

Transport in Scotland

OUTPUT REPORT

of a seminar held at Nairn on Monday 17 November 2003, facilitated on behalf of HITRANS by Rocket Science UK Ltd, to inform HITRANS response to the Scottish Executive's consultation paper.

Context

This report has been prepared as a factual account and does not contain a commentary or conclusions. Its main purpose is to provide the core HITRANS group and its coordinator with material to inform the development of HITRANS response to the consultation paper.

The seminar programme was structured around two main issues, each of which was the subject of group work.

1. Roles and responsibilities for a regional transport partnership
2. Management & resourcing for regional partnerships

There were 8 work groups and this report is based on the output of their discussions, conclusions and recommendations. The report also includes 8 questions from groups put to the Minister during a 'question time' session and a summary of the Minister's responses. The report ends with individual messages to HITRANS submitted by 62 of the seminar's participants.



ISSUE 1

Roles and responsibilities for a regional transport partnership

The views from each work group on the roles and responsibilities for a regional transport partnership are shown below. Each work group considered the following three questions:

- Question 1: Are there any transport powers currently with Scottish Ministers that might more effectively be exercised by local government, whether at regional partnership or local authority level?
- Question 2: Will Transport Scotland need to attract powers that are currently with local government – especially in relation to concessionary fares and quality contracts now that these are to be coordinated nationally?
- Question 3: Would it be helpful for transport Scotland to have powers to promote new railways or tramways in Scotland at its own hand?
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Feedback on Issue 1

Issue 1: overall recommendation of work group 1

Lifeline strategic/external routes (ferry & air) and strategic road/rail networks to be planned and managed regionally and delivered locally with national standards and guidelines applied for appropriate functions. Essential to have direct regional and local links to the Minister and decision makers.

Question 1

Recommendations

- ✍ Trunk roads revert to regional body for strategic planning and local delivery
- ✍ Calmac/Northlink and livestock devolved to regional body for strategic planning with Aberdeen seat
- ✍ HIAL and PSO (external) network to be devolved to regional body
- ✍ Strategic rail planning at regional/national level

Conclusion

- ✍ Roads hierarchy to be reviewed to develop regional strategic routes. Trunk road maintenance and development at regional level and delivered locally
- ✍ Ferry and air services devolved to regional body for strategic planning with Aberdeen involved in body (Calmac, Northlink, livestock, HIAL and PSO (external) network)
- ✍ Strategic rail planning at both regional/national levels



Question 2

Recommendations

- ✍ Yes, the Agency will need to attract powers to adopt national concessionary fares scheme with local deliver and national standard for quality contracts. Important and integrated ticketing/timetabling

Conclusion

- ✍ Adopt national concessionary fares scheme
- ✍ National standard for quality contract and regional level for delivery.
- ✍ Introduction for inter-modal ticketing – National Strategy Regional/local delivery

Question 3

Recommendation

- ✍ Yes, essential to have at national and regional levels strategic planning
- ✍ Yes, national agency must have powers to promote new railways/tramways

Conclusion

- ✍ Essential Agency has powers to promote railways/tramways
- ✍ Also essential regional partnership are involved in strategic planning
- ✍ Also, local involvement in infrastructure, timetabling, service levels

Issue 1: overall recommendation of work group 2

Transport Scotland to provide strategic guidance and support for large scale capital programmes/procurement. Regional bodies to take on management and development of regional services and associated infrastructure apart from national/international routes. Both Regional and National bodies to be accountable to local level.

Question 1

Pro's and con's

- ✍ Regional management brings greater understanding of regional issues against this could be a loss of integration
- ✍ Must capitalise on expertise of franchise management in order to avoid reinventing wheel

Recommendations

- ✍ Need national rail management with strong regional and local representation
- ✍ Ports, ferries and airports require Regional Management
- ✍ Regional road issues are very different from Highland to the Central Belt, e.g., congestion versus getting freight off road (i.e. there is not just one solution to particular problems)

Question 2

Pro's and con's

- ✍ Quality partnerships require standard conditions
- ✍ Integrating concessions is difficult but would be good
- ✍ Large capital projects require central/regional management with local input
- ✍



Recommendations

- ✍ National Agency should work to support local/regional partnerships to define large capital programmes (ferries, roads, ports, etc)
- ✍ Develop integrated concessions policy at national level
- ✍ Develop standard conditions for Quality Partnerships

Issue 1: overall recommendation of work group 3

Any issue to be dealt with at lowest practical appropriate level. Principle of subsidiarity. Use 'Regional' (prefix) terminology, to aid understanding of role and functions of a Regional Partnership. Devolve trunk roads to Regional Partnership (excluding motorways, TEN's). Transport Scotland to look after National concessionary fares. Quality Contracts best dealt with by Regional Partnerships. SRA powers to Transport Scotland (especially strategic freight). Role for Regional Partnership in delivery of HIAL and Calmac services.

Question 1

Pro's and con's

- ✍ Pro's: accountability and ability to prioritise across the region with consequential efficiency gains
- ✍ Con's: fragmentation and lack of expertise (skills base)

Recommendations

- ✍ Any issue should be dealt with as at low a level as possible
- ✍ Use 'Regional' terminology to assist all involved to better understand the role and functions of a regional partnership

Conclusion

- ✍ Trunk road responsibility should be devolved to the Regional Partnership level. The same holds true for HIAL and Calmac. Regional rail services should also be considered

Question 2

Pro's and con's

- ✍ Pro's: simplicity/transparency/consistency having agreed at national level
- ✍ Con's: loss of local accountability, may be better level to deliver Quality Contracts

Conclusion

- ✍ Strong merit in having powers given to Transport Scotland to demonstrate simplicity, transparency and consistency across Scotland
- ✍ However, Regional Partnerships would be better placed to deliver quality contracts

Question 3

Recommendations

- ✍ Strategic freight
- ✍ SRA powers and functions

Conclusion

- ✍ It would be helpful to have new powers and to have further additional powers to take on role of SRA



Issue 1: overall recommendation of work group 4

A Regional body to be established, with a strategic overview to ensure the delivery of an integrated sustainable transport system, within a clear national framework.

Question 1

Pro's and con's

- ✍ Rational planning of the transport systems/(road/air/road) infrastructure
- ✍ Ring-fencing of transport spending allocation (not too prescriptive)

Recommendations

- ✍ Trunk road maintenance to move to regional control
- ✍ Harbour development funding undertaken at a regional level
- ✍ Ring-fencing of transport spending allocation
- ✍ All transport services to regional control

Conclusion

- ✍ A regional body with a strategic overview for all transport modes to be established – under the directives of national guidelines

Question 2

Recommendations

- ✍ National concessionary fares
- ✍ Keep local transport initiatives at a local level

Conclusion

- ✍ Concessionary fares to be controlled nationally but keep all others at a regional level

Question 3

Conclusion

- ✍ Yes

Issue 1: overall recommendation of work group 5

Principle of subsidiarity should apply as appropriate. Local Authorities should retain broadly current powers except perhaps concessionary fares. Regional Partnerships should be a vehicle for influence both up and down with particular emphasis on integration of services. Regional Partnerships should have responsibility for strategic regional roads and the delivery of regional projects with policy and strategy input in terms of strategic air and ferry services.

Question 1

Conclusion

- ✍ Powers to deal with regional roads required by Regional Partnerships

Question 2

Conclusion

- ✍ No, but power for framework and reimbursement for concessionary fares should be national
- ✍ The ability to make enhancements and administration with small operations should be local
- ✍ Quality Contracts don't need to be administered nationally

Question 3

Conclusion

- ✍ Yes, and Transport Scotland should be empowered to control rail services with influence from Regional Partnerships

Issue 1: overall recommendation of work group 6

The emphasis should be on devolving powers down, along with adequate funding, rather than shifting powers up to the national or regional level, certainly in terms of air, ferry, road and rail control.

Question 1

Pro's and con's

- ✍ Pro's: better co-ordination with local transport, greater accountability, local knowledge, should reflect better local needs
- ✍ Con's: antipathy within local areas to where decision-making is centralised, loss of control by Minister (weakens decision-making?)

Recommendations

- ✍ Air, ferry and trunk roads control to Regional Partnerships/Local Authorities
- ✍ Majority of trunk roads in Highlands (A9, A96, etc) of national importance
- ✍ Maintenance/improvement etc to cascade to Local Authority level

Conclusion

- ✍ Delivery/procurement of these services – scope to devolve these powers downwards (along with £) to regional and/or local level, rather than shifting powers upwards
- ✍ Needs adequate funding

Question 2

Pro's and con's

- ✍ Concessionary fares to allow cross boundary free charges would require agreement on who would fund this (problematic)
- ✍ Concessionary fares could be administered by regional bodies by policy directed by Agency to achieve uniformity across all modes of transport



Conclusion

- ✍ Improve cooperation rather than transfer powers

Question 3

Recommendation

- ✍ Break dependency on Westminster
- ✍ A Scottish SRA needs to be set up to control the Scottish Rail networks and achieve cooperation with other modes of transport
- ✍ The Scottish SRA should come under the control of the National agency

Conclusion

- ✍ Yes, SRA should also be devolved so that Scotland has its own say/national powers

Issue 1: overall recommendation of work group 7

A 10 year strategic plan for the region could be agreed. This should form the basis of investment decisions. More local power and responsibility with adequate funding. Concessionary fares to go to national body to provide consistency (Welsh model).

Question 1

Recommendations

- ✍ Increased strong regional input to ferry specification
- ✍ Ownership remains at centre to ensure adequate funding for problem issues
- ✍ An agreed 10 year strategy must be set down to ensure regional buy-in

Conclusion

- ✍ Wish to see power and responsibility to be taken down to regional 'partnership' level on the basis of adequate

Question 2

Conclusion

- ✍ Concessionary fares should be passed to the central body to create a more cohesive, coherent and uniform system for all modes of transport – local consultation is necessary
- ✍ All modes of transport need to be covered by Quality Contracts

Question 3

Conclusion

- ✍ Yes

Issue 1: overall recommendation of work group 8

Start with needs of the customer. Delivery should be as local to that customer as possible. If locally significant then managed at a local level. If regionally significant then manage at a regional level. If nationally significant then manage at a national level.

Question 1

Pro's and con's

- ✍ Pro's: regional significance of transport infrastructure
- ✍ Con's: problem if there are 3 tiers, if you unpick transport services from councils – could lead to increased costs

Recommendations

- ✍ If a locally significant service – then should be managed at a local level. If a regional service – then manage regionally, etc. (loop applies for all services)
- ✍ Transport as close to population it serves as possible

Conclusion

- ✍ HIAL, Calmac and trunk roads should be managed regionally and delivered locally

Question 2

Pro's and con's

- ✍ Pro's: national scheme for concessionary fares should be run nationally
- ✍ Con's: local additions, policing of system at local level

Recommendations

- ✍ National policy, regional delivery

Conclusion

- ✍ 2 views on concessionary fares. Either national policy should be delivered locally, or a totally national scheme should be run by Transport Scotland (no role for Local Authorities)

Question 3

Conclusion

- ✍ Transport Scotland should have powers to promote all modes of transport infrastructure

Feedback from HITRANS coordinator and Scottish Executive

Issue 1: roles and responsibilities for a regional transport partnership

Howard Brindley

- ✍ Responsibility needs to be at local level where it is possible to be closest to the people
- ✍ Regional Partnerships must be transparent, clear and reflect local views
- ✍ There are mixed views on the roles of Regional Partnerships surrounding whether or not they should deal with lifeline issues, delivery or lobbying
- ✍ At national level long term planning is needed with an agreement on funding
- ✍ Funding confidence needs to exist in the long run

Geoff Pearson

- ✍ Noted from the work group's feedback that HITRANS:
 1. Have courage and would like to do it
 2. Show coherence and understand the complexity and need to cooperate
 3. Have supreme confidence with a 'can do it' approach – if empowered they feel like they could do a decent job

ISSUE 2

Management and resourcing for regional partnerships

ISSUE 2 – Topic 1

Views on management framework options

Each work group considered their views on the management and resourcing for regional partnerships. Firstly, each work group put forward their views on the management framework options shown below:

- A: Existing local authorities working together through voluntary partnerships
- B: New Passenger Transport Executives across Scotland repeating the SPT model in the rest of Scotland; while leaving responsibility for local roads with existing councils
- C: The creation of new Joint Committees across Scotland, made up from existing local authorities, building on the benefits of the voluntary partnerships, with more formal structure and constitution, but without strong decision-making and budgetary powers
- D: The creation of new Joint Boards, also made up from local authorities, properly maintaining the link with the constituent councils, but with the powers and budget to plan and take difficult decisions on transport matters for their area
- E: The active creation of further special purpose bodies to work with local authorities and the voluntary partnerships

Feedback on Issue 2 – Topic 1

Topic 1: overall recommendation of workgroup 1

Ultimate answer is some derivative of C and D recognising concerns of island communities in respect of levels of service and direct funding need to be addressed.

Option C

Pro's and con's

- ✍ Building on current voluntary arrangements
- ✍ Staged introduction to new powers
- ✍ Strategic planning involvement
- ✍ One Local Authority, one role
- ✍ Budget down from Scottish Executive
- ✍ Local Authority still receives GAE as present for current functions
- ✍ Regional Strategic Transport Programme funded by Section 70 from Authority

Conclusion

- ✍ Joint Committee gives staged introduction to new powers and limits executive powers
- ✍ Current service levels, i.e., Shetland, must be maintained to get full consensus

Option D

Pro's and con's

- ✍ Sharing expertise and best practice – effective decentralisation of functions (ferry office, etc)
- ✍ Council perception of loss of local accountability, control, funding and voting
- ✍ Funding devolved to regional level and not take up from Local Authority

Recommendations

- ✍ For option to proceed guarantees are needed on – voting, funding, Local Authority functions, current levels of service
- ✍ Serious concerns that current levels of service are diminished in general equalisation

Conclusion

- ✍ Could work if island communities interests are protected and Local Authority functions are maintained
- ✍ Needs a willingness from all partners

Topic 1: overall recommendation of workgroup 2

Joint Boards – as key will have competence and control over long-term budgets. We recommend that they are developed with regard to accountability and should take on the responsibilities of the regional organisations.

Option A

Pro's and con's

- ✍ Similar to D but does not have the 'clout'
- ✍ Currently in existence therefore makes sense to build on it



Conclusion

- ✘ Lacks competence, accountability and control of own budgets to fulfil/deliver regional transport programmes

Option D

Pro's and con's

- ✘ Local authorities already have experience of Joint Board working
- ✘ Can plan effectively and authoritatively because has control of own budget and is accountable
- ✘ Can cooperate/buy in expertise

Recommendations

- ✘ This option is taken forward and developed with special regard to accountability issues – should take on responsibility of regional organisation

Topic 1: overall recommendation of workgroup 3

We strongly recommend option D (a regional Joint Board) as the natural progression from the current HITRANS model. We would seek to offer reassurances to all Local Authorities from the perceived threats posed by this model. Should large scale, single issue projects come to fruition, then these should use the special purpose bodies operating under the Joint Board structure.

Option A

Recommendations

- ✘ Building on positives from HITRANS towards an incremental approach to a stronger strategic body

Conclusion

- ✘ Whilst there has been some limited success to date, this new agenda will require a more structured approach to delivery

Option D

Conclusion

- ✘ A Joint Board will provide a secure funding regime and structure
- ✘ It will be at an appropriate scale providing both security and functionality

Topic 1: overall recommendation of workgroup 4

Option D, for reasons stated below.

Option A

Conclusion

- ✘ It is not an option – need to strengthen voluntary partnerships



Option D

Pro's and con's

- ✍ Practical issues (competition, accountability, boundary issues)

Conclusion

- ✍ Preferred option, outstanding issues requiring to be resolved: cross boundary issues build upon existing practices

Option E

Conclusion

- ✍ Not the preferred option, but could be a possibility

Topic 1: overall recommendation of workgroup 5

The creation of a Section 19 body which would be fit for purpose rather than based on an existing model with the powers and budget to plan and take different decisions for transport matters for the region. It should be directly funded for both revenue and capital spend for the regional strategic network and be as lean as possible with the partners determining the constitution of the body. The partners should include councils and other appropriate bodies recognising the need to ensure appropriate levels of democratic accountability.

Option A

Conclusion

- ✍ Local Voluntary Partnerships have reached their limits

Option B

Conclusion

- ✍ Not suitable – too narrow and remote

Option C

Conclusion

- ✍ Tied too much to Local Authorities

Option D

Conclusion

- ✍ Seen as remote and Local Authorities do not like the idea of requisition

Option E

Conclusion

- ✍ Too specific and narrow



Topic 1: overall recommendation of workgroup 6

We would choose option D as it is more comprehensive, durable, has greater control and cannot be disbanded. Only options D and E allow for composition of regional partnership to include more than the Local Authorities. Choose option D with amendments: “to plan and take strategic decisions on transport” methods. Would look for democratic membership covering all stakeholders, possibly creating a users forum. We need this option to take on HIAL, Northlink and Calmac if powers are devolved from the Scottish Executive. Option D covers the whole spectrum of transport – other options do not.

Option A

Conclusion

- ✍ Reject, as on the whole it is the status quo
- ✍ However, linked to whether HIAL/Northlink devolve?
- ✍ Shetland think A is ok if these bodies do not devolve. If no extra powers are coming down to HITRANS from the Scottish Executive, A would be fine. But if powers do devolve, Shetland would favour D, although funding would need to be clarified

Option B

Conclusion

- ✍ Reject, not comprehensive
- ✍ May be great for large urban areas, but would not be appropriate for the Highlands and Islands

Option C

Conclusion

- ✍ Similar to A in its looseness, cooperative nature over control (confusion?)
- ✍ Also can be disbanded ‘willy nilly’

Option D

Pro’s and con’s

- ✍ Pro’s: more formal than Joint Committee, would be responsible to the Minister
- ✍ Con’s: how to make Board representative of all without becoming unmanageable (may need sub-groups?), would not be responsible to the electorate?

Recommendations

- ✍ Potential for all other users to be represented, possibly create a users forum
- ✍ Employ officials to be on Board, should be living and working in HITRANS area



Topic 1: overall recommendation of workgroup 7

Option D with option E added on when required. This provides joined up thinking and appropriate powers for delivery over all modes.

Option A

Conclusion

- ✍ Discounted – currently voluntary partnerships have reached a limit – need to move forward

Option B

Conclusion

- ✍ Discounted – does not include roads, too political, lacks joined up thinking for delivery

Option C

Conclusion

- ✍ Lack of power and autonomy counts against this option

Option D

Pro's and con's

- ✍ Pro's: lots of autonomy and power to deliver, reduction of duplication
- ✍ Con's: staff numbers might grow, 'job creation scheme'

Recommendations

- ✍ Representatives from operators should be involved in an advisory capacity

Conclusion

- ✍ Provides joined up thinking and appropriate powers for delivery over all modes

Option E

Conclusion

- ✍ Addition to D for particular projects

Topic 1: overall recommendation of workgroup 8

These recommendations follow the view that the decision for strategy/delivery should be at the lowest 'appropriate' level. Regional partnership should determine regional strategy and have the ability to maximise funding for large scale projects/programmes. There should be a body that facilitates, but leaves delivery to Local Authorities. A voluntary partnership works well, but may not meet future needs (Orkney view). A Board would be too formal for needs. Therefore, a committee may be the best option.

Option A

Conclusion

- ✍ Fine at present but requires development to take on future responsibility (considered in part 1) e.g. funding from Scottish Executive



- ✍ Orkney happy with option A, moving to another model does not necessarily suit Orkney and Shetland

Option C

Pro's and con's

- ✍ Pro's: Joint Committee builds on current model
- ✍ Con's: could be difficulties working strategically and raising money from members

Conclusion

- ✍ Would meet requirements of future funding and delivery, without removing control from Local Authority level
- ✍ Democratic accountability

Option D

Pro's and con's

- ✍ Pro's: funding available to implement board's strategy
- ✍ Con's: local accountability – members act on behalf of board rather than Local Authority, board sets agenda, what role for Local Authorities if there is a Joint Board, Local Authorities need to control the agenda

Conclusion

- ✍ Unnecessarily formal given desire to keep delivery services at a local level

ISSUE 2 – Topic 2

Options for resourcing effective regional partnerships

Each work group put forward their views on the options for resourcing effective regional partnerships. These options are shown below:

- A: The majority of funding continuing to be provided to local authorities through GAE, with Councils each deciding individually and separately how much to pass on to the partnership (voluntary partnership or Joint Committee)
 - B: Funds still provided to local authorities through GAE and regional partnerships requisitioning their budget from their constituent Councils (Joint Board)
 - C: Section 70 paid direct from the strategic transport authority to the regional partnerships, replacing some or all of the transport GAE provided to constituent councils
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Feedback on Issue 2 – Topic 2

Topic 2: overall recommendation of work group 1

No workable solution among options given – each has problems. Some mechanism needs to be found to meet the concerns of the smaller authorities about losing control and ‘losing a vote/funding’. A further issue of concern is about levels of service and general decrease in standards of high performing Councils.

Option B

Pro's and con's

- ✗ GAE process not transparent
- ✗ Do not like requisitioning, only want extra funding to Regional body

Option C

Pro's and con's

- ✗ Section 70 from STA to Regional body for new functions
- ✗ Maintain current Local Authority functions and GAE budget, but with fully funded lifeline services, i.e. local ferries, planes, roads

Conclusion

- ✗ Enhanced GAE continues for locally delivered functions
- ✗ Transparency of calculation an issue
- ✗ Regional partnerships with new functions funded by Section 70 by STA



Topic 2: overall recommendation of work group 2

Favour option C as this will assist long term planning. The board structure allows for accountability and should be simple and cost effective to administer.

Option B

Pro's and con's

- ✍ Subject to consensus of councils
- ✍ Long winded way of getting money to boards

Option C

Pro's and con's

- ✍ Know what you are getting each year
- ✍ Gives ability to develop long term programmes

Recommendations

- ✍ Accountability through board structure

Topic 2: overall recommendation of work group 3

Funding should be principally through GAE but wish to retain Section 70 grants for the large funding projects.

Option A

Conclusion

- ✍ This option provides no security of funding to deliver

Option B

Conclusion

- ✍ This model has the ability to provide stability to the funding issue but is predicated on an agreed formula that has the confidence of all
- ✍ One-off major projects would not fit well with this model and a Section 70 agreement will be the most effective complimentary means of meeting this need

Option C

Conclusion

- ✍ We can see virtues in avoiding going through Local Authorities but this carries the risk of being perceived as less accountable than option B

Topic 2: overall recommendation of work group 4

Option C, for the reasons stated below.

Option A

Conclusion

- ✗ Too long-winded and complicated
- ✗ Possibility of council creaming off funds

Option B

Conclusion

- ✗ Joint Board could requisition the full level of GAE but GAE funding directly to Joint Board

Option C

Pro's and con's

- ✗ Possible knock-on effects to other services
- ✗ Fairer way of describing funds

Conclusion

- ✗ The most logical choice – removes anomalies between bodies

Topic 2: overall recommendation of work group 5

Direct funding for Local Authorities through GAE to continue. Strategic Regional Partnership to be funded directly for capital and revenue of strategic network and administration of the body.

Topic 2: overall recommendation of work group 6

We would recommend a hybrid of C in which an amount of money would be paid from Strategic Transport Authority to regional body to cover HIAL and other costs, plus strategic projects. However, GAE transport funding to be continued and calculated at present level, but ring fenced for transport.

Option A

Pro's and con's

- ✗ Pro's: Local Authorities can spend GAE as they please, e.g., Highland Council spend money on education that should be spent on transport
- ✗ Con's: Local Authorities might not give the money to the regional body, not appropriate to body with budget set nationally where money has to be spent on what it is ring fenced for



Conclusion

- ✍ Reject as it stands, but combine with C

Option B

Conclusion

- ✍ More complex, not democratic, if Board decides to do something, Local Authority has no say

Option C plus A

Pro's and con's

- ✍ Pro's: guaranteed funding coming in at right level, Local Authorities would still get GAE, but GAE for transport would be ring fenced for transport, would allow some funding for strategic 'regional' initiatives

Recommendations

- ✍ All regional funding would come in through Transport Agency direct to regional authority but GAE to Local Authority for transport issues would be allocated on current basis and ring fenced

Topic 2: overall recommendation of work group 7

Option C (caveat) but not all of GAE should be replaced, only some.

Option A

Conclusion

- ✍ Discounted – given Topic 1 choice
- ✍ This is current SPT funding and does not provide sufficient funding

Option B

Conclusion

- ✍ Given choice in Topic 1 this has advantages, but funding stream should go to regional body
- ✍ Local Authority has not control of funds requisitioned

Option C

Recommendation

- ✍ Funding needs to follow functions

Conclusion

- ✍ This option is the preference, but only some funding should be replaced, not all

Topic 2: overall recommendation of work group 8

Preferred option is combined package of GAE to Local Authorities (as at present) and Section 70 grant paid directly to HITRANS for large capital and cross-boundary projects.



Option A

Pro's and con's

- ✍ Pro's: local democracy – council determines how much to spend on transport, GAE could be combined with Section 70 grant direct to HITRANS

Conclusion

- ✍ Recommend mix of GAE and Section 70 grant



Q & A session with the Minister for Transport

A question to the Minister was asked by each work group. The questions, along with summaries of the Minister's responses, are detailed below.

Question 1

"Does the Minister agree that it is essential that local and regional access links to the Ministers and Scottish Executive, which are currently enjoyed, will be maintained in any new partnerships?"

Response

- ✍ Yes, whatever for the new agency takes, there has to be good links to the Ministers
- ✍ An agency would be less independent than a quango and more responsible to the Minister with close involvement and open access, focused on delivery

Question 2

"What assurances can you offer that your Whitehall colleagues will buy into your policy? We note your commitment, but can you guarantee that Whitehall Ministers will agree, were you to seek a transfer of rail powers, for example, the creation of a Scottish SRA?"

Response

- ✍ No, we cannot guarantee that
- ✍ We can only seek to work closely with Westminster
- ✍ Relationships will vary over time and we must make devolution work
- ✍ Even with total influence or control we would not rush to make changes
- ✍ We will continue to have a UK-wide transport network and it needs significant investment
- ✍ It is not straightforward, fuzzy lines exist, but we will make sure the relationship with the UK government is strong



Question 3

“Movement of goods and people are fundamental to sustaining the Highland economy – without significant investment in the basic road fabric, how does the Minister hope to achieve the desired improvements in the public transport and freight network?”

Response

- ✍ We are continuing to invest in the roads and because the budget is getting bigger, there will be more money to the roads
- ✍ We have got to make a commitment to public transport to reduce congestion, so these investments are expanding
- ✍ We would like to see freight move to the rail, canal and boat network

Question 4

“How will route development and innovation be built into long fixed term contracts for rail, sea and air services by Transport Scotland and Regional Partnerships?”

Response

- ✍ It is always difficult in detailed service Quality Contracts – you can end up running a system rather than a service and have to be wary about squeezing out innovation and enterprise
- ✍ We actively encourage people to come forward with ideas
- ✍ It is more difficult with maritime contracts which must go to the lowest tender
- ✍ Nevertheless, we have seen innovation in the quality of service and are committed to customer service

Questions 5a, 5b and 5c

“How will you ensure equity of distribution of resources to the HITRANS area to account for our unique needs and problems?”

“At the moment there is a perception that the methods used to distribute funding from the national purse is to the detriment of the Highlands and Islands, where we have few people but huge transport infrastructures. Will the new arrangement address this issue?”

“What are the determinants of the current spending on transport modes in Scotland and how does the Minister see this being more transparent in the new arrangement and how will the case for Scotland’s share of the UK national resources be best developed?”



Response

- ✍ The most significant determinant on funding is GAE, allocated according to rurality (population) and nature of the road network (length of roads)
- ✍ These are not matters for Ministers but for COSLA
- ✍ If Ministers try to do it unilaterally there would be an outcry at COSLA
- ✍ There are Authorities from different backgrounds (cities) but if we open up the GAE formula there will be complaints and people arguing fiercely for every case
- ✍ This case will not be argued within this consultation
- ✍ HITRANS needs a regional priority list and then needs to lobby (similar to what NESSTRA has done)
- ✍ This would give a great sense of achievement

Question 6

“Will you support a 10 year Regional Transport Strategy with funding and how will you decide the level of funding in the Highlands & Islands bearing in mind that there will be competing priorities in the rest of Scotland?”

Response

- ✍ Regional priorities should be decided by Regional Partnerships
- ✍ There are tensions between regions who are willing to battle for investment locally
- ✍ We would like to see a 10 year plan for transport as realistic and deliverable as possible to say yes, we are willing to commit
- ✍ But we do not yet have the structure for delivering regional plans
- ✍ If a moderate, sensible share of allocation is needed, the new transport agency will deal with it

Most Important Message

The most important messages that individuals wanted to leave with HITRANS concerning the topic of the event are listed below.

1. That maximum funding is sought for roads, in the Highlands & Islands, before some of them are beyond economic repair. Standards of these roads should be maintained. Transport includes all modes; road, rail, sea and air. Integrated freight encouraged where possible and planning department encouraged to support commercial developments and funding to be sought where possible in growth areas. HITRANS to keep up the good work. We endeavour to move freight by rail and sea but our roads are essential and linked to economic growth and sustainability.
2. Local lifeline services need to be fully funded and managed locally. Local functions should be maintained. A regional body has to get Local Authorities to work together to produce a 10 year strategic programme signed up to by all Local Authorities and STA given Section 70 funding. Improved integration of modes, ticketing, timetabling very important through strategic planning in all areas including rail. Transport is fundamental to sustainable development and one of the most important issues to island communities.
3. This is a great opportunity for self determination by the Highlands & Islands of Scotland. The opportunity must not be lost because of difficulties in reassuring councils who feel they have 'too much to lose' by signing up to new arrangements.
4. Transport services should best be provided by Local Authorities, as they are closer to the point of service and already have that responsibility and accountability. Likewise, these bodies should be funded by GAE and/or Section 70 grant aid as appropriate. Local Authorities have the experience and expertise to deliver, and have a proven track record in doing so. The Scottish Executive have not always performed as well, i.e., under spending on low budget/bad management.
5. Transport Scotland should be set up to deal with policy matter and strategic management. The regional partnership should manage regional transport and infrastructure including ferries, ports, residual airports and all routes except national/international routes, e.g., A9 and A96. It should be set up as a joint board with direct funding from transport Scotland. Local service delivery should be carried out by Local Authorities/others.



6. Today has proved that 'one size does not fit all'. Will there be sufficient funding to meet everyone's aspirations? Will these new proposed bodies meet and deliver the transport requirements of the Highlands & Islands?
7. The A82 is a vital link for the West Highlands. It urgently requires a lot of investment to upgrade it to modern standards – at present it is a national disgrace, and a real hindrance to the economic development of the West Highlands.
8. There is an agreed view that the existing arrangement of providing services as appropriate at the local level with cross boundary and larger schemes being dealt with by the regional or Transport Scotland depending on the size and strategic nature of the project.
9. Regional body will only work if there are built in controls to protect interests of smaller partners and displays a transparent system of budget allocation.
10. Management of Scottish rail infrastructure and decisions on development should be devolved to the Scottish Parliament from the SRA.
11. For the travelling public to have reasonably cost effective, interlinking services, so that journeys are as pleasant as possible.
12. Any new body must be seen to deliver improvements at local level whilst maintaining local input to the decision making process.
13. Built on current HITRANS cooperative success, with natural evolution to stronger Regional Partnership (Joint Board) funded by GAE (for revenue purposes) and Section 70 for major capital projects. This will recognise the enormous local pride in the ability of its own people to deliver improved transport for its people.
14. Think strategically for the overall development of the Highlands & Islands. Involve all partners (public and private sectors) at the regional level. Essential that any future organisation develops the positive work of HITRANS to date. Most appropriate topic which has certainly focused minds, very well organised event.
15. 70% of funding having to go to public transport is fundamentally wrong for HITRANS when the fabric of the basic infrastructure is so poor. There is a danger that funding is targeted at a minority and does not give best value nor maximising efforts towards a sustainable population across the area.

16. Integration to date appears to be all through Local Authorities and does not address future issues such as partnership working with others, e.g., Health Boards, Ambulance Service, etc.
17. Keep decision making local as much as possible and do not create another SPTE.
18. A model which fits the needs of the Central Belt may not meet the special needs of the Highlands. So, we need enough flexibility to establish a regional structure which meets local needs.
19. Heavy focus on public transport. Need to prioritise issues relating to freight movement.
20. Build upon existing frameworks and use expertise built up over many years as a basis for future plans and decisions on transportation strategies. New bodies must have reasonable powers and substantial budget.
21. Powerful, adequately funded regional transport authorities are required to deliver the transport infrastructure and services that a modern, dynamic economy requires.
22. Whatever form of local partnership is eventually established, care must be taken to ensure that the experience and expertise of the transport operators is adequately factored into strategic investment decisions. The partnership body will need to recognise that it does not have operational experience itself.
23. The need for a properly-funded strategic (10 year minimum) approach to transport in Scotland covering road, rail, sea and air services, delivered via Joint Boards with functions clearly and formally defined, capable of being developed/adjusted to best meet regional needs. Local Authorities to continue to be responsible for all purely local transport issues.
24. Transport Scotland to oversee Strategic Regional Joint Boards with 10 year plans relating to delivery of improved services including better infrastructure and modes of transportation. Joint Boards to have authority and responsibility in cooperation with Local Authorities with regard to delivery.
25. HITRANS with its membership should be beefed up to Joint Board status to deal with strategic issues and Local Authorities should continue to have responsibility for local services but could use expertise from Joint Boards as necessary, e.g., tendering of local services.

26. We need a stronger regional body to promote the distinct needs of the Highlands & Islands within Scotland. This needs to have adequate funding to address the significant transport problems of the area.
27. Need for clarity (and agreement) over powers, duties and areas of responsibility of regional partnership – reflecting and perceived threats and concerns.
28. It will be vital to ensure that Local Authorities all support the new proposals. To achieve this, they should be obliged to be part of formally constituted regional partnerships. Equally they should be obliged to spend the equivalent of GAE funds on their transport needs. In other words, the agency should top slice its allocation to provide those funds to the authorities.
29. The Scottish Executive probably needs an agency to reduce the workload on its present staff and to control large ‘Central Belt’ projects. It is very important that such a body, or system, does not take away any power from Local Authorities to solve their own local problems.
30. Those who live and work in the Highlands & Islands are the best equipped to determine the transport priorities for their region. Those ‘outsiders’ who help to fund the necessary investment, whether in London, Edinburgh or Brussels, should trust the local bodies to spend that money wisely, and not attempt to define expenditure in detail.
31. Please consider the effects of poor road maintenance on companies who have to move freight. This is quite separate from Capital Expenditure. A ‘one-off’ upgrade needs to take place on roads. The costs incurred by hauliers and freight movers are quite unacceptable whilst the deficit in Council Road Department Expenditure is in the region of 100’s of £millions.
32. Whatever is set up there must be a focused increase in transport investment in the Highlands & Islands to achieve a meaningful improvement for the wider public. A visible improvement for transport must be achieved.
33. There is a once in a generation opportunity to bring powers presently exercised by the Executive to the Highlands & Islands. This will improve accountability; innovation; and the quality of decision making.
34. Any new Regional Partnerships must have significant decision making and budgetary powers and must be set-up in a way which takes into account the concerns of those councils whose service delivery is of a higher standard than that of its potential partners.

35. It is crucial that this discussion is rapidly broadened to include all forms of transport; the role of freight has been wholly ignored. Shipping and the role of harbours are also absent. These are very important to the Highlands & islands, and any future discussions must take this into account.
36. There is a clear need for HITRANS to continue to move forwards and the logical next step is the formation of a body with statutory powers that can deliver the strategic transport agenda of the Highlands & Islands. The best mechanism for this is through a Joint Board arrangement with adequate funding being made available to achieve the transportation objectives.
37. There is a need for transport planning to give greater weight to other government objectives such as social inclusion and health. In this regard walking and cycling should be given greater prominence at a HITRANS level (which reflects the aspiration of government).
38. Provide a structure which is suitably funded, transparent, and able to deliver consistent solutions. Freight, remember when dealing with local produce, i.e., fish, timber – all journeys start on a local road. These must be adequately funded.
39. Regional policy and transport strategy must be closely linked together. Transport underpins economic development.
40. Rail must be devolved to the Scottish Executive to fully empower the various transport regions to fully implement an integrated transport programme for the future, i.e., budget powers from Whitehall.
41. Great opportunity to discuss and focus on STA. Collective thinking helps to bring together the many strands of the document. Hopefully to carry improvements to Scotland's transport.
42. Resource to be directed to the development of an economic model which demonstrates the effectiveness and return on any public subsidy/investment. This model will aid decision making for optimal levels of public spending and also act as a potent lobbying tool to attract further funding, if its justification is objectively demonstrated.
43. The public perception of HITRANS and any future successor will depend totally on delivery and results therefore public consultation deciding on priorities is essential, and funding must be made available to deliver within a publicly acceptable timeframe.

44. HITRANS has to ensure that it maximises its influence for its share of resources and delivery of projects for the Highlands & Islands and for the delivery of integrated transport at national and international level.
45. Clear priorities will have to be established within a robust framework which is appropriately resourced and democratically accountable. Integration and development of strategic plans with lifeline services at their core should be the key element.
46. Focus on the expansion of the skills base for transport delivery – not just a shifting of existing expertise. Get the structures to hit delivery – not only convenience within current legislation. Recognise the diversity of transport needed in Scotland.
47. Any change should demonstrate benefits before implementation – this change offers to be an exception. If change has to be enforced, it should be done on the basis of maximising local control, voluntary regional arrangements and the release of adequate funding from the Executive.
48. HITRANS to have greater influence in decision making at the national and local stage on all transport modes including rail. Transport delivery requires more stability and longer term perspective than at present – will this deliver that?
49. Power to deliver transport improvements is more important than structure. This means that the responsible bodies must have security of finance, links to other policy areas (e.g., regional planning) and local involvement (with communities, transport users, etc). Delivery should be at the most local level that is effective.
50. To continue to work and influence the Scottish Executive – with reference Transport Scotland.
51. A much greater involvement in the running of HIAL.
52. Ensure that the opportunity is not missed to bring decision making about strategic transport issues in the Highlands & Islands closer to the region.
53. Any regional partnership should work with Local Authorities to provide a clear focus on service delivery. This is best achieved by devolving responsibilities to the lowest appropriate level and ensuring full integration of transport networks.
54. The paper is lightweight and does not address anything other than the movement of people. There is no mention of freight in the whole body of the document. Little mention of other than road based passenger transport.

55. Concentration seems to be on passenger transport and not freight or cargo. Links to Ireland and N. Wales are important and better routing of ferry services could take some heavy traffic off the road. HITRANS should consult with industry and (their) local councils about utilising sea routes.
56. HITRANS must be aware of the commitment of national government to developing and encouraging cycling and walking. At events like this we do not get people who do everyday journeys. The average travel to work distance is 2½ miles in the Highlands, equal to the UK average. There is a danger that with its legitimate concerns in road improvements and ferry links that this will be forgotten. People in urban areas (Inverness, Inner Moray Firth and small towns) must have safe, attractive, direct routes provided for shorter distances. These routes should be delivered as part of a planned strategy and should be a priority in these areas. Otherwise people will not chose these methods and the multifarious health, environmental and economic benefits will be lost.
57. Ensure that it takes forward Local Authority identified priorities.
58. Get responsibility and authority together at the lowest reasonable and competent level to ensure delivery of democratically determined requirements. Ensure that there is enough in-house competence to manage the tasks and contractors.
59. Consider carefully the input of Local Authorities today and outline a strategy which is going to ensure deliver of an improved transport strategy for the whole of Scotland.
60. With the powers of decision making and budgetary control comes responsibility and accountability. Ensure that any joint board is not led by/dictated to by the centre (Scottish Executive).
61. We need to have a solution which will deliver the strategic transport improvements that are needed in the region. This can only happen through a strong regional authority, which has the ability to plan ahead and invest in the infrastructure and services that are recognised.
62. GAE funds within Highland region will be severely affected by demographic trends in future years. Currently GAE will pull substantially by 2016 if current trends continue.

Ends

