HI TRANS

THE HIGHLANDS AND ISLANDS TRANSPORT PARTNERSHIP

Report to Partnership Meeting 12 November 2021

CONSULTATION

Scottish Aviation Strategy Consultation

Purpose of Report

This report introduces a consultation by the Scottish Government to help inform the development of a Scottish Aviation Strategy.

Background

Transport Scotland have recently published a discussion document will help the Scottish Government to develop an Aviation Strategy that realises their vision for aviation:

For Scotland to have national and international connectivity that allows us to enjoy all the economic and social benefits of air travel while reducing our environmental impact.

The discussion document is being used as the basis for consultation with the aviation sector, business, tourism, local communities and others on how we can achieve this vision. These discussions, alongside the responses to the online public consultation, will inform the future development of our Aviation Strategy.

The Aviation Strategy will then form the basis of the work that the Scottish Government and partner agencies undertake with the aviation sector and other relevant organisations to achieve the vision.

The Aviation Strategy will not consider the transport infrastructure needed to travel to and from the main Scottish airports as this is being covered in Transport Scotland's Strategic Projects Review 2.

Structure

The discussion document sets out the questions Transport Scotland would like you to answer to help us develop the Aviation Strategy. A link to the full document can be https://bit.ly/3k1AbQ1. It provides information and context to support answering the consultation questions.

These subsequent sections invite views on how we can achieve our vision, focusing on the following key themes: aviation's transition to net-zero, Scotland's international connectivity, Scotland's domestic connectivity and air freight.

Consultation Questions

1. What more, if anything, should the Scottish Government and industry do to accelerate the transition to low/zero emission aviation?

2. What can the Scottish Government do to help increase the use of sustainable aviation fuels?

3. What do you think the Scottish Government can do to help ensure a just transition to net-zero for the Scottish aviation sector?

4. Considering the future challenges and opportunities, what changes, if any, should we make to our approach to help achieve our aim for international connectivity?

Priority	Short haul	Long haul
1	Germany	USA
2	France	China
3	Netherlands	Canada
4	Italy	Australia
5	Norway	Japan
6	Spain	
7	Switzerland	
8	Belgium	
9	Sweden	
10	Ireland	

5. Do you agree with the priority countries for short haul and long haul set out in the table above?

   a. Yes
   b. No
   c. Don't know

6. Which other countries should we focus on in the:

   a. Short term (next 2 years)
   b. Medium term (2-5 years)
   c. Long term (5 years plus)

7. How do we incentivise the use of more efficient aircraft, whilst still ensuring that we secure the routes Scotland needs?

8. What do you think about the idea of the Scottish Government purchasing new zero emission aircraft to lease to any airline operating routes in the Highlands and Islands?

9. What else can the Scottish Government do to achieve its aim of decarbonising scheduled flights within Scotland by 2040?

Less Demand for air services	Same level of demand for air services	More demand for air services
- Greater use of video-conferencing and other technology - Telemedicine - Focus on higher spending tourists rather than volume - Improved facilities on islands - High speed rail - Medical supplies and post delivered by drone - Improvement in ferry provision and/or fixed links	- Around the same number of people living and working in the Highland and Islands - No changes to current travel patterns - No changes to how goods are transported	- More people living and working in the Highlands and Islands (e.g. because of growth of the energy sector, more home and remote working, more small business start-ups etc.) - More tourists - Lower costs as a result of using electric/hydrogen aircraft - Modal shift from ferry to plane - More goods transported in belly hold/ dedicated air freight

10. What air services do you think are needed to meet the needs of people living in and visiting the Highland and Islands in the scenarios set out above:

   a. less demand for air services
   b. same level of demand for air services
   c. more demand for air services?

11. Most air services in the Highlands and Islands are delivered on a commercial basis. How can the Scottish Government best work with the private sector to deliver the air services you think are needed?

12. How effective do you think the Air Discount Scheme has been at addressing high airfares?

13. How can the Scottish Government improve the Air Discount Scheme?

14. What do you think about complementing the current operating model with an on demand service, such as air taxi?

15. What do you think about an open charter service?

16. In addition to on demand and open charter services are there any operational models you think could be used? If so, what?

Operator	HIAL	Shetland Islands Council	Orkney Islands Council	Argyll & Bute Council
Airports	Barra	Fair Isle	Eday	Coll
	Benbecula	Foula	North Ronaldsay	Colonsay
	Campbeltown	Out Skerries	Papa Westray	Oban
	Dundee	Papa Stour	Sanday	
	Inverness	Tingwall	Stronsay	
	Islay	Whalsay	Westray	
	Kirkwall			
	Stornoway			
	Sumburgh			
	Tiree			
	Wick John O' Groats			

17. What are the strengths and weaknesses of the operational model set out in the table above?

18. What changes, if any, do you think should be made to these governance arrangements to improve services?

19. What changes, if any, do you think should be made to these governance arrangements to reduce running costs?

20. Do you think the Scottish Government should encourage airlines to offer plane- plus train tickets?

      Yes / No / Don't know

21. If yes, how do you think the Scottish Government could best do this?

22. What more, if anything, do you think the Scottish Government can do to help promote efficient and sustainable airfreight transport?

23. What else do you think the Aviation Strategy should try to achieve?

Preparing HITRANS Response

HITRANS welcomes the opportunity to respond to this wide-ranging consultation on the future priorities and governance surrounding aviation in Scotland.

Aviation forms a crucial, often lifeline, element of the transport network in many parts of the HITRANS area. From the transfer of schoolkids in Colonsay and North Ronaldsay to the transfer of patients and medical staff from all the islands and the most remote parts of the mainland to and from the acute hospitals such as Raigmore, Aberdeen Royal and the Queen Elizabeth in Glasgow.

Air services often also provide the only means of accessing Scotland's urban centres when the journey purpose is constrained by time. HITRANS Regional Transport Strategy has highlighted that this connectivity needs to be at a level where passengers are able to undertake an affordable day trip from but also to the airport serving their island or region.

Similarly, we have highlighted the need for Inverness Airport to have the equivalent level of access to key hub airports such as Heathrow, Amsterdam and Manchester. In previous recent consultations including the UK Governments Aviation 2050 consultation and recent reviews of Air Passenger Duty and Air Departure Tax, HITRANS have highlighted the vital role aviation plays in attracting inward investment and visitors to the region but also how good air links to hub airports provides the onward connectivity for the businesses which rely on these links for sustaining and developing their trade.

The consultation also provides an opportunity to highlight a number of other priorities relating to aviation and air services in the Highlands and Islands including;

- Ensuring that the ambitious commitment for the Highlands and Islands to become the first net zero aviation region by 2040 delivers improved and affordable connectivity for the region and that opportunities for research and development supporting the transition to electric and hydrogen can provide wider economic benefits to the region.
- Ensuring that aviation policy prioritises support for those islands and regions where surface transport does not offer a competitive alternative to air links.
- Ensuring that the Scottish Government uses this welcome review of the governance and support of air services to consider alternatives structures and funding mechanisms that can best deliver improved affordable connectivity. As the consultation highlights, we have an operational model where 4 different bodies (and The Highland Council at Wick in addition to those listed in the table above) support PSO's where a more coordinated approach may realise reduced running costs and more equitable fare structures.
- Welcoming proposals for the Scottish Government to encourage airlines to offer plan plus train tickets but highlight that this should be extended to other modes – especially bus but also car clubs or bike hire. International best practice offers a number of examples that could improve the end to end journey experience for passengers but also help reduce the carbon footprint of surface access to and from airports.
- Welcoming the opportunity to review the crucial role of airfreight to many businesses in the Highlands and Islands and to work with Scottish government and HIE to understand how changes may reduce both the cost of airfreight but also improve the logistics and timescales involved.
- Ensuring the Strategy helps re-establish scheduled air services to Skye (Skye and Lochalsh is the population centre with the longest journey times to Scotlands main urban centres) and aligns with Rural Growth Deal plans for Oban Airport.

Next Steps

- HITRANS officers will develop a draft response which will be shared with Members and Advisors.
- Contact Transport Scotland's Aviation team undertaking the consultation and request that they host events to engage with key stakeholders prior to the submission deadline.
- Invite HITRANS Advisors to a dedicated meeting to discuss our response prior to the submission deadline.
- Delegate responsibility for submitting HITRANS final response to HITRANS Chair and Partnership Director

RTS Delivery

RTS Delivery
Impact - Positive

Comment – This work supports RTS Strategic priority enhance regional connectivity.

Policy
Impact - Positive

Comment – This work supports development of the Aviation policies set out in the RTS.

Financial
Impact – Neutral

Comment - There are no direct funding implications for HITRANS resulting from this report.

Equality
Impact –neutral

Recommendation

Members are invited to;

1. Note the report
2. Consider those priorities for HITRANS to identify in responding to the Consultation
3. Approve the preparation of a draft response by Officers for Members to comment upon
4. Delegate responsibility for submitting HITRANS final response to HITRANS Chair and Partnership Director.

Report by: Neil MacRae
Designation: Partnership Manager
Date: 15th November 2021