

Item:
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Report to Partnership Meeting 26 April 2024

RESEARCH AND STRATEGY DELIVERY

Bottlenecks!

Purpose of Report

To inform the Board on the progress of the whisky logistics study.

Bottlenecks! The brief

HITRANS has been asked by the Scotch Whisky Association to update that work in the light of increased output, new production sites, and changes to the freight network including ferries.

Bottlenecks! seeks to identify current and future freight needs of the industry, identify any related freight transport issues, and make recommendations for addressing those issues. It will also identify how future transport options can address the climate emergency and help the Scotch Whisky industry deliver its commitment to reach net zero emissions by 2045. The project will additionally explore resilience issues of the region's transport infrastructure that could arise in relation to Scotland's changing climate. Cross-border links are also to be considered.

The previous Spirit of the Highlands study was commissioned by HITRANS and the SWA, with the results of the study published in June 2011. The 2011 study was supported by development of a spreadsheet analysis tool to derive the level of traffic generated by the whisky industry on key road infrastructure and led to the Lifting the Spirit rail trials.

The Study

WSP UK Limited was appointed by the HITRANS and the Scotch Whisky Association. The report is in draft form awaiting SWA and other stakeholder comments.

Draft Summary

1. Since the 2011 study was published, the whisky industry in the HITRANS area has experienced significant growth, with its capacity having grown by 26% from 2009 to 2021. The rural nature of the area results in the whisky industry being reliant on the road network and ferry services to operate and its growth has resulted in an increase in the

number of HGV movements, with this placing a greater demand on the resilience of the transport network.

2. An increase of 10% in the current industry's capacity, which is likely to represent the minimum growth anticipated over the next ten years, has the potential to develop an additional 56,888 HGV movements on an annual basis which will place an even greater demand on the transport network.

3. Distillers, maltsters, hauliers and ferry operators were consulted in January and February 2024 to identify existing issues which have an impact on the whisky industry's operation and highlight any potential measures which could address the issues. A number of issues were identified including the restricted width of the A95, the susceptibility of sections of the A82 and A83 to rock falls and landslips and the distance required to divert around issues on certain sections of the trunk road network. The limited capacity and reliability of the Islay ferry was also highlighted as a concern.

4. The transport network in the HITRANS area is predominantly rural in nature and is impacted on by climatic events including flooding, landslides, high winds and winter weather, with the majority of these likely to worsen as a result of the changing climate. The network is also reported to experience a proportion of serious and fatal accidents which is twice that of the UK average.

5. While the nature of the transport network in the HITRANS area will always present issues to the Scotch whisky industry's operation, it is considered that there are measures which can be implemented to improve the network's resilience and enable the industry to continue to grow for the benefit of the Scottish economy.

6. The consultation exercise confirmed the industry and its stakeholder's willingness to embrace emerging technologies to support the transition to net zero, but the locations of distilleries in the HITRANS area will result in the industry continuing to rely on the trunk road network and ferry services for the foreseeable future. This will require further Government investment to both address the current resilience issues and provide a transport network which is able to adapt to the changing climate.

Draft recommendations

It is considered that the following schemes and measures will be essential to the development of a resilient transport network which is able to support the Scotch whisky industry's continued growth:

1. Development of a strategy to address the high proportion of serious and fatal accidents reported on the trunk road network in the HITRANS area. This has an impact on accident response times and consideration should be given to the deployment of additional units in the HITRANS area.

2. Introduction of additional VMS and undertake a review of the availability / suitability of diversion routes for HGVs.

3. Installation of wind deflectors on all major bridges in the HITRANS area which are susceptible to high winds.
 4. Update the design standards and improve the current drainage infrastructure to provide a road network which is more resilient to the changing climate.
 5. Creation of a freight forum to facilitate better communication between customers and operators could lead to consolidation of loads to reduce the number of freight movements and demand on ferry crossings. Additionally, long distance freight movements could be reduced by localising supply chains where possible including encouraging malting and maturation to take place local to distilling.
 6. Support the continued development of the A82 Tarbet to Inverarnan improvement project.
 7. Requirement to revisit the 2008 Scottish Road Network Landslides Study to identify a strategy to mitigate the impact of landslides on this section of the A82.
 8. Commitment to a date by which the current scheme to minimise the impact of landslides on the operation of the A83 at the Rest and Be Thankful is completed.
 9. Completion of dualling of the A9 between Perth and Inverness by 2035.
 10. Provide commitment to carriageway widening schemes where possible at constrained sections in association with planned maintenance activities.
 11. Provision of a dedicated ferry to serve freight movements between Islay and the mainland.
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Annexe 1

Whisky Industry HGVs

Daily Two-Way Traffic Flow	Route Name	Total Traffic	General HGVs	Whisky Industry HGVs	Prop of Whisky Ind HGVs
1	A96 – Keith to Inverness	17,127	2,312	159	6.9%
2	A95 – Keith to Granish	2,599	652	530	81.3%
3	A9 – Tore to Invergordon	14,629	2,502	62	2.5%
4	A9 – Inverness to Tore	30,322	4,215	121	2.9%
5	A9 – Inverness to Granish	9,979	1,477	192	13.0%
6	A9 – Granish to Kingussie	10,340	2,254	173	7.7%
7	A9 – Kingussie to Perth	15,051	1,987	173	8.7%
8	A82 – Inverness to Invergarry	2,540	538	1	0.2%
9	A82 – Invergarry to Fort William	3,917	768	1	0.2%
10	A82 – Fort William to Tyndrum	16,314	767	4	0.5%
11	A9 – Invergordon to Thurso	4,341	829	38	4.5%
12	A82 – Tyndrum to Tarbert	7,163	752	4	0.6%
13	A82 – Tarbert to Dumbarton	23,225	2,764	12	0.4%
14	A87 – Invergarry to Uig	4,822	371	3	0.7%
15	A830 – Fort William to Mallaig	9,410	668	1	0.1%

16	A85 – Oban to Tyndrum	4,514	722	1	0.1%
17	A83 – Tarbert to Kennacraig	4,088	442	8	1.8%
18	A835 – Tore to Braemore	10,348	869	0	0.0%
19	A96 – Keith to Aberdeen	21,934	1,755	68	3.9%
20	A83 – Campbeltown to Kennacraig	2,399	513	3	0.6%

Annexe 2

Growth

The industry's capacity has grown by 26% between 2009 and 2021, which equates to an average increase of 2% per year.

Whisky Industry Capacity Comparison Area	2009 Capacity	2021 Capacity	Increase
Ord	4,000,000	11,650,000	+66%
Sutherland	21,030,000	15,500,000	-36%
Nairn	8,600,000	50,900,000	+83%
Kingussie	2,600,000	3,050,000	+15%
Skye & Western Isles	2,700,000	4,090,000	+34%
Oban – Mull	1,700,000	2,400,000	+29%
Ben Nevis	2,000,000	2,000,000	+0%
Far North West	60,000	50,000	-20%
Campbeltown	2,250,000	4,750,000	+53%
Orkney	3,500,000	3,700,000	+5%
Inverness & Tomatin	5,000,000	5,123,750	+2%
Islay & Jura	18,390,000	21,950,000	+16%
Speyside	166,500,000	196,100,000	+15%
Invergordon	38,750,000	51,500,000	+25%

TOTAL	277,080,000	372,763,750	+26%
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RISK REGISTER

RTS Delivery

Impact – Mode shift, resilience, climate change, economy, regional competitiveness

Policy

Impact –Decarbonisation, transport efficiency, mode shift, Food and Drink policy

Financial

Impact – The study is fully funded

Equality

Impact – Nil

Recommendation

1. Members are asked to note the report.

Report by: Frank Roach
Designation: Partnership Manager
Date: 15 April 2024