

Minute of Meeting held via  
Microsoft Teams on Friday  
24 April 2020 at 9.30am.

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</p>
IN ATTENDANCE	<p>Mr Ranald Robertson, Partnership Director Mr Neil MacRae, Partnership Manager Mr Frank Roach, Partnership Manager Mrs Jayne Golding, Projects and Policy Officer Mrs Vikki Trelfer, Active Travel Officer Mr Derek Mackay, Comhairle nan Eilean Siar Mr Malcolm Macleod, The Highland Council Mr Gavin Barr, Orkney Islands Council Mrs Anne Murray, Comhairle nan Eilean Siar Ms Diane Anderson, Moray Council Mr Fergus Murray, Argyll &amp; 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 Mike Mitchell, Partnership Treasurer Mrs Nicola Moss, Moray Council</p>

Declaration of Interest	There were no declarations of interest.
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**MINUTES**

Minute of Meeting of 7 February 2020	1	It was <b>agreed</b> to approve the Minute of Meeting of 7 February 2020.
Matters Arising	2	<p>The following updates were provided:</p> <p>Item 6 – HITRANS proposal in respect of the Review of Local Governance had been submitted. The Review would be delayed due to the COVID -19 Pandemic.</p> <p>Item 14– Funding for a Project Officer to manage the MaaS Investment Fund workstream had been secured. The post had been advertised and interviews would be held over the coming weeks.</p> <p><b>It was agreed to note the updates.</b></p>

## **PARTNERSHIP**

- COVID-19 3 Mr Ranald Robertson provided an update with regards to Covid-19. The Report stated that HITRANS had, where possible, been working to achieve a business as usual approach in the most challenging of times. 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 stated that it was recognised that the partners were often on the frontline and that the strain the crisis placed on key workers in partner Councils and the NHS was very different to the organisational impact on HITRANS. A summary of HITRANS Covid-19 related activities was detailed in the Report.

**It was agreed to note the update.**

## **FINANCE**

- Revenue Budget Monitoring Report – 1 April 2019 to 29 February 2020 4 With reference to item 3 of the Minute of Meeting of 7 February 2020, Mr Mike Mitchell, Partnership Treasurer submitted a Revenue Budget Monitoring Report for 1 April to 29 February 2020. The Report stated that the annual budget had been approved at the Board Meeting 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, together with income from The 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 29 February 2020 which indicated that the total income and expenditure was broadly in line with the budget out-turn target. The Report stated that based on the financial performance to date, it was predicted that at the end of the financial year the budget would deliver underspend of £8,450.

**It was agreed to:**

- (1) note the Report; and**
- (2) approve the revenue monitoring position for the period to 29 February 2020.**

- HITRANS Business Plan 2020/21 5 With reference to item 4 of the Minute of Meeting of 7 February 2020, Mr Ranald Robertson, Partnership Director, submitted a Report seeking approval from the Partnership for the HITRANS Business Plan for 2020/21. The Report stated that the Business Plan set out how it was intended to support delivery of the Strategy during 2020/21 working with constituent Councils and Stakeholders with a view to improving transport services across the highlands and Islands. As with previous Business Plans the programme of work set out included a two year Research and Strategy Development Programme.

**It was agreed:**

- (1) to approve the Business Plan for financial year 2020/21.**
- (2) Incorporate the comments of Board Members in relation to publicising the work that HITRANS was involved in and to include as a key workstream post COVID-19 renewal and recovery: and**

## **RESEARCH AND STRATEGY DELIVERY**

- Research/Strategy Development Programme for 2019/20 6 With reference to item 8 of the Minute of Meeting of 7 February 2020, Mr Ranald Robertson, Partnership Director submitted a Report which provided an update on progress with delivering the Research and Strategy Development Programme and seeking 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.**

- Platform for Change 7 With reference to item 15 of the Minute of Meeting of 7 February 2020, Mr Frank Roach, Partnership Manager submitted a Report providing information on developments towards the creation of an integrated transport interchange at Inverness. The Report stated that HITRANS began investigating alterations to the layout at Inverness station in 2014. The

Report indicated that Network Rail had acquired the following assets which would be required for the development of the interchange:

- Royal Mail Sorting Office and Car Park
- TK Maxx/ Sports Direct
- TK Maxx Car Park
- Highland Rail House (the north side of Station Square)

The Report further stated that it was envisaged that a Steering Group comprising Network Rail, Transport Scotland, HITRANS and The Highland Council would be set up to progress the integrated transport interchange.

**It was agreed to note the Report.**

Security of Lifeline  
Air Services 8

Mr Neil MacRae, Partnership Manager, submitted a Report inviting the board to consider work that HITRANS and partners could undertake to help secure lifeline air services both within and to/from the region in the future. The Report provided information on pre Covid-19 changes to air services together with post Covid-19 impacts. The Report stated that in light of recent events, it was proposed that HITRANS should seek early engagement with HIAL and Transport Scotland to ensure that support for local outcomes were prioritised in responding to the crises facing the aviation industry. It was indicated that lifeline air services should be a key national transport priority due to their significance for Highlands and Islands communities.

**It was agreed:**

- (1) to note the Report; and**
- (2) that HITRANS, together with local partners, would engage with HIAL, Transport Scotland and the wider aviation industry to secure lifeline air services within the Region and to key destinations within Scotland.**

Corran Narrows  
Fixed Link: Outline  
Feasibility Study 9

With reference to item 17 of the Minute of Meeting of 15 November 2019, Mr Neil MacRae, Partnership Manager, submitted a Report providing an update on progress with the Transport Appraisal for the Corran Narrows in Lochaber and detailing the executive summary of the Outline Feasibility Study which had explored fixed link solutions. The Report indicated that to support the work already undertaken by The Highland Council through the Corran Ferry STAG Appraisal (2019) the project sponsors (The Highland Council, HITRANS and Highlands and Islands Enterprise commissioned transport consultants Stantec to undertake an Outline Feasibility of Fixed Links across the Corran Narrows in late 2019 with the objective of establishing the following:

- whether a fixed link across the Corran Narrows could feasibly be delivered
- potential alignments and structural forms
- an envelope of capital and maintenance costs
- how this cost envelope compares to a long-term ferry-based solution
- the scale of benefits associated with a fixed link.

The Report indicated the Feasibility Study had demonstrated that a fixed link across the Corran Narrows appeared a potentially viable proposition and detailed the potential transport and wider economic benefits. The Feasibility Study had been submitted to Transport Scotland to highlight the case for the proposal for to be given all-inclusive consideration as part of the STPR2 interventions.

**It was agreed to note the Report.**

- Scottish Islands Passport Project 10 Ms Sarah Compton-Bishop, Scottish Islands Passport Scheme Project Manager, gave a presentation providing an update on the Scottish Islands Passport Project. The presentation detailed the outcomes, approach and proposed outputs. Ms Compton-Bishop detailed the timeline and progress to date and outlined the potential impacts on the project as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- It was agreed to note the presentation.**
- National Cycle Network Review 11 Ms Vikki Trelfer, Active Travel Officer and Mr Neil MacRae, Partnership Manager, submitted a Report providing an update on Sustrans' review of the National Cycle Network, and implications of this for the Network in the HITRANS area. The Report stated that the National Cycle Network (NCN) in Scotland was currently a network of walking and cycling routes covering the whole country from the Borders to the Shetland Isles. The Report indicated that as custodians of the Network, Sustrans' vision was to shape a network of traffic free paths that could be used by a sensible 12 year old travelling alone. The Report highlighted that Sustrans received funding from Transport Scotland for the development and improvement of NCN routes in Scotland. The Report provided information on the reclassification and removal of sections from the Network and the implications for the HITRANS area. The Board expressed concerns at the potential impacts within the HITRANS area.
- It was agreed:**
- (1) to note the Report; and**
- (2) to make representations to Sustrans, Transport Scotland and Scottish Ministers requesting that any proposals to reclassify or remove any of the National Cycle Network is paused until post COVID-19 and that these proposals are subject to island proofing.**
- Active Travel Update 12 With reference to item 13 of the Minute of Meeting of 7 February 2020, Ms Vikki Trelfer, Active Travel Officer, submitted a Report which provided an update on Active Travel projects in which HITRANS were currently involved. The Report stated that several projects under the 2019/20 fund which were due to complete in March had now been postponed. HITRANS had agreement from Transport Scotland to accrue the funds allocated to these projects into the next financial year. The Report detailed the projects which had been completed as part of the 2019/20 budget and indicated that HITRANS had submitted a bid to Transport Scotland for funding from the 2020/21 Regional Active Travel Fund. The Report further stated that several projects within the Sustrans Partnership Fund were likely to be delayed due to COVID-19 restrictions. The consultants appointed to work on the Active Travel Masterplan for Wick and Thurso would progress the project utilising remote working and engagement.
- It was agreed:**
- (1) to note the Report; and**
- (2) to consider opportunities for advancing projects within the different Active Travel funding streams to support HITRANS' wider policy objectives and priorities.**
- HML Unfazed 13 With reference to item 10 of the Minute of Meeting of 7 February 2020, Mr Frank Roach, Partnership Manager, submitted a Report providing information on the final Highland Mainline Unfazed Report. The Report stated that the Report had been sent to Transport Scotland, The Report highlighted that the aim was to ensure that STPR2 acknowledged the non-delivery of STPR1 as far as the Highland Main Line (HML) was concerned. Mr Roach gave a presentation in relation to the HML Unfazed Report.
- It was agreed to note the Report.**

## CONSULTATION

National Planning Framework 4 14 With reference to item 16 of the Minute of Meeting of 7 February 2020, Mr Neil MacRae, Partnership Manager, submitted a Report detailing HITRANS draft response to the National Planning Framework (NPF) 4 Call for Ideas. The Report stated that the National Planning Framework was a long-term Spatial Plan for Scotland that set out where development and infrastructure was required to support sustainable and inclusive growth.

The Report highlighted that the Scottish Government had started work to prepare the NPF4 which would look to Scotland in 2050. It was envisaged that NPF4 would differ substantially from its predecessor with a longer time-horizon, fuller regional coverage and improved alignment with wider programmes and strategies, including on infrastructure and economic investment. The Report further indicated that the Scottish Government had launched a Call for Ideas to help encourage individuals and organisations to highlight their priorities. HITRANS had engaged with partner Local Authorities and helped provide evidence in support of their responses. A Copy of HITRANS response was detail in the Appendix to the Report.

**It was agreed to authorise the Partnership Director to finalise the HITRANS response to the National Planning Framework 4 Call for Ideas, taking on board the comments of Members, and submit the response by the deadline of 30 April 2020.**

## EUROPEAN PROJECTS

EU Funding Consolidated Update 15 With reference to item 18 of the Minute of Meeting of 7 February 2020, Ms Jayne Golding, Projects and Policy Officer, submitted a Report which provided an update on HITRANS involvement in European Funded projects which included Horizon 2020, Interreg North Sea Region (NSR) and Interreg VA Cross Border Programme. The Report indicated that since the Partnership Board meeting in February 2020, a Business Support Assistant had been recruited to support involvement in EU projects and assist with the administration and preparation of financial claims. Three other staff members were also being recruited; a FASTER Project Officer, Business Support Assistant and a MaaS Project Officer to support work in Stronger Combined. The Report further indicated that the majority of European funded projects would be delayed or suspended due to COVID-19 although it was hoped that extensions would be granted. HITRANS were exploring how European projects might be able to support communities during the COVID-19 pandemic.

**It was agreed to note the Report.**

STPR2 16 Mr Neil MacRae, Partnership Manager, indicated that HITRANS had been invited to submit comments to Transport Scotland in relation to STPR2.

**It was agreed to authorise the Partnership Manager, in consultation with Board Members and Permanent Advisers, to finalise the HITRANS response to the STPR Consultation.**