

PRESENT		<p>Cllr Allan Henderson, The Highland Council Member (Chair) Cllr Uisdean Robertson, Comhairle nan Eilean Siar Member Cllr Graham Sinclair, Orkney Islands Council Member Cllr Robin Currie, Argyll and Bute Council Member Prof David Gray, Non Councillor Board Member Mrs Naomi Bremner, Non Councillor Board Member Mr Robert Andrew, Non Councillor Member</p>
IN ATTENDANCE		<p>Mr Ranald Robertson, Partnership Director Mr Mike Mitchell, Partnership Treasurer Mr Neil MacRae, Partnership Manager Mr Frank Roach, Partnership Manager Mrs Jayne Golding, Projects and Policy Officer Mrs Vikki Trefer, Active Travel Officer Ms Kelly Martin, Graduate Project Support Officer Mr Derek Mackay, Comhairle nan Eilean Siar Mr Malcolm Macleod, The Highland Council</p> <p>Mrs Anne Murray, Comhairle nan Eilean Siar Ms Diane Anderson, Moray Council Mr Fergus Murray, Argyll & Bute Council Mr Ian Armstrong, SCDI Mr Nicky Sobey, HIE Mr Gordon Fyfe, Public Relations Consultant Mr Paul Steele, Comhairle nan Eilean Siar Mr John Boyd, Grant Thornton Ms Sarah Compton-Bishop, Scottish Islands Passport Scheme Project Manager</p>
APOLOGIES		<p>Cllr John Cowe, Moray Council Member (Vice Chair) Mr Robert Andrew, Non Councillor Member Ms Pip Farman, NHS Mr Gavin Barr, Orkney Islands Council Ms Pip Farman, NHS</p>
Declaration of Interest		<p>There were no declarations of interest.</p> <p>MINUTES</p>
Minute of Meeting of 24 April 2020	1	<p>It was agreed to approve the Minute of Meeting of 24 April 2020 with the inclusion of Mrs Nicola Moss in the list of apologies.</p>
Matters Arising	2	<p>The following updates were provided:</p> <p>Item 7 – Mr Frank Roach indicated that Network Rail were preparing a Report on the Inverness Interchange.</p> <p>Item 8 – Mr Ranald Robertson indicated that HITRANS were engaging with partners in order to secure lifeline air services within the Region and to key destinations within Scotland.</p> <p>Item 11 – Mr Neil Macrae indicated that a meeting involving Local Authorities would be organised in order to discuss the proposals by Sustrans to reclassify the National Cycle Network.</p> <p>It was agreed to note the updates.</p> <p>FINANCE</p>
Revenue Budget Monitoring Report –	3	<p>With reference to item 4 of the Minute of Meeting of 24 April 2020, Mr Mike Mitchell, Partnership Treasurer submitted the Revenue Budget Monitoring Report for 1 April 2019</p>

1 April 2019 to 31
March 2020

to 31 March 2020. The Report stated that the annual budget was approved at the Board Meeting held on 8 February 2019 and had subsequently been amended for the inclusion of the 2018/19 underspend of £23,389. The budget included grants received from the Scottish Government's Regional Active Travel Fund and Transport Scotland Active Travel Fund, as well as income from Highland Council, as part of the Inverness City Active Travel Network Programme, and income contributions for research and strategy development work. The summary statement was attached as an Appendix to the Report and detailed the final outturn financial position for the year ended 31 March 2020 which indicated a projected underspend of £7,072.

It was agreed to:

- (1) note the Report; and**
- (2) approve the revenue monitoring position for the period to 31 March 2020.**

HITRANS Annual 4
Audit Report

Mr Mike Mitchell, Partnership Treasurer presented a Report detailing the draft External Audit Annual Report for the financial year ended 31 March 2020. The Report indicated that it had been anticipated to conclude the audit procedures and signing the financial statements in September 2020 but that due to the impact of Covid-19 and the travel restrictions/social distancing measures in place to control the pandemic, the audit work was being undertaken remotely during 2019/20 which was causing delays.

The Report stated that while the original publication deadline for the HITRANS' financial statements was 30 September, Schedule 6 of the Coronavirus (Scotland) Act 2020 allowed a body to postpone submitting the unaudited accounts to auditors and publishing the audited accounts until it is reasonably practicable. The Report indicated that the Scottish Government had provided guidance on this in Finance Circular 10/2020. The guidance advised that 30 November should be considered a reasonably practicable date for publishing the audited accounts. The Report indicated that a revised timetable for completing our audit had been agreed with officers.

It was agreed to note the Report.

Revenue Budget 5
Monitoring Report –
1 April 2020 to 31
August 2020

Mr Mike Mitchell, Partnership Treasurer submitted a Revenue Budget Monitoring Report for 1 April 2020 to 31 August 2020. The Report stated that the annual budget was approved at the Board Meeting held on 7 February 2020 and had subsequently been amended for the inclusion of the 2019/20 underspend of £7,072. The budget included income from Highland Council, as part of the Inverness City Active Travel Network Programme and income contributions for research and strategy development work. The summary statement was attached as an Appendix to the Report and detailed the financial position to 31 August 2020. It was highlighted that the income and expenditure was broadly in line with the budget out-turn target.

It was agreed to:

- (1) note the Report; and**
- (2) approve the revenue monitoring position for the period to 31 August 2020.**

RESEARCH AND STRATEGY DELIVERY

- Research/Strategy Development Programme for 2020/21 Update 6 With reference to item 6 of the Minute of Meeting of 24 April 2020, Mr Ranald Robertson, Partnership Director submitted a Report which provided an update on progress with delivering the Research and Strategy Development Programme and sought approval of amendments to the programme to reflect commitments made, changing priorities and funding opportunities identified since approval of the 2019/20 Business Plan.
- It was agreed to approve the amendments made to the Research and Strategy Development Programme 2019/20 as detailed in the Appendix to the Report.**
- Fastline Faslane 7 With reference to item 18 of the Minute of Meeting of 15 November 2019, Mr Frank Roach, Partnership Manager submitted a Report providing an update in relation to the Fastline Faslane. The Report stated that HITRANS had recently been successful in obtaining Local Rail Development Funding from government funding to explore transport issues in and around the Faslane Naval Base, and in particular, consider the case for provision of a rail link. To this end, the client group had commissioned Stantec to undertake a Sustainable Transport Options Study in line with the Scottish Governments appraisal guidance (STAG) focused on access options to the area.
- The Report indicated that the initial process involved identification of problems and issues which affected workforce in both installations on a day to day basis. Stantec were currently analysing evidence of transport problems across the area, but it was critical to supplement the research with the opinions of stakeholders who lived, worked and did business in the area. The Report highlighted that the project had been delayed while establishing contacts within the MOD, however it would appear that the issues had been rectified and the project could now move forward at pace.
- It was indicated that a large number of people in the area were working from home due to COVID-19 however a substantial number were still travelling. The impact of COVID-19 would be taken into account as part of the Study.
- It was agreed to note the Report.**
- Scottish Government Consultations 8 Mr Neil Macrae provided a verbal update in relation to Scottish Government consultations. STPR2 had been published just prior to lockdown and HITRANS had submitted a response. The Infrastructure Commission for Scotland published its Phase 1 Key Findings Report at the end of 2019 and HITRANS had submitted a formal response to the Report. It was indicated that the Infrastructure Advisory Body had no representatives from the Highlands and Islands.
- Mr Fergus Murray indicated that it would be imperative that Argyll and Bute Council were involved in discussions in respect of the options for the rest and be thankful route.
- It was agreed to note the updates.**
- Rail Decarbonisation 9 Mr Frank Roach, Partnership Manager submitted a Report in respect of Transport Scotland's Rail Services Decarbonisation Action Plan which was launched by Michael Matheson, Cabinet Secretary for Transport, Infrastructure and Connectivity, in July 2020. The Report detailed a map showing the decarbonised rail network in Scotland, 2035. Within the 'Next Steps' section of the Report it was highlighted that electrification of the Highland Main Line was to be welcomed. It indicated that journey time reduction would be achieved through lighter, faster trains. The Report further indicated that HITRANS would also continue to keep abreast of alternative traction possibilities and the hydrogen aspects of Opportunity Cromarty Firth as well as pursuing greater frequency and reduced journey times on the Inverness to Aberdeen line.
- It was agreed to note the Report.**

CivTech Challenge 5.0 10 Ms Kelly Martin, Graduate Project Support Officer submitted a Report providing an update on HITRANS involvement in the CivTech 5.0 project and feedback was welcomed on additional information that might be helpful to include. The Report stated that HITRANS was currently involved in the CivTech 5.0 programme to address a specified transport challenge, *“How can we use technology to create a smart and sustainable travel network in remote and rural areas?”* The issue was identified when considering the geography of the Highlands and Islands and the associated challenging transport environment, covering almost 50% of Scotland's landmass but with only 10% of its population. The Report highlighted that while dispersed settlements were reliant on a good transport network for connectivity and access to key services, the financial sustainability of traditional transport services was a significant challenge.

The Report highlighted the importance of understanding the transport available for use within the region (including buses, ferries, trains, car clubs and cycling), and creating a more flexible, demand-responsive system that would meet the needs of users, calculates and understands travel patterns as well as addressing cost efficiencies and long-term viability. The Report stated that the CivTech 5.0 alliance had aided in the navigation of procurement routes and introduced innovative businesses to solve the challenge.

It was agreed to note the Report.

Freeport 11 Mr Frank Roach gave a presentation in relation the potential benefits of Freeport status around the Cromarty Firth. A Free Trade Zone in the area will help secure supply chain opportunities after the UK leaves the EU single market and provide skilled employment in the Highlands. A free trade zone would effectively operate outside the UK's tax jurisdiction. Companies could defer the payment of taxes on products until they were sent to their destination. They can also avoid taxes on components they import to make goods which are then exported. It was indicated that the UK Government had launched a consultation in relation to the potential creation of up to 10 Freeports across the UK.

It was agreed to note the presentation.

Active Update Travel 12 With reference to item 12 of the Minute of Meeting of 24 April 2020, Ms Vikki Trelfer, Active Travel officer submitted a Report providing an update on Active Travel projects in which HITRANS were currently involved. The Report stated that a total of £187k was available for projects in 2020/21 through the Regional Active Travel Fund (Transport Scotland) under the following headings:

- Bikes on Buses
- Cycle Parking at Transport Interchanges
- Active Travel Masterplan Small Interventions
- Active Travel Project Design

The Report indicated that the projects from 2019/20 which had been delayed due to Covid-19 were now progressing or complete.

- Street lighting and signage improvements to improve access to Aviemore Station with match funding from ScotRail Station Fund – Due to Complete October 2020
- Design work on active travel improvements at Uig on Skye - Complete
- Cycle parking at transport interchanges – To be installed on Skye and Kyle of Lochalsh by October 2020.
- Contribution to Transport Hub as part of Wick Riverside improvements – Due to complete October 2020

The Report indicated that £100k was available again in 2020/21 through the Sustrans Partnership Fund. The Report highlighted that bids were invited from Partnership Members. It was further highlighted that the following projects were being taken forward:

- Wick and Thurso Active Travel Masterplan updates
- Elgin Active Travel Map

It was agreed to note the Report and consider opportunities for advancing projects within the different Active Travel funding streams which would support HITRANS wider policy objectives and priorities.

Branchliner II	13	<p>Mr Frank Roach, Partnership Manager submitted a Report providing an update on the progress of Branchliner – Timber by Rail. The Report stated that during winter 2019-20 HITRANS and Victa Railfreight worked on the cost-model for a merry-go-round timber train, identifying wagon provision as the most important area to de-risk. Discussion took place with Transport Scotland on the potential for government to assist with the lease costs of a rake of suitable wagons. The Report indicated that HITRANS had located a timber harvester/supplier as a willing partner to take part in a trial run from the NDA terminal at Georgemas, with support from HITRANS, but the trial was delayed for technical reasons. Victa Railfreight had submitted a successful bid to Transport Scotland’s Rail Freight Fund for support to run timber trains from Caithness working with the same harvester/supplier.</p> <p>The Report stated that a short term opportunity to use Inverness Millburn Yard arose prior to the deployment of autumn leaf fall trains. Pipe carrying wagons were identified as being available at short notice, although it was recognised that they did not provide for an optimised payload, and West Coast were contracted to provide traction. The Report highlighted that Network Rail moved very swiftly to approve paths and made sidings available at very short notice.</p> <p>The Report indicated that trains commenced in August for 6 weeks and it was highlighted that HITRANS was contributing £5k in funding which covered an agreed sum per tonne for terminal access at Georgemas and could assist with unforeseen issues, such as ballast requiring to be moved at short notice. It was indicated that the next steps would be that a report would be produced which would provide the industry and stakeholders with findings that may point towards a commercial model.</p> <p>It was agreed to note the Report.</p>	
COVID Temporary and Active Funding	19	14	<p>Mr Neil Macrae, Partnership Manager, submitted a Report providing an overview of the recent funding opportunities for temporary bus and active travel Infrastructure and other recent Challenge funds announced by Transport Scotland. An overview of the funds and successful applications from within the HITRANS area was summarised within the Report.</p> <p>It was agreed to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="464 1149 1433 1205">(1) note the Report and consider opportunities for further applications or any representations; <li data-bbox="464 1234 1433 1312">(2) Note that Mr Neil Macrae would circulate the weekly Reports produced by bus operators to Members and that the content would be considered by Partnership advisors: and <li data-bbox="464 1344 1433 1422">(3) Authorise the Chair and Partnership Director to develop actions in support of establishing support mechanisms that would assist local partners in tackling challenges specific to rural transport and those delivering them.
Shared Update – Transport Information Provision	15	15	<p>Ms Julie Cromarty, Public Transport Information Officer submitted a Report providing an update on the shared service approach for co-ordinating the provision of public transport information across the HITRANS area. The Report stated that four out of five local authorities within the HITRANS area were using the public transport database with the last local authority having recently agreed for HITRANS to take full responsibility for data migration to overcome staff pressures at the local level. The Report indicated that work to improve the source information received from operators was being done in collaboration with the operators themselves and each local authority. This improvement was on an ongoing basis to ensure the output information received by the public was continually improving.</p> <p>The Report stated that in March 2020 the database supplier (Trapeze) informed HITRANS they would only seek to take up the final year extension allowed under the contract if they were able to significantly increase the annual maintenance cost from the rate agreed in the contract. This left HITRANS with no option but to retender the contract a year earlier than expected. It was further stated that development work on stop templates had just been completed and testing would commence once the data migration and testing of the system was complete. A Project Implementation Plan including local authority training would be discussed and circulated to all Local Authorities once the data migration and accuracy phase was complete and the HITRANS system training had been completed.</p> <p>It was agreed to note the Report.</p>

MaaS Project 16
Status Update

With reference to item 14 of the Minute of Meeting of 7 February 2020, Ms Marelise Hamar, MaaS Project Officer, submitted a Report providing an update on the HITRANS Mobility as a Service (MaaS) Project. The Report stated that the MaaS Project had now successfully launched and plans to go live into pilot phase in March 2021, for a now successfully extended period of 12 months. In order to support delivery of the Pilot, HITRANS had appointed a Project Officer to lead the activities through to completion in April 2022. The Report indicated that the launch date had been delayed from August 2020 due to the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. However, all activities were tracking against the revised post-COVID schedules as agreed by project partners and external funding stakeholders.

The Report highlighted that the pilot project would deliver a new unified MaaS platform (website and app) with a range of functions including journey planning, booking and payment for public transport services. The defined project delivery strategy comprised of three workstreams;

- Research and Evaluation
- Marketing
- Technical

The Report further indicated that as a result of the impact of COVID-19, Ticketer, who bought the benefit of existing API links with regional bus operators, were no longer able to support the project due to a lack of available resourcing. In order to maximize output value of the project, various options for reallocation of funds previously assigned to Ticketer were now being considered.

It was agreed to note the Report.

EUROPEAN PROJECTS

EU Funding 17
Consolidated Update

Ms Jayne Golding, Projects and Policy Officer, submitted a Report providing an update on HITRANS involvement in European funded projects. This included programmes Horizon 2020, Interreg North Sea Region (NSR) and Interreg VA Cross Border Programme. Feedback was welcomed on additional information that might be helpful to include in the projects log.

The Report indicated that HITRANS was currently involved in eight European projects. The Appendix to the Report provided details on all projects including current status, timelines, description of main activities, a Gantt Chart showing involvement into 2023 and a consolidated budgets table. The Report stated that amounts had been converted into GBP using the European Commission's official monthly exchange rate and that as of August 2020, HITRANS total budget for European projects was £4,655,584.

It was agreed to note the Report.

PARTNERSHIP

Programme of Meetings 2021 18 Mr Ranald Robertson, Partnership Director submitted a Report advising Members on the proposed dates for Partnership Board and Permanent Advisors meetings in 2021 and invited Members to indicate acceptance or changes to the dates. It was indicated that the November 2020 meeting would be moved to 27 November and would be held through Microsoft Teams.

It was agreed that HITRANS Partnership and Advisors meet in 2021 on the following dates and locations:

DATE	PARTNERSHIP MEETING	ADVISORS MEETING	LOCATION
21 January 2021		Morning	Virtual
5 February 2021	Partnership Board Meeting		Virtual
1 April 2021		Morning	Virtual
23 April 2021	Partnership Board Meeting		Virtual or Inverness
26 August 2021		Morning	Virtual
16/17 September 2021	Evening Meeting followed by full Partnership meeting on Friday Morning		Eilean Siar or Virtual
28 October 2021		Morning	Virtual
11/12 November 2021	Evening Meeting followed by full Partnership meeting on Friday Morning		Argyll and Bute or Virtual

COVID-19 – HITRANS Activity Update 19 Mr Ranald Robertson, Partnership Director submitted a Report providing an update on the activities undertaken by the HITRANS team in recent months related to the global pandemic situation. The Report stated that HITRANS had where possible been working to achieve a business as usual approach in the most challenging of times as the nation focussed on mitigating the public health crisis created by the global Coronavirus / COVID 19 pandemic. The Report indicated that there had been direct impacts on how HITRANS worked and a number of new areas directly relating to the pandemic where HITRANS officers were providing support / input. The Report provided a summary of HITRANS COVID-19 related activities listed in bullet points within the Report.

It was agreed to note the Report.

Programme for Government 20 Mr Neil Macrae, Partnership Manager and Mr Ranald Robertson, Partnership Director submitted a Joint Report providing Members with a summary of the key transport related aspects of the Programme for Government (PfG) published on 1 September 2020. The Report provided a summary of the key elements of the Programme for Government relevant to the delivery of the RTS in the forthcoming year. Mr Graham Sinclair thanked HITRANS for their support in relation to Orkney Internal Ferry services.

It was agreed:

- (a) to make representations to the relevant Scottish Government Ministers;
- (b) that the Scottish Government infrastructure proposals for the ferry network must include all islands;
- (c) that the National Concessionary travel Scheme should be subject to an Islands Impact assessment in terms of the Islands (Scotland) Act 2018;
- (d) that Concessionary Travel on ferries for over 60's should include internal ferry networks;
- (e) that National Concessionary Travel should include services for young people; and
- (f) that Transport Scotland should develop a long term solution for the Rest and be Thankful as a matter of urgency.