

Executive Summary – Million Miles Project

The [Million Miles project](#) was run by [Transition Black Isle](#) between 2012 and 2015 and funded by the Climate Challenge Fund. The Black Isle is a peninsula just north of Inverness, with a population of about 10,000 people. The project's aim was to encourage more sustainable transport in the community and thus to save 1% (one million miles) of residents' estimated car travel. [The full report is available here](#)

The project included a range of alternative transport choices:

- Active travel (cycling and walking)
- Public transport (bus and rail)
- Reducing the impact of car use (lift sharing and fuel efficient driving)

Headline achievements of the project were a reduction of 1,352,277 (1.1%) car miles, with resulting CO₂ savings of 718t per year and 2,153t in total.

Two project officers shared a full-time post to run the project. They reported to a sub-group of Transition Black Isle Directors. Twelve very part-time (~80h/y) Community Cycle Trainers organised events from their locations throughout the area. Additional PR support and bookkeeping was bought in.

Cycle-related activities led to 40 cycle training and maintenance qualifications being awarded. 471 events were run involving 3,401 children and 1,968 adults (total attendees). Events ranged from formal training to awareness raising. Young people were involved through schools, clubs, family cycling, and specific off-road skills sessions. The least successful initiatives were commuting and leisure cycle trips to Inverness along roads. The most successful was the Fortrose to Avoch Primary School bike-bus, along the old railway line. This led on to a successful collaboration with Fortrose Academy. Dr Bike sessions at Community markets were also popular.

Other cycling projects included provision of bike racks at strategic points throughout the Black Isle (linked to public transport stops), support for feasibility studies of cycle paths on main roads, a Bike Fest event, and a national conference on rural cycling. Finally, a spin-off community enterprise (www.blackislebicycles.co.uk) focused on cycle tourism received funding from the Coastal Communities Fund.

Community Mapping increased awareness of walking and cycling routes around the area. Workshops and informal meetings allowed local people to learn how they could add their own information to OpenStreetMap (OSM), a global web-based map. The wider OSM on-line community helped by adding background information for the Black Isle. A short-term paid intern then validated the most useful routes and prepared route maps.

The outputs from this work can be used via the OSM route planner, www.CycleStreets.net, and through downloadable route cards for the Black Isle. The complete active travel map of the area, including detailed village maps, was printed at A2 size and delivered to all 8,300 households, with more copies retained for future events.

Car-based work included 8 training days in more efficient driving, with 54 participants. Our main focus was on lift sharing, through development and promotion of the national liftshare.com website. This involved funding the creation of a [local page](#) on the website followed by a range of promotional activities. These originally piggy-backed on congestion arising from long-term roadworks on the Kessock Bridge to Inverness. Promotion included roadside banners, press articles, radio interviews, and lunchtime events at key local employers. Around 726 people registered with the website during the project and they listed 829 possible journeys.

Public Transport in the area is mostly by bus though two western villages have a railway stations. The project worked with Stagecoach, the sole bus provider, on a number of village-based promotional schemes, offering a week's free travel. These promotions were linked with 4 'out and about' days the project ran in village halls, which were attended by 320 people. Other aspects of the project were also promoted at these events. Stagecoach also began a bike rack scheme by installing back racks on the back of buses to the Black Isle during the summer months.

Project monitoring involved trialling a range of approaches and because of the diversity of initiatives and the dispersed population of the area, was extremely challenging. Final figures have been obtained by using travel checks, where respondents report their travel behaviour and are followed-up by phone and Survey Monkey to identify any behavioural change. A total of 387 households provided initial checks and they comprise about 4.4% of total households in the project area. Of these 109 households completed repeat checks (1.9% of area). At the start¹ the travel patterns of the repeat group showed no difference from the full initial survey group. The monitoring provided detailed figures for all aspects of the project as well as qualitative anecdotal responses.

Experience gained The project provided valuable lessons in how to tackle the difficult issue of sustainable rural transport. It also increased Transition Black Isle's capacity to deliver long and complex projects, including public engagement, project and staff management, PR, and partnership working. The report analyses this in detail.

Finance Over the three years the Climate Challenge Fund contributed £194,035 (99.6% of the approved budget). The project attracted a further £44,600 for additional work not in the original budget, from a range of local and national public and NGO sources. The project led to £160,000 being raised for new work by some partner organisations. A conservative estimate of in-kind contributions from partners and volunteers is £10,500. The Black Isle Bicycles spin-off project attracted £120,000. The total additional (non-Climate Challenge) funding resulting from the project is thus £335,100.

¹ Text amended 15/6/2015 to clarify that the groups were similar when first surveyed. So the reduced car mileage found from the repeat group should also apply to the full initial survey group.