Council

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# 1. Introduction

- 1.1 This topic paper contains evidence on transport in the Falkirk Council area to support the preparation of Falkirk LDP3 and in particular to provide input to the LDP3 Evidence Report. Land use and transport are intimately connected, and consideration of transport will be integral to LDP3 in terms of identifying infrastructure improvements and locating development in such a way as to enable the development of sustainable places.
- 1.2 The scope of the paper covers the current national, regional and local policy framework; travel patterns and behaviour in the Falkirk Council area; and the range of different travel modes in terms of current and planned infrastructure assets and capacity and other issues associated with each mode. Regard has been paid the suggested areas of relevant evidence in the LDP Guidance.
- 1.3 Transport Scotland's Development Planning and Management Transport Appraisal Guidance (DPMTAG) highlights the importance of a sound evidence base, as a basis for transport appraisal work which is expected to accompany the preparation of the Proposed Plan.



## 2. Policy Context

### National

- 2.1 The **National Infrastructure Plan 2021-22 to 2025-26** builds on the findings of the Infrastructure Commission for Scotland. Its vision is that our infrastructure supports Scotland's resilience and enables inclusive, net zero and sustainable growth, with a focus on three strategic themes.
  - Enabling the transition to net zero emissions and environmental sustainability
  - Driving inclusive economic growth
  - Building resilient and sustainable places
- 2.2 An important feature of the National Infrastructure Plan is the investment hierarchy which comprises four steps: determine future need; maximise the useful life of existing assets; repurpose and co-locate; and replace, create and build new assets. The efficient use and adaptation of existing infrastructure therefore needs to be considered before moving to investment in new facilities.
- 2.3 The **National Transport Strategy (NTS2)** provides the national transport policy framework, setting out a clear vision of a sustainable, inclusive, safe and accessible transport system which helps deliver a healthier, fairer and more prosperous Scotland. Its priorities are to reduce inequalities, take climate action, deliver inclusive economic growth and improve health and well being. A key feature of NTS2 is the Sustainable Travel Hierarchy which promotes walking, wheeling, cycling, public transport and shared transport options in preference to single occupancy private car use.
- 2.4 The **Strategic Transport Projects Review (STPR2)** provides an overview of transport investment, that is required to deliver NTS2. Its recommendations are mostly generic in nature (e.g. connected neighbourhoods, active freeways, mobility hubs) but there is a location specific reference to sustainable access to Grangemouth Investment Zone. STPR2 was developed out of regional 'case for change' documents developed at regional level, and the Forth Valley Case for Change contains substantial local evidence on transport issues and opportunities in the Falkirk area.

2.5 **National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4)** deals with sustainable transport under Policy 13, highlighting that LDPs should prioritise locations for future development that can be accessed by sustainable modes. Their spatial strategies should reflect the sustainable transport hierarchy by making best use of existing infrastructure and services. LDPs are required to promote a place based approach to consider how to reduce car dominance. Policy 15 on local living and 20 minute neighbourhoods is also critical to future transport policy and investment. In terms of National Developments, ND8 National Walking, Cycling and Wheeling Network is relevant. ND15 Industrial Green Transition Zones references Grangemouth and in particular new/upgraded facilities for intermodal freight handling.

2.6 **The Route Map to Achieve a 20 per cent Reduction in Car Kilometres by 2030** is a strategic document that details the interventions that will be put in place to achieve this ambitious target. The publication of the route map supports a national conversation on sustainable travel and the document is aimed at national, regional and local stakeholders.



## Regional

- 2.7 Falkirk Council is part of the South East of Scotland Transport Partnership (SEStran). The **SEStran 2035 Regional Transport Strategy** was approved in 2023. It is based around four strategy objectives: transitioning to a sustainable, low carbon transport system; facilitating healthier transport options; transforming public transport connectivity across the region; and supporting safe, sustainable and efficient movement of people and freight across the region. It contains a suite of policies and actions to deliver these objectives.
- 2.8 There is increasing focus on the Forth Valley region as an important scale for consideration of transport issues, tying in with the STPR2 process and the regional economic and spatial strategies which are emerging. The **Forth Valley Connectivity Commission** was established in 2021 to consider how the region's economic potential could be maximised through enhanced connectivity. Its final report, entitled 'Bridging Divides: Connecting Communities across the Forth Valley' was published in November 2023. It contained recommendations relating the better integration of land use and transport planning, the regeneration of the region's urban centres, and the improvement of intra-regional active travel and bus networks.
- 2.9 Transport will feature prominently in the Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) which is likely to be prepared for the Forth Valley region. The indicative Forth Valley RSS produced by the Forth Valley authorities in 2021 highlights regional connectivity as a strategic opportunity.

## Local

- 2.10 Falkirk's **Local Transport Strategy (LTS)** was approved in 2023. It is built on a vision of a local transport network that encourages active and sustainable travel choices, creates and connects better places, and promotes well being and community regeneration. The vision is underpinned by four values of accelerating sustainability, improving inclusion, achieving economic growth and enhancing existing infrastructure. Supporting these is a set of priorities, policy objectives and actions dealing with active and sustainable travel, accessible transport, safety in transport, the Falkirk Growth Deal, Town Centre Regeneration and transport, electric vehicles, road safety and network, parking, freight and digital innovation.
- 2.11 An **Active Travel Strategy** was approved alongside the LTS. Its priority actions are focused on identifying and promoting a hierarchy of strategic routes, promoting thriving high streets, creating liveable neighbourhoods, and embracing sustainability.

## 3. Travel Patterns and Behaviour

- 3.1 Information on travel patterns is available from the 2011 census. However, a survey undertaken to support the LTS in 2022, and the annual 'Take the Right Route' surveys provides more recent data.
- 3.2 Travel behaviour is influenced by factors such as settlement pattern, economic and social factors, technology and available infrastructure. The population of the Falkirk Council area is 160,560 (2020) , living in a network of small, relatively low density towns and villages with the largest town, Falkirk, forming a central administrative and employment hub and generally the focus of the transport network. Local employment is focused on Falkirk, and the major industrial complex at Grangemouth, although there are considerable commuting outflows and inflows, assisted by the area's central location in central Scotland at the hub of the strategic road and rail network. Congestion is generally low, except at peak times, and parking plentiful.
- 3.3 Against this background, travel by private car is the dominant mode, with the LTS survey showing that it is the most common mode of transport for 75% of people. 73% use public transport less than once a week, and 71% cycle less than once a week.



- 3.4 The 'Take the Right Route' survey shows modal split for various types of trips, as illustrated in Figure 1. Again, the predominance of the car is evident. Time series data from previous surveys shows that use of the car has either increased or stayed similar since 2019.

**Figure 1: Mode of transport used for various types of trips**

	<b>Car (%)</b>	<b>Cycle (%)</b>	<b>Walk (%)</b>	<b>Public Transport (%)</b>
<b>Taking kids to school</b>	62	0	35	2
<b>Work</b>	78	4	6	12
<b>Full time education</b>	24	13	14	49
<b>Local shops/ services</b>	49	2	45	4
<b>City/town centre</b>	62	2	11	24
<b>Supermarkets</b>	81	2	10	8
<b>Kids activities</b>	83	0	12	4
<b>Leisure</b>	65	4	19	12
<b>Visiting family/ friends</b>	75	2	11	11
<b>Health services</b>	74	2	7	16

Source: 'Take the Right Route' Survey 2023

- 3.5 In terms of travel to work, the 2011 census indicated the level of car commuting in Falkirk as 72%, significantly higher than the Scottish figure (62%). Public transport is 10.8% and walking 6.5%. 8% worked at or from home, a figure which will undoubtedly have increased due to the change in working patterns since the Covid 19 pandemic. In terms of destination, most work trips for residents are within the Falkirk Council area, with 14% working in Stirling, 10% in Edinburgh, 5.7% in West Lothian, and 5.1% in Glasgow. The most significant inflows of commuters are from neighbouring Forth Valley authorities.
- 3.6 Travel to school is a significant trip generator. The 'Hands Up' surveys carried out by Sustrans show the modal split for pupils travelling to Falkirk schools from 2008 to 2022. There has been a slight decline in the proportion of children travelling by car, and an increase in bus travel. Disappointingly, those walking to school have declined from 49.4% to 40.7%, and the proportion cycling has remained static.



- 3.7 Travel behaviour has been changing as a result of social and technological trends, some of which were accelerated by the Covid 19 pandemic. Key changes included increased home working or hybrid working patterns, increased online meetings and the increase in digital shopping which is changing people's relationship with city/town centres.
- 3.8 The proportion of households in the Falkirk Council area which had no access to a car/van was 25.2% in the 2011 census. This was less than the national average of 31%. In the 2023 'Take the Right Route' survey, 21% of respondents had no access to a car/van.
- 3.9 Traffic on Falkirk's roads showed a long term pattern of growth until 2020 when, due to the exceptional circumstances of the Covid 19 pandemic, the figure fell by almost a quarter. However, from 2020 to 2022, the figure has returned to 0.95 billion vehicle miles, around 93% of its pre-pandemic level.
- 3.10 Freight is a significant component of traffic in the Falkirk Council area due to Grangemouth's role as a port, a national logistics hub and a major industrial cluster. Notwithstanding efforts to upgrade intermodal freight handling at Grangemouth and the shift from road to rail, local roads carry high levels of HGV movements which can impact on the functioning of the road network as well as on the local environment and communities.
- 3.11 Efforts have been made over recent years to influence travel behaviour in the area and to encourage more sustainable forms of transport. Apart from improving active travel infrastructure, the Council has run its 'Take the Right Route' initiative under the Scottish Government's 'Smarter Choices, Smarter Places' programme. Surveys have investigated the factors influencing people's travel choices, and convenience, ability to carry things, safety and cost remain the factors rated as most important, although health and the environment are not far behind.
- 3.12 Looking to the future, the population of the Council area will continue to grow, with a 6% rise projected in the 25 year period from 2018-2043. Various economic initiatives including the Council's £80m Growth Deal, the just transition of Grangemouth to net zero technologies and the emerging Forth Green Freeport are expected to grow the local economy. This will generate more trips and place additional pressure on the area's transport infrastructure. Legislation, policy initiatives and associated investment to achieve the Scottish Government's objective to achieve net zero emissions by 2045 will increasingly influence travel behaviour.

- 3.13 The 20 minute neighbourhood concept which is embedded in NPF4 will be a key element in transport policy going forward. In some ways, Falkirk's settlement pattern of small towns, served by a network of district and local centres and a good path network, could support a system of 20 minute neighbourhoods. However, there are also trends working against this, such as the outward suburban growth of our towns and the tendency to centralise facilities and services. There is also a need to consider what the 20 minute neighbourhood concept means for our rural communities.
- 3.14 Transport modelling can be a vital tool in predicting future transport patterns and how such patterns may be affected by different variables including infrastructure, policy interventions and economic trends. The council has used models in the past to test development scenarios. A new Paramics Model has recently been built which takes in the main urban centres of Falkirk and Grangemouth extending west to the M876 at Junction 1 at Checkbar, east to Gate 10 on the A904 Grangemouth Road to Bo'ness, south on the A801 to Bowhouse Roundabout, north to M876 (including Larbert and Stenhousemuir) and east to Bowtrees Roundabout and the A905 south of Airth. The model has been developed to allow the Council to model the current TIF, Growth Deal and Investment Zone projects and the necessary traffic management proposals that will be required in the delivery of the Grangemouth Flood Protection Scheme. The model will be used to inform any future STAG appraisal that will be required to review any transport interventions required by the Investment Zone and the Forth Green Freeport programme. The model does not cover the outlying settlements of Denny, Bonnybridge and Bo'ness or the south and north rural settlements.



## 4. Active Travel

- 4.1 Active travel comprises walking, wheeling and cycling, and is prioritised in NTS2's sustainable travel and investment hierarchies. In Falkirk, relevant objectives, policies and actions are set out in the Active Travel Strategy.
- 4.2 Current infrastructure for active travel in the Falkirk Council area is extensive. There are over 1700 km of footways, footpaths and cycleways. The core path network, as identified in the Council's Core Paths Plan, [and shown on this interactive map](#), extends to nearly 400km, much of it off-road. A review of the Core Paths Plan, incorporating additional routes, is ongoing. There has been significant investment in the path network over recent years, both in the creation of new paths and improvement of existing routes, supported by funding from Sustrans and other funding streams. Key examples include major bridges over the River Carron that have been delivered at Dorrator and Abbotshaugh to facilitate north-south movement, whilst investment to the canal towpaths and the Bo'ness to Blackness route have improved east-west connections. In 2019, the Falkirk Council area received the Ramblers' Association award for 'Britain's Best Walking Neighbourhood'.



- 4.3 Key strategic routes which pass through the area include:
- NCN Route 76 - connecting Stirling, Larbert, Grangemouth and Bo'ness around the southern edge of the Forth Estuary
  - NCN Route 754 - connecting Linlithgow, Polmont, Falkirk and Bonnybridge along the Forth & Clyde and Union Canals
  - John Muir Way - including sections of NCN 76 and NCN 754
- 4.4 There remain gaps in the network and scope for improvements in the linkages between and within communities, and better integration with other travel modes. Whilst the walking network generally good, the cycling network is less well developed, particularly within towns. The Active Travel Strategy identifies a strategic network of primary and secondary routes connecting communities, and rural connections linking into villages to the north and south of the area, with a commitment to deliver the primary network by 2038. It also prioritises the improvement of routes connecting into Falkirk Town Centre and the four District Centres.
- 4.5 Key projects which will contribute to this strategic network are the Falkirk to Denny/Bonnybridge route, which has planning permission, and the Falkirk Central Sustainable Transport Network Growth Deal project, which will address links into Falkirk Town Centre, including the Falkirk-Helix-Grangemouth route, and links to the Forth and Clyde Canal. Additional feasibility studies have been carried out examining Falkirk-Larbert and Falkirk-Polmont routes.



## 5. Public Transport

- 5.1 A public transport network of bus services, rail and shared mobility options will play an essential role in reducing single occupancy car trips and achieving a more sustainable transport system. Efficient public transport and shared mobility also increases employment and education opportunities for those who do not have access to a car.

### Bus Services

- 5.2 Local bus services across Scotland are operated by the commercial market, meaning much of it is privately owned and run by transport operators. The Council has little influence over timetabling, fares and frequency of buses, although it does intervene to subsidise some services. In the Council area, McGills is the principal bus operator, having taken over from First Bus in 2022.
- 5.3 The Falkirk Council area benefits from a range of services with Falkirk itself generally being the hub from which services radiate to serve the surrounding communities. Longer distance services also operate, connecting the area with Stirling, West Lothian, Cumbernauld, Edinburgh and Glasgow.
- 5.4 Bus patronage has been decreasing in Falkirk, a trend which was exacerbated by the Covid 19 pandemic. The STPR2 Forth Valley Case of Change document reports that, over the period 2003-2017, the share of the population using bus services four or more days a week has decreased by an average of 0.5% annually. Factors causing this decline include congestion, long journey times, frequency and timing of services, poor connectivity, cost, and personal security. Congestion is a particular issue on the radial routes into Falkirk.
- 5.5 The bus station in Falkirk closed in 2018, with the main hub moving to Newmarket Street. Public realm improvement works in Newmarket Street, undertaken in 2023, have improved the environment and safety of this area for users. In the longer term, the proposal under the Falkirk Growth Deal for a new transport hub at Falkirk Grahamston will improve connectivity and integration of modes, although it is unlikely that McGill's will move the hub away from Newmarket Street.

- 5.6 The Council is participating in the Forth Valley Bus Alliance which was awarded £0.5m in 2021 from the Bus Partnership Fund to deliver improvements on key journey corridors. In Falkirk, these include:
- The A9 between Stirling city centre and Camelon roundabout, Falkirk.
  - A803 Glasgow Road that links the Falkirk Wheel Park and Ride (P&R) and Falkirk Town Centre (identified for corridor improvements in LDP2)
  - B902 Graham's Road, from the B902 at the interchange with Ronades Road to Falkirk Town Centre via Graham's Road.
- 5.7 As well as conventional bus services, Demand Responsive Transport (DRT) has potential in local areas where there are few or no conventional bus services. The exact route and stopping points are usually flexible, but in all cases journeys must be booked in advance. Some DRT services are only for specific groups of people in the community, such as the elderly or disabled.



## Rail

- 5.8 Whilst the bus network covers most local routes, rail plays an essential role in inter-urban travel, connecting Falkirk with major cities across Scotland. There are five rail stations in the Council area: Falkirk High, Falkirk Grahamston, Larbert, Polmont, and Camelon. Each station has associated car parking, and substantial investment has been made in additional parking at Larbert and Falkirk High in recent years in response to demand. The rail network in Falkirk received substantial investment through the Edinburgh Glasgow Improvement Programme, with electrification of the lines and improvement in journey times. However, the impact of the Covid 19 pandemic has reversed the long term growth trend in the use of the rail network as commuter footfall has dropped significantly.
- 5.9 Several communities in the area have no mainline station and have to travel to other towns to access rail services. In the past, preliminary consideration has been given to the feasibility and cost/benefit of new facilities at Grangemouth and Bonnybridge, and station sites remain safeguarded in LDP2, but there is no active appraisal work ongoing at present, and the technical and cost implications are considerable. Most recently, appraisal work for Bonnybridge did not, in Transport Scotland's view, present a compelling case for change. Scotrail prepared a Falkirk Station Travel Plan in 2019, which looked at access to Falkirk High and Falkirk Grahamston in particular, highlighting public transport connections to Falkirk High as a particular problem/opportunity.
- 5.10 The Falkirk Central Sustainable Transport Network project, part of the Council's £80m Growth Deal, is focused around a proposed transport hub at Falkirk Grahamston station. The station would be rebranded as 'Falkirk Central' and proposals would seek to improve station facilities and accessibility, improve multi-modal integration, and address missing active travel connections in Falkirk Town Centre.



## Taxis

- 5.11 Taxis and private hire vehicles complement other public transport modes. They provide links from the beginning to the end of journeys, facilitated for example by the taxi ranks at the five railway stations. They play a crucial role in providing transport in cases where public transport or active travel are not viable options.

## Shared Mobility

- 5.12 The Council promotes shared mobility through its Tripshare Falkirk scheme and Car Club. Tripshare Falkirk is a car sharing scheme that matches people making similar journeys whilst the Car Club improves accessibility to all-electric private vehicles through a car rental model.

## Transport Poverty

- 5.13 Increasing attention is being drawn to the issue of transport poverty which can be defined as the lack of transport options that are available, reliable, affordable, accessible or safe that allow people to meet their daily needs and achieve a reasonable quality of life.
- 5.14 The STPR Forth Valley Case for Change document assigned a transport poverty risk rating to datazones. It concluded that some 41% of datazones in the Falkirk Council area were at high risk, compared with 36% in Scotland as a whole. The high risk areas tend to be relatively more deprived and/or isolated communities.





## 6. Road Network

### Strategic Roads

- 6.1 The Council area is at the hub of the motorway network in the Central Belt, with the following routes passing through it:
- M80 - giving access to Glasgow and the west (Junctions 7 and 8)
  - M876 - connecting the M80 and M9 and giving access to Clackmannanshire and Fife (Junctions 1-3)
  - M9 - connecting north to Dunblane and east to Edinburgh (Junctions 3-8)

These routes are part of the trunk road network and managed by Transport Scotland, through Operating Companies. Falkirk is part of the south east unit, managed by BEAR Scotland.

- 6.2 The motorway network has been affected by various capacity constraints which the Council has been tackling through its Tax Increment Financing (TIF) programme. Completed schemes include:
- M9 Junction 6 - improvements completed in 2014 under Falkirk TIF to address capacity constraints and facilitate access to and from Grangemouth industrial/logistics cluster.
  - M9 Junction 5 - improvements completed in 2022 under Falkirk TIF to address capacity constraints and facilitate access to and from Grangemouth port and industrial/logistics cluster.
- 6.3 Identified future upgrading projects include:
- M9 Junction 4 - improvements required to support allocated development at Gilston and Whitecross and intended to be developer funded.
  - M9 Junction 3 - conversion to 4 way junction to facilitate full eastbound/westbound access, including road safety improvement at Champany. The junction straddles the Falkirk/West Lothian boundary. Transport Scotland has no current plans to deliver the additional slips, and it would have to be developer funded. In the meantime, land is safeguarded in LDP2.
  - M80 Junction 7 - upgrading of the slip roads to accommodate growth along the A803 corridor. Funding has been secured through the Housing Infrastructure Fund and developer contributions.
- 6.4 Transport Scotland has also reported safety issues associated with the trunk road network at M876/J1, M9/J7-8, and A786 Higgins' Neuk roundabout, and a provisional programme of upgrading to various trunk road bridges in the area.

## Local Road Network

- 6.5 Most journeys in the Council area are made via the local road network for which the Council has responsibility. The local road infrastructure adopted by the Council comprises:
- 1715 km of footway, footpaths and cycleways
  - 990 km of carriageway
  - 31 car parks
  - 283 bridges and structures
  - 26,759 streetlights and 1,444 illuminated road signs
  - 65 electric vehicle charging points.
- 6.6 Falkirk is the hub of the local road network with routes radiating out to connect with the other settlements and the trunk road network. The arterial route of the A9 Northern Distributor Road provides an urban bypass around the north side of the town.
- 6.7 As noted previously, the growth of the area over the past 30 years has put additional pressure on the network. Whilst traffic levels dropped during the Covid 19 pandemic, they are now back up to pre-pandemic levels. The area's role as a logistics hub means freight movements put additional pressure on parts of the local road network en route to the motorway network. Whilst in general the local network is relatively uncongested, there are a number of pinch points which become congested at peak times. This congestion tends to be focused on the radial routes into Falkirk, including the A803 at Camelon to the east, the B902 Grahams Road to the north, the A904 Grangemouth Road connecting east to the M9 J6, the A9 Laurieston Bypass, and the A803 Callendar Road to the east. The other towns and villages do not generally experience congestion, with the notable exception of long standing issues on the A883 at Denny Cross. The main spine route through the lower Braes, the B805, can also be problematic given past growth in the Braes area and associated junction constraints on a largely unimproved route. There can also be localised congestion around the Forth Valley Royal Hospital in Larbert. Further localised congestion is associated with the school run, for example close to St Mungo's HS where school traffic competes with commercial and commuter traffic on the A9 Northern Distributor Road.

- 6.8 There are various schemes in hand to address constraints on the local network. These include:
- A9/A904 Westfield improvement scheme - this will see the improvement of the corridor between Falkirk and Grangemouth including the Westfield roundabout to improve traffic and active travel movement along this important corridor. Works have commenced, financed by funding from TIF and the Levelling Up Fund.
  - M9 Junction 5, Phase 2 - this scheme will complement the M9 junction improvements through signalisation of the adjacent A9/Grandsable Road junction and carriageway improvements, funded through TIF.
  - Icehouse Brae - this TIF scheme complements the above improvements, providing a direct link for freight traffic between West Mains/Tillyflats and the motorway network.
  - Denny Eastern Access Road - completion of this bypass road will address congestion issues at Denny Cross. Construction has commenced, with funding from developer contributions and the Council's capital programme.
  - A801 Avon Gorge - this is a longstanding joint scheme by Falkirk and West Lothian Councils to address safety issues at the crossing of the River Avon by the A801 and to improve this strategic link between the M9 and M8 motorways. Following a design review, the authorities are working with Scottish Government on a fresh business case.
- 6.9 For various congested radial routes into Falkirk, opportunities for mitigation are limited. This has implications for new development which would put additional strain on these routes. For example, new development in Larbert/Stenhousemuir will put additional pressure on the busy routes into Falkirk through Camelon and Bainsford, whilst additional sites in the Braes will feed into the constrained B805. This emphasises the importance of locating growth where access by sustainable and active travel modes is of a high quality.
- 6.10 The condition of local road network is a frequently cited issue in local consultations. In the LTS survey, some 63% either disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement that infrastructure was in a good condition.

## Disused Rail Infrastructure

- 6.11 The Planning (Scotland) Act 2019 states that in preparing local development plans, planning authorities 'are to have regard to the desirability of preserving disused rail infrastructure for the purpose of ensuring its availability for possible future public transport requirements'. The Falkirk Council area has a substantial number of old railway solums, including former branch lines and mineral railways. These have generally passed into the ownership of the Council and many are in use as paths and active travel routes. The proposed Falkirk-Denny path uses such land. Generally, the Council will retain such routes, although it is unlikely that they would be brought into use for public transport purposes.

## 7. Grangemouth Port, Freight and the Industrial Cluster

- 7.1 Grangemouth is Scotland's largest container port. Owned and operated by Forth Ports, it handles 9 m tonnes of cargo each year through specialist container, liquid and general cargo terminals. This cargo flow represents as much as 30% of Scotland's gross domestic product (GDP), highlighting the port's essential role as an economic facilitator for Scotland. A range of liquid bulks, containers and general cargo commodities transit the port using road, rail and sea. Forth Ports have an ongoing programme of investment in freight handling infrastructure, including expansion of warehousing and enhancement of the railhead facilities. Grangemouth also hosts some significant logistics companies such as WH Malcolm which together with the port form a nationally important logistics hub.
- 7.2 Notwithstanding the increasing use of rail to carry freight, HGV traffic continues to have a significant impact on the local road network and local communities which requires management and mitigation. For example, at present there are no proper parking/welfare facilities for HGVs in the town.
- 7.3 The successful bid for Green Freeport status in 2023 has the potential to grow, not only the port business and associated intermodal logistics hub, but also the wider industrial cluster at Grangemouth. Significant vacant land is available for investment at the port, Ineos and the Earls Road chemical cluster. Ineos has an ambitious net zero plan based around hydrogen and carbon capture technologies, whilst the Council's Growth Deal includes innovation centres for carbon dioxide utilisation and biotechnology. The Grangemouth Flood Protection Scheme is also likely to create network issues.
- 7.4 Recommendation 39 in STPR2 recommends improvements are made to transport which would enhance sustainable access to Grangemouth Investment Zone for both people and freight. A STAG appraisal is being prepared to investigate transport issues in and around the town, taking account of the various proposed developments highlighted above. A Forth Freight Study, to be undertaken by SEStran, will feed into this work.

## 8. Canals

- 8.1 The Council area is at the hub of Scotland's Lowland Canals, hosting substantial sections of the Forth & Clyde and Union Canals, together with their interchange at the Falkirk Wheel and connection into the River Carron and the Forth. The use of the canal network for freight has been the subject of feasibility studies, but its potential is constrained by a number of factors. Nonetheless, the upgraded towpaths are a vital part of active travel infrastructure in the area, providing a strategic east-west spine connecting a number of the area's communities. There is an ongoing focus on improving connectivity with the canal corridor from these communities and important trip destinations such as Falkirk Town Centre.



## 9. Electric Vehicles

- 9.1 Notwithstanding the policy shift towards sustainable and active travel, there is recognition that private vehicles will continue to play a role in future transport, and so supporting the shift towards zero emission vehicles will be important if climate change goals are to be met.
- 9.2 As the electric vehicle market continues to evolve and develop, the Council has set out an Electric Vehicles Charging Deployment Strategy to accelerate the deployment of Electric Vehicle Charge Points (EVCPs) across the Council area. As of January 2023, more than 60 EVCPs had been delivered, including infrastructure that is provided to partners. Charging points are focused on town centres, the large facility at Falkirk Stadium, and other community and sports centres.
- 9.3 Of those surveyed as part of the LTS consultation, some 9% had access to an electric or hybrid vehicle. The survey also highlighted cost and lack of charging infrastructure as the most common reasons for not buying an electric vehicle.



# 10. Car Parking

## Car Parking Standards

- 10.1 In terms of new development, the Council applies the parking standards in the National Roads Development Guide (NRDG), with a local variation related to residential garages not contributing to required provision. The NRDG gives flexibility to reduce parking standards in town centres and urban areas where there are good links to sustainable transport. NPF4 Policy 13 emphasises the role which minimising space dedicated to car parking, including a shift to low/no car developments, can play in reducing car use.

## Parking in Town Centres

- 10.2 The 2019 car parking survey identified some 5,485 car parking spaces Falkirk Town Centre, of which only around 23% are in Council control. The rest are private, mostly serving Central Retail Park, the two shopping malls and the supermarkets around the edge of the town centre. Car parking provision increased through the 1990s and 2000s as these retail facilities were developed. Parking demand, however, has been falling in recent years due to the changing role of the town centre, the reduction in retail and diminishing footfall. The 2019 survey indicated overcapacity of some 30%. The fact that most parking is private, and much of it is free, limits the influence which public parking policy can have on travel behaviour, in particularly encouraging more access to the town centre by sustainable and active means.
- 10.3 In 2020, the Council commissioned WSP to examine parking issues in the town centre. The study identified a package of measures to improve parking management, some of which were implemented.
- 10.4 In 2023, the Council approved a new vision for Falkirk Town Centre to address the decline of retail, the repurposing of vacant space for alternative uses, and finding new ways of bringing vitality back to the centre. On the back of this document, a parking strategy is likely to be developed, which looks at the role of car parking in the centre going forward, including the amount and distribution of parking which is retained in the future, and how it is managed. There is potential to repurpose surplus parking for beneficial uses, encourage sustainable access, and reduce the impact of cars on the town centre, whilst recognising that vehicular access will continue to have an important role, particularly for certain types of users.
- 10.5 Adequate parking is available in district and local centres to support their function.

## Park and Ride

- 10.6 There is a park and ride facility on the western side of Falkirk at the A803/A883 roundabout, north of the Falkirk Wheel. However, it has fallen into disuse due the level of free parking in Falkirk Town Centre, and the lack of a dedicated bus lane along the whole of the route into Falkirk. These factors are likely to be significant constraints on the potential for park and ride more generally in Falkirk.





# 11. Environmental Impacts

## Air Quality

- 11.1 The Falkirk Council area currently has one transport-related Air Quality Management Area (AQMA), located in Falkirk Town Centre, declared for NO<sub>2</sub> (annual mean). There is a relevant Air Quality Management Plan.

## Greenhouse Gas Emissions

- 11.2 The transport sector makes a significant contribution to greenhouse gas emissions. The 2021 estimate for transport-related greenhouse gas emissions in the Council area was 327.4 kt CO<sub>2</sub>e (compared with 370.0 kt CO<sub>2</sub>e in 2005), and comprises around 14% of total emissions in the area.



## 12. Summary

### 12.1 The key points are:

- There is an up to date policy context comprising NTS2, STPR2, the Regional Transport Strategy, the Local Transport Strategy and the Active Travel Strategy, all with the promotion of the Sustainable Travel Hierarchy as their priority.
- Cars remain the dominant mode of transport for most trips, notwithstanding efforts to promote sustainable transport modes.
- The long term growth in traffic both nationally and locally was briefly interrupted by the Covid 19 pandemic, but is now back up to pre-pandemic levels.
- There is a good network of core paths in the area but the recently approved Active Travel Strategy highlights the need to take a more strategic approach to active travel with a hierarchy of strategic routes, filling of gaps in the network and better integration with other modes.
- Public transport patronage is reducing, exacerbated by the Covid 19 pandemic. There are issues with cost, connectivity/integration, and frequency of services. The Falkirk Central Sustainable Transport Network and Forth Valley Bus Alliance offer potential for improvement.
- The strategic and local road networks are subject to congestion at key pinch points. A range of upgrades have been completed or are being promoted to deal with capacity issues.
- Grangemouth is a nationally important industrial logistics hub whose status is likely to be further enhanced through future investment. This presents challenges in terms of impacts on the local road network and local communities.
- There is an overprovision of car parking in Falkirk Town Centre. The type and level of parking provision needs reviewed as part of regeneration and repurposing strategies for the Town Centre.

# Sources

- [National Planning Framework 4](#)
- [National Transport Strategy 2](#)
- [SEStran 2035 Regional Transport Strategy](#)
- [STPR2 Final Summary Report](#)
- [STPR2 Forth Valley Initial Appraisal: Case for Change](#)
- [Falkirk Local Transport Strategy 2023](#)
- [Falkirk Active Travel Strategy 2023](#)
- [Forth Valley Connectivity Commission Final Report 2023](#)
- [Forth Valley Connectivity Commission Issues Report 2022](#)
- [Falkirk Town Centre Parking Survey](#)
- LTS Travel Survey 2022
- Take the Right Route Falkirk Travel Attitudes Survey
- [‘Hands Up’ Scotland Survey](#)

