

Report to Partnership Board Meeting 21 April 2023

EUROPEAN PROJECTS

FASTER Project Update

PURPOSE OF REPORT

To update Members on the development of the FASTER project funded through the INTERREG VA Programme, supported by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF). The project launched in October 2020.

OVERVIEW

The FASTER Project (Facilitating A Sustainable Transition to EVs in the Regions) is a joint proposal between seven Partners across Scotland, Ireland and Northern Ireland to support the overarching ambition to transition to low carbon transport systems.

The key objective of FASTER is to install 73 interoperable rapid charge points (50KW capacity) in the INTERREG VA region by June 2023, ensuring that the availability of charging stations is not a major obstacle to EV market penetration. It will also provide an additional supportive, enabling environment for suppliers and consumers, providing increased confidence and reassurance in regional commitment to the emerging EV market.

HITRANS will lead the technical work package on procurement, and will install 24 rapid charge points (or more if budget allows) across the three local authority areas covered within the programme area: Argyll & Bute (excluding Helensburgh), Western Isles, and Skye, Lochalsh & Lochaber areas of The Highland Council.

UPDATE

Installation preparation continues to progress well for FASTER, with works starting to be scheduled in by both SSE and Scottish Power, from June through to October, but trying to keep August free.

Each site installation will take approximately one month, with the ground being open for just 1-2 weeks, all being well. We try to keep the installation timeframe as short as possible to reduce disruption and to reduce the time the public is waiting for a newly sited charger to go live.

As an overview, the process is as follows:

- Week 1: Scottish Power excavate the ground, lay the cables, install the feeder pillar/cabinet & lay the foundations
- Week 2: SSE create their connection, EDF install the meter, Scottish Power install the charger and reinstate the ground
- Week 3: Scottish Power commission the charger (it's physically checked, signed off and handed over) and complete bay-marking

- Weeks 4: Charge Place Scotland conduct back office (software) checks
- Week 5: Charger goes live and can be used by the public

If there is any hold up it is usually in Week 2, as there are 3 different suppliers to co-ordinate on site that week.

In addition, there has been some site changes within the project - we had to drop two sites due to significant increases in civils costs since estimations at procurement, one being Fort William and the other being Craignure on Mull.

Whilst there is significant provision in Fort William already, demand is high and set to increase. However, the private sector is likely to invest in infrastructure provision here.

For Mull, finding a suitable site has always been challenging.

Several areas in Mull were identified as sites requiring area coverage on Mull such as Balevulin, Burg, Ulva Ferry & Croggan. However, no appropriate council owned land was identified in these areas and/or sites were too far away from sufficient power network capacity.

We then investigated private partnership in Salen as a central location to cover the network gaps but a location could not be agreed upon.

Council land purchase was also explored but could not be concluded in the project timeframe.

Co-locating additional chargers at Craignure with existing ones was considered but the Pier redevelopment works put that into question. An alternative car park was identified but this is the one that fell through due to rising civils costs.

We also tried to co-locate a new charger next to the existing one in Tobermory, but the connection costs were in excess of £70,000. Connection charges are being restructured as of this month, so this cost should reduce significantly in the future, and FASTER will still be replacing the existing charger in Tobermory that's at its end of life, improving on existing provision.

Whilst it's disappointing not to be adding any new provision on Mull through FASTER, these learnings have highlighted the charging infrastructure challenges faced on the island. Tobermory, Salen (via a land purchase) and Craignure Pier are still noted for possible future installations by the Council.

The two dropped sites will be replaced as per our site reserve list attached. Fort William will be replaced by an additional charger at each of the Ballachulish & Portree sites and Mull will be replaced by two new chargers at Dunoon.

PROJECT BUDGET

HITRANS has a significant budget in the FASTER project totalling €1,675,703, allowing for the installation of at least 24 rapid charge points.

RISK REGISTER

RTS Delivery

Impact – Positive

Comment – The FASTER project supports several RTS objectives, particularly in the field of low carbon transport and support for EV uptake.

Policy

Impact – Positive

Comment – FASTER is supporting broader policy work by conducting research on the procurement and installation of a rapid charging network and how this complements existing infrastructure.

Financial

Impact – Positive

Budget line and value – The project attracts a reimbursement rate of 85%.

Equality

Impact – Positive

Comment – FASTER aims to increase the number of publicly accessible charge points to encourage more EV drivers in the region.

RECOMMENDATION

Members are asked to note the report.

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Date: 11th April 2023

Annex 1

Flowchart to show process for choosing reserve sites

