



## HITRANS Marketing & Communications Strategy

### Why Marketing & Communications?

While the measures outlined in the RTS are central to building an infrastructure that will enable this change, HITRANS also needs to make a convincing case to the travelling public that their own behaviour needs to change. To do this, HITRANS will build a public profile which will facilitate getting its message across, and explaining the practical benefits which the vision contained within the RTS will bring. Effective marketing and communications is central to achieving this.

### The current position

We are currently still little known outside of government, key stakeholders and specialist transport circles. In order for our message to be effective, the public needs to know:

- who we are
- what we do and want to achieve
- what we stand for

Our communications objectives will therefore be to:

- Make HITRANS a household name in the Highlands and Islands of Scotland.
- Make people aware of what we are doing and why, explained in terms of the high level aims of the RTS, what HITRANS aims to deliver as described in the RTS and the benefits that will accrue to business and the population of the region.
- Become the automatic first point of contact on transport planning and delivery issues in The Highlands and Islands: **e.g. transport = HITRANS.**
- Encourage behavioural change among the public in line with the objectives laid out in the RTS – e.g. making “smart transport choices” including: greater use of public transport, car sharing, personal travel plans, alternative transport options, etc, through highlighting the advantages, practical benefits and needs which these address.

In all our communications work we will reiterate the HITRANS vision to enhance the region’s viability and the four key outcome objectives of the RTS:

- Enable the people to participate in everyday life
- Improve the safety and security of travel
- Manage the impacts of travel on the regions assets
- Improve the health of the region’s people

We will also drive home the key messages that transportation in the region must be comprehensive, sustainable, inclusive and safe, and contribute to the overall transport and economic strategies for Scotland.

## **Who do we want to influence?**

Our target audience may be briefly defined as:

- **The Scottish media, locally, regionally and nationally (as conduit for our message)**
- **Stakeholders (as partners in achieving our objectives)**
- **Decision Makers (Including elected representatives in the partnership area and at both Scottish and UK national levels)**
- **The public (as targets for behavioural change)**

## **How do we achieve our aim?**

There are five main areas of activity which should form the key planks of our communications strategy.

- **Branding**
- **Media work**
- **Events**
- **Advertising**
- **Publications**

### **1. Branding**

Branding is a highly effective marketing tool with the potential for high audience penetration, if the branding is widely recognised among the target audience and identified with a clear message. For our branding to be effective, HITRANS corporate image must become recognisable to everyone working and living in the partnership area. It must be connected in the public mind with transportation issues: particularly with public transport, alternative travel and making “smart” transport choices. Once our brand and its associations are clearly established in the public mind, it will facilitate further, more finely targeted communications work, as our audience makes the link between the logo and the aims and values of HITRANS.

HITRANS already has a distinctive brand image in its logo. This has been extended and enhanced to produce a suite of promotional materials that will be used to promote awareness of HITRANS and its aims. These include:

- Generic banners for use at events and during press interviews
- A range of promotional stationery and other items for use at events and elsewhere, as appropriate
- The website, which will be developed to become our key “shop window” for the public and the media.
- A basic information leaflet about HITRANS Strategy, its role and objectives, with contact details.

All materials are designed to have an indefinite shelf-life and minimise the need for replacement of materials unless they are used up. This makes them cost effective, and will facilitate their use for a variety of communications purposes. Additional replacement materials and additional marketing materials will be purchased annually, as appropriate. Any additional materials will be chosen to have a maximum shelf life and to be multi-purpose, as far as is practicable.

### **Action**

- **Promotional materials to be distributed to key contacts, stakeholders, and at events, as appropriate.**
- **Opportunities to distribute materials to members of the public - particularly the young – to be actively sought at appropriate events**
- **Basic HITRANS information leaflet to be distributed to library & information divisions of partnership authorities, for access in local libraries and information centres, with additional supplies to be provided as required.**
- **Enquirers to routinely receive a copy of the leaflet, in addition to any more detailed response. The leaflet will also be available for download as a PDF.**

### **Website as key area of branding**

The Website is our main “shop window”. It is essential that it is attractive, user friendly and comprehensive. The Website is maintained in-house by HITRANS staff on a day to day basis, using a Content Management System. This allows changes to be made quickly, with HITRANS being in direct control of site content.

## **2. Media Work**

The media is a key platform for highlighting our work and influencing behavioural change among the travelling public. It is also an important platform for influencing decision makers and opinion formers, and demonstrating to stakeholders that we are pressing ahead with our objectives. For HITRANS purposes the media should be defined as:

- All commercial media outlets providing information within the HITRANS partnership area
- Specialist transport media
- Local authority and Scottish Government and Parliamentary outlets, through which we can reach our target audience.

### **Coverage**

There is no public media or “press” specific to the HITRANS partnership area as a whole. The media has developed historically in a series of overlapping “patches”, with national, regional or local significance. Penetration of the target audience will vary, depending upon how the specific media view the relevance of a specific measure or activity to their target audience.

### **Types of media in the HITRANS region:**

- **National:** Including Scottish national broadcasters, national newspapers and UK national media outlets; both broadcast and print (the UK media will be included in general PR distributions, rather than specifically targeted).

- **Regional:** Including local and regional radio stations and significant local newspapers with a large readership extending across a large section of the partnership area– e.g. The Press and Journal, Oban Times, and regional broadcasters.
- **Local:** Local newspapers and websites throughout the partnership area.
- **Specialist:** Publications dealing specifically with transport issues. (Functionally, these are national publications with a specialist audience).

It is important that our media work is appropriately targeted. A particular focus will be given to reaching local radio, the tabloid press and local newspapers, as these are likely to be the most effective in convincing the public to alter their behaviour towards transport. The national broadcast media (which includes all television), broadsheet newspapers and specialist publications, will be more effectively used as a means of conducting an informed debate, influencing decision makers and opinion formers and demonstrating to stakeholders that HITRANS is achieving its objectives.

To encourage behavioural change, we must present our message in a style suitable for popular publications. This means focusing on people, images and user friendly slogans wherever possible. It will also often entail presenting HITRANS' aims at events that are not primarily transport focused, in order to reach out to as wide a public as possible.

### **Carrying out media work**

Media work is divided into proactive and reactive. Our media work will, in the main, be proactive, positive and aimed at explaining our aims to the public: demonstrating that we are achieving our objectives to the Scottish Government, Transport Scotland and our partner local authorities, and encouraging behavioural change towards transportation among the travelling public, in line with our objectives. We will when appropriate employ the services of specialist media companies to assist in the delivery and distribution of media releases to obtain maximum impact.

### **Reactive media work**

We will also when appropriate carry out reactive media work in response to media coverage that is incorrect, negative or which challenges HITRANS aims and objectives. This will be achieved through issuing responses in the form of Press releases, letters to publications, direct rebuttals and through offering responsive interviews in reaction to negative coverage. The aim of reactive media work is not to silence criticism or dissent, but to challenge incorrect, unfair or misleading coverage and turn such coverage into a positive media opportunity. Reactive media work can often be an opportunity to make public announcement of HITRANS views and actions.

### **Engaging with the different types of media**

#### **Print media**

As indicated above, broadsheet newspapers service a smaller audience than the tabloid press, but one which is well informed and includes opinion formers and decision makers. It is a platform for engaging in high level debate and presenting our aims and objectives in detail to stakeholders and other influential bodies. Tabloids have a much wider readership and will be targeted if we are to achieve behavioural change. Local newspapers also have strong local readerships and are extremely influential in their circulation areas. It should be noted that readerships for national newspaper titles vary in the partnership area and this will inform the level of effort that we give to pursuing coverage in specific publications.

#### **Broadcast media**

The Highlands and Islands has several broadcast media outlets, including a number of radio stations serving local areas, others which have audiences that cut across the partnership area and beyond, and national outlets which, by definition, reach the whole

partnership area. These include: BBC TV, STV and BBC Radio Scotland. Local radio stations offer the opportunity to carry out carefully targeted media work aimed at specific audiences across the partnership area. Stations with a wider broadcasting reach require stories with a wider relevance than just the partnership area, but can be useful for carefully targeted work particularly carried out in partnership with other RTPs, or government bodies.

We will seek to obtain as wide a level of coverage as possible through all types of media. It is also important to remember that people access different types of media in different settings and at different times. We will seek to exploit all mediums to the full and tailor our efforts to suit their specific requirements.

### **Which media?**

**Television:** Can have the greatest initial impact and we will ensure that broadcasters are provided with suitable images. Television coverage is highly competitive, with each channel having few camera crews and many competing priorities, therefore stories covered tend to be those that have a national or human interest slant, unless the event has a particular novelty value. Television coverage by its nature will tend to be attracted by our larger scale projects, events with a strong visual component and those with plenty of scope for comment from the public.

**Radio:** Is an extremely intimate medium, which is accessible in a way not possible with television or print coverage. It is particularly important as a means of reaching the travelling public in general and car commuters in particular. Like television, it has its own requirements: specifically, we must have a well briefed spokesperson, available for interview at all times.

**Print:** This medium has a longer shelf life; particularly since the advent of online versions of the various publications and lends itself to sustained campaigns to change attitudes and stimulate debate. In local newspapers manpower is scarce and we can expect to place articles written in-house by HITRANS or on its behalf, with little if any editing, if these are provided to the correct length and accompanied by high quality images.

HITRANS will pursue media opportunities by press releasing projects, canvassing editorial on key objectives and policies contained within the RTS, developing opportunities to promote HITRANS policies in opinion columns, letters pages and through development of news and feature opportunities.

HITRANS will issue press releases on projects carried out as part of the capital programme identified in the RTS, as agreed with the partnership authorities. This, and the results of research and responses to consultations, will form the backbone of our routine press work, as these provide a reliable series of ongoing opportunities that may be highlighted throughout the year. Press Releases will be issued:

- a. By HITRANS with additional quotes from partners
- b. By the local authority, or other partner, with a quote from HITRANS, highlighting the aims and objectives of the partnership.
- c. By HITRANS exclusively, within our capacity to comment on behalf of the region to national issues

### **Photography Requirements**

The ability to provide high quality images is essential to succeeding in achieving coverage in local newspapers, web based and in-house publications, which do not have their own photographic resources. HITRANS also requires, and is steadily acquiring, a

library of such images for its own publishing and marketing purposes. While the need for such images can to a large degree be met in-house, professional quality images are essential for events with higher than usual significance; such as those with ministerial involvement. The services of a professional photographer will be engaged where these circumstances arise.

### **Purpose of media work**

All media work will be carried out with the intention of:

- Effecting behavioural change and perception among the travelling public, in line with our objectives.
- Highlighting HITRANS' and transportation's key role in improving the highlands and islands through better transport planning and delivery in the region.
- Positioning us as an authoritative voice on transportation planning and delivery
- Engaging in public debate on transport issues.
- Demonstrating to partners and stakeholders that HITRANS is delivering on its objectives.

Key contacts, stakeholders and decision makers within the partnership area will receive copies of all press releases and public communications electronically as a matter of course, as part of our general approach of keeping supporters, partners and public representatives fully informed of our activities.

### **Media Spokespersons**

HITRANS Chair will act as key spokesperson. All comments will be issued in his name, unless he is unavailable, in which case the Partnership Director or other senior officers may substitute, as appropriate. Opportunities will be sought to develop his role as the "face of HITRANS" in the media wherever possible. We will pursue opportunities for the Chair to develop his role as spokesperson through participation in debates and interviews on radio, television and in print. Where technical or 'expert' input is sought this will generally be provided by the Partnership Director or in his absence by one of the Partnership Managers

### **3. Events**

HITRANS will participate in events which will advance awareness of the aims and objectives of the RTS, to the public, stakeholders, decision makers or the transport constituency. Participation may range from sponsorship or contributing a keynote speaker, to an exhibition presence, depending upon the nature of the individual event. Suitable events may include the following:

- **Transport events** - Staged by national or regional authorities and/or professional bodies on specialised transport themes. HITRANS will participate as: exhibitor, participant, or sponsor, depending upon which approach would best advance the objectives and policies laid down in the RTS. There may be a case for developing a 'rural transport' event with other RTPs to highlight the particular issues faced in these areas.
- **HITRANS events** - Those organised by HITRANS to promote specific issues or areas of activity relevant to our aims and objectives. This may involve arranging focussed information providing events with decision makers and policy influencers at Scottish and UK government level.

- **Other events:** We will ensure that we have a presence at events which will serve to promote our objectives and policies with appropriate target audiences. Specifically, these will include cultural events, recreational events and large scale community events led by organisations with appropriate agendas (e.g. environmental, cycling, third sector interest groups, etc). These will not necessarily be focussed on a transport theme, but serve as platforms to get our message across to the wider public, through engaging with activist groups whose aims and objectives overlap with our own.

#### 4. Advertising

Advertising, for HITRANS purposes, is defined as all opportunities to highlight the HITRANS brand and message in the public sphere, excluding media editorial, whether purchased or free. This includes: web links, contributing copy to websites and acknowledgement of HITRANS support for projects by partner organisations.

In the latter case, HITRANS support must be acknowledged publicly in line with the conditions indicated in the conditions of grant. Specifically:

***“The grantee shall acknowledge proportionately in publicity material relating to a project the contribution of HITRANS to its costs. HITRANS may require to approve the form of such acknowledgment prior to first publication”.***

The materials may include:

- **Signage** - on site and elsewhere. This will include the HITRANS logo of an appropriate size and prominence and if possible our website address.
- **Advertisements** – whether taken out in the public media, specialist publications or closed distribution publications.
- **Any public communications** regarding the project, exclusive of directly targeted media work seeking editorial coverage.

Ensuring that our contacts details, branding and aims are highlighted in key reference publications such as the telephone directories and business directories is essential to raising our overall profile.

## **5. Publications**

Some publications must be produced as part of our statutory obligations; others will be produced as part of our overall strategy to communicate HITRANS' aims and objectives to a wider audience. Although HITRANS will standardise on web based publications, in line with our environmental objectives and for reasons of cost effectiveness, a small quantity of high quality printed publications will still be required.

All publications will be produced to conform to the requirements of HITRANS' equalities policy and, where appropriate charges will be levied in accordance with the Freedom of Information Scotland Act (FOISA). Information in this scheme is available free of charge when viewed on the HITRANS website or sent via e-mail. For those without access to the website a single printout off the website (or a hard copy of the document) can be requested. These will be provided free of charge except where indicated. Requests for multiple printouts of material on the website or for multiple hard copies may incur a fee to cover the cost of printing, photocopying, postage. For full details of the FOISA scheme will be available on the HITRANS website.

### **Electronic publication as standard**

Although a small stock of our publications will be printed, our default provision will be electronic. This will serve a variety of purposes including: cost effective production and amendment distribution while emphasising our commitment towards protecting the environment. It will also encourage enquirers to refer to the website and emphasize its role as our key information portal. All publications will be available for download from the website in pdf format. Where a direct request is received that cannot be met by downloading, the format of choice will be on DVD or data key, as appropriate. Print copies will only be provided where electronic media is not an option, or where printing off documents personally would represent an unreasonable expense for the enquirer.

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