

Report to Partnership Meeting 2 February 2024

EUROPEAN PROJECTS

EU Funding Consolidated Update

PURPOSE OF REPORT

To update Members on HITRANS involvement in European funded projects. This includes programmes Interreg North Sea Region, Interreg VA Cross Border, Interreg North West Europe and Horizon Europe. Feedback is welcome on additional information that might be helpful to include in the projects log.

OVERVIEW

HITRANS is currently involved in three active European projects, as well as providing support to the Low Carbon Travel & Transport (LCTT) projects. The Appendix includes details on all projects including status, timelines, description of main activities, Gantt Chart, and a consolidated budgets table. Amounts have been converted into GBP using the European Commission's official monthly exchange rate. As of August 2023, HITRANS total budget for European projects is £3,347,744.82.

KEY UPDATES

The **RURALITIES** project, funded by Horizon Europe had their latest Partnership Steering Board meeting in Inverness. HITRANS hosted the event in Inverness Town House where the historic nature of the venue was very well received by project partners. HITRANS are leading one of the six SIMSES lighthouses across Europe (simplified rural socio-ecological systems), with our lighthouse focusing on rural transport. A budget change process is pending that will bring additional budget to HITRANS following the withdrawal of another UK based partner.

The **FASTER** SEUPB funded project is reported separately following completion of the installation programme.

The **PAV** North Sea Region project that completed in Spring 2023 has recently been the subject of a second level control audit as part of the Audit Authority's overall assurance and annual reporting to the Commission as requested in Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013, Article 127 and Regulation (EU) No 1299/2103, Article 25. The draft report has been shared with HITRANS officers and the key finding was that all controlled expenditure for the period covered by the Audit was found to be eligible. The main findings and recommendations of the report have been agreed with the HITRANS Partnership Director.

FUTURE PROJECTS

HITRANS are engaging with Scottish Enterprise and HIE on what the future of Interreg funding could look like for Scotland. There is a possibility that we could be funded by Scottish Government to deliver complementary activity if we are accepted as an Associate Partner in a North Sea Region or Northern Periphery and Arctic Programme Project. This includes for the **SUB** project where we already enjoy Associate Partner Status.

HITRANS have also been included as an Associate Partner in the North West Europe CAMINO project. **CAMINO** is led by the City of Almere (with whom HITRANS partnered on PAV) and other consortium members are: ROSAS Centre (CH) and De Lijn (BE). The project partners will jointly develop two strategies, 1 for PTAs and 1 for PTOs, which will provide the blueprint for the long-term integration of *automated mobility on-demand (AMOD)* in public transport. The strategies are based on transnational learnings from an international network of 11 industry-leading associated organisations (including HITRANS), providing insight into state-of-the-art use cases, barriers to be overcome, and preparatory steps to ensure their effectiveness, transferability, and replicability.

RISK REGISTER

RTS Delivery

Impact – Positive

Comment – HITRANS EU project work supports several RTS objectives, particularly in the field of low carbon transport.

Policy

Impact – Positive

Comment – HITRANS EU project work supports broader policy work in a variety of ways, including making areas better connected and rural areas more accessible, and conducting research to assist with policy development.

Financial

Impact – Positive

Budget line and value – HITRANS EU projects bring large investments to the area at attractive intervention rates, ranging from 50%-100%.

Equality

Impact – Positive

Comment – A large proportion of EU project work is targeted at improving the availability and accessibility of transport services in the HITRANS area, such as increasing the number of publicly available charge points, trialling new transport services in rural areas and introducing low carbon transport services.

RECOMMENDATION

Members are asked to:-

1. Note the report.

Report by: Ranald Robertson
Designation: Partnership Director
Date: 23rd January 2024

HITRANS European Projects Log

Approved Projects

Project Title	Description	Programme	Status	Timeline	HITRANS Activities	Lead
Smart Cities	50/50 partnership with The Highland Council to deliver the Smart Cities programme for Inverness	European Regional Development Fund (ERDF)	Ongoing Phase 1 & Phase 2	2018 - June 2023	<p>Phase 1: Completed</p> <p>Phase 2 Projects:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - (Ongoing) Vehicle Management System (VMS) & Ferry Information Signs: the proposal has been approved with a total budget of £500k. Work is currently ongoing to install the 3 new signs, and Part 2 of the project focusing on improved passenger transport information kicked-off in Autumn 2022. 	NM/JG
G-PaTRA	Green Passenger Transport in Rural Areas HITRANS are project partners working with lead partner RGU to accelerate the use of zero emission vehicles and vessels in public transport	Interreg North Sea Region (NSR)	Ongoing	Oct 2017 – June 2023	<p>WP3 Accelerating the use of zero emission vehicles and vessels:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - HITRANS is piloting an electric bus in rural Morayshire with Moray Council – services started Jan 2019 - An evaluation of the pilot & associated carbon reduction emissions is being completed using results from a metric spreadsheet, capturing passenger numbers, total KM travelled, charge point use and any operational issues - Due to Covid-19 the route served by the electric bus service was suspended for a period, with the bus instead being used on the Kingston service which it performed well on – it has since resumed its original route - The final report on the business case for battery-powered trains from Wick-Thurso has been produced and is available on the HITRANS website - The project will contribute funds towards a study on hydrogen for rail - The e-bike pilots launched in Jan 2020 in Aviemore, Grantown-on-Spey and Fort William – the project was paused for a period due to Covid-19, but the e-bikes were 	JG/RP

					<p>offered to key workers as a means of transportation and proved extremely popular – future phases focused on wellbeing by advertising the bikes through local partners, including GP practices</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Additional project budget and extension time has enabled us to launch DRT pilots across the region, with the contract awarded to Liftango 	
FASTER	Project between NI, Ireland & Scotland to install EV rapid charge points in the Interreg VA programme area	Interreg VA – Special EU Programmes Body (SEUPB)	Ongoing	Sept 2020 – Dec 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The project will install 73 EV rapid charge points across the Interreg VA programme area of Scotland, Northern Ireland and Ireland to increase the number of publicly accessible rapid charge points - HITRANS will install 24 x 50kW charge points across the West Highlands & Islands – the HITRANS proportion of the Interreg VA programme area - Procurement for the charge point installations is now concluded, with installations taking place throughout 2023 	GR/JG
eHUBS	<p>Develop electric mobility hubs in cities</p> <p>An existing project that HITRANS were invited to join – the project has already had success launching eHUBS across different cities in Europe</p>	Interreg North West Europe (NWE)	Ongoing	April 2021- August 2023	<p>Implement eHUBS in & around Inverness:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - HITRANS main activities in the project are to implement shared e-bike hires, e-cargo bikes, electric car clubs and Mobility as a Service in and around the city of Inverness - The hubs will be launched from Summer 2022, featuring a combination of the above mobility modes - Hi-Bike will see an expansion as part of the project - Match funding has been obtained by EST and Transport Scotland - We have now recruited a Mobility Hubs Project Officer who is leading on this work 	CF/JG
RURALITIES	Climate smart, ecosystem-enhancing and knowledge-based rural expertise and training centres	Horizon Europe	Ongoing	Oct 2022 – Oct 2027	<p>RURALITIES:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Expert learning centres will be validated and delivered via real-scale practicing in 6 EU-based “lighthouses” simplified rural socio-ecological systems (SIMSES) - HITRANS role will be one of these ‘lighthouses’ focusing on rural transport - Due to the delay finalising the UK’s formal association to the programme with the EU, guaranteed funding is being provided by UKRI in place of Horizon Europe 	JG/RR

EU Projects – Budgets

Status	Project Title	Programme	HITRANS Budget	Intervention Rate	HITRANS Contribution	Leads
Approved	Smart Cities (Phase 2)	European Regional Development Fund (ERDF)	£500,000	70%	£150,000	NM/JG
	G-PaTRA	Interreg North Sea Region (NSR)	€ 699,874	50%	€ 349,937	JG/RP
	FASTER	Interreg VA SEUPB Cross-Border Programme	€ 1,675,703	85%	€ 251,355	GR/JG
	LCTT	European Regional Development Fund (ERDF)	£135,000	n/a	£135,000	NM/VT
	eHUBS	Interreg North West Europe (NWE)	€ 456,783	60%	€ 182,713	CF/JG
	RURALITIES	Horizon Europe	€ 361,000	100%	€ 0	JG/RR
	TOTAL £	Exchange Rate August 2023	£3,347,744.82		£936,300.68	