

Item:

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Report to Partnership Meeting 6 October 2022

RESEARCH AND STRATEGY DELIVERY

Rail Round Up

Purpose of Report

To inform the Board on rail matters.

Evanton Station

We have engaged consultants Aecom to investigate the technical feasibility of reopening Evanton Station, with funding from the Coastal Communities Fund, HITRANS and Kiltearn Community Council. There have been delays in accessing the future timetable data. A presentation to Kiltearn Community Council is scheduled for Monday 7 September.

Hydroban

A bid was submitted a bid to the UK Levelling Up Fund investment by Argyll and Bute Council for investment in infrastructure in Oban. HITRANS assisted by engaging a consultant to assist with the hydrogen bus element of the bid. Oban is perhaps the most multi of all multimodal transport hubs in Scotland, with reliance on fossil fuels to serve the Lorn and the Islands by road, rail, sea and air.

In September 2021 Greenpower unveiled plans to create hydrogen at their Loch Awe windfarm. Off takers could include ferry, rail, bus, the SGN independent gas network, aquaculture, and other processes.

The deployment of hydrogen buses is seen as an early stimulation of demand for green hydrogen that with assist with ScotRail's and CMAL/CalMac's plans for hydrogen powered fleets.

Zero Emissions Train

The former Class 314 electric train has now successfully run on hydrogen at the Bo'ness heritage railway. The train has been retro fitted with a fuel cell and

hydrogen tanks, with green hydrogen supplied by Angel Trains electrolyser. Wick-Thurso remains the proposed test route for mainline testing, a Programme for Government commitment for 2025.

Going With The Flow

The plan to recommence timber from the Flow Country to Inverness by rail has been stalled as wagons are not currently available. It had been hoped to run a demonstrator project, building on the success of the Georgemas trial of 2020. Planning permission for a lineside loading pad has been awarded. Discussions are ongoing on routes to wagon procurement.

The economics of timber by rail will be much improved if West Fraser at Morayhill decide to create a rail terminal taking advantage of the signalling alterations at the new Inverness Airport station.

Fastlane Faslane

The project to investigate a rail station at Scotland's biggest single site employer, funded by Transport Scotland's Local Rail Development Fund, has been through the Case for Change. We are ready to go to Options Appraisal but are still awaiting TS views on stage one.

As a short term measure, we have had some timetabling work carried out to identify resources required to run additional services to Garelochhead for the base.

Inverness Airport Station

The new station will be open for the start of the December 22 timetable. HITRANS work on this has been ongoing since 2005. The station will cater for airport users, airport workers, business park visitors and workers, and residents of Tornagrain and wider East Inverness.

Fair Exchange

The new signalling token exchange point at Stromeferry on the Kyle Line 30% funded by HITRANS is now operational. It breaks up the long 40-minute section between Strathcarron and Kyle, providing additional capacity for engineering access to the track, improved operations at Kyle through permissive working, and efficient road traffic management during periods of rockface maintenance on the A890.

Fort Transit

HITRANS has carried out a study to maximise the use rail network by providing an additional unit and traincrews operating schools, commuter and off-peak leisure services out of Fort William in order assist with congestion-busting through mode shift. The next step will be to assess potential demand.

RISK REGISTER

RTS Delivery

Impact –Mode shift, integration, resilience

Policy

Impact –Future fuels, decarbonisation, transport efficiency, network usage maximisation.

Financial

Impact – Nil

Equality

Impact – Access to the network for all

Recommendation

1. Members are asked to note the report.

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Date: 5 September 2022