

Minute of Meeting held in the
Council Chambers, Orkney Islands
Council, Kirkwall, on Friday 15
September 2023 at 9.30am.

Present	Mr Uisdean Robertson, Comhairle nan Eilean Siar Member (Chair) Ms Amber Dunbar, Moray Council Member (Vice-Chair) Mr Andrew Kain, Argyll & Bute Council Member Mr David Dawson, Orkney Islands Council Member Mrs Naomi Bremner, Non-Councillor Member Mr Robert Andrew, Non-Councillor Member
In Attendance	Mr Ranald Robertson, Partnership Director Ms Carolyn Moir, Partnership Treasurer Mr Derek Mackay, Partnership Secretary Mr Frank Roach, Partnership Manager Mr Neil MacRae, Partnership Manager Mr David MacLeod, Comhairle nan Eilean Siar Mr Donald Macrae, Moray Council Ms Julie Cromarty, The Highland Council Ms Nicole Wallace, The Highland Council Ms Laura Cromarty, Orkney Islands Council Mr Fergus Murray, Argyll & Bute Council Mr Nicholas Sobey, HIE Ms Rebecca Wallace, SATE Project Officer Mr Iain Macinnes, Mr James Stockan, Orkney Islands Council Ms Joni McBride, Audit Scotland Mrs Patricia Fraser, Audit Scotland Mr David Holden, SATE Project Mr Lukas Princ, SATE Project Ms Gillian Skuse, Orkney Islands Council
Apologies	Mr Ken Gowans, The Highland Council Member Mrs Nicola Moss, Moray Council
Declaration Interests	of Mr Robert Andrew declared that he had retired as Stagecoach Scotland Regional Director in June 2020 and acted as an advisor to Scottish Citylink. Mrs Naomi Bremner declared that she had provided consultancy support to Stantec in the preparation of the Preliminary Appraisal Report for the draft Regional Transport Strategy.

MINUTES

- Minute of Meeting of 21 April 2023 1 The Minute of Meeting of 21 April 2023 was **approved**.
- Matters arising 2 Mr Ranald Robertson indicated that the Scottish Islands Passport continued to grow with over 17,000 app users. Funding had been secured from the Paths for all to continue the Project.

It was agreed to note the update.

FINANCE

- Revenue Budget Monitoring Report – 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023 3 With reference to item 3 of the Minute of Meeting of 21 April 2023 Ms Carolyn Moir, Partnership Treasurer, submitted a Report setting out the revenue monitoring position for the year ended 31 March 2023.

It was agreed to approve the Report and the schedule showing the revenue monitoring position for the period to 31 March 2023.

- HITRANS Annual Audit Accounts 2022-23 4 Mrs Patricia Fraser, Audit Scotland, presented the draft External Annual Report for the financial year ended 31 March 2023. The Report stated that the audit work on the 2022/23 annual accounts was now substantially complete and 2022/23 draft Annual Audit Report was provided together with the Action Plan 202/23. The Annual Accounts would be emailed following the meeting for signing. Mr Ranald Fraser thanked Mrs Fraser and Ms Joni McBride for their work in compiling the External Audit Annual Report.

It was agreed to note the Draft 2022/23 Annual Audit Report.

- Revenue Budget Monitoring Report – 1 April 2023 to 31 July 2023 5 With reference to item 3 of the Minute of Meeting of 21 April 2023 Ms Carolyn Moir, Partnership Treasurer, provided a verbal update in relation to the revenue monitoring position to 31 July 2023.

It was agreed to:

- (1) note the update.**
- (2) Note that the Revenue Budget Monitoring Report 1 April 2023 – 31 July 2023 would be circulated following the meeting.**

- Review of Contract Standing Orders 6 With reference to item 19 of the Minute of Meeting of 12 November 2021 Mr Ranald Robertson, Partnership Director, and Ms Carolyn Moir, Treasurer submitted a Joint Report stating that the previous review of Contract Standing Orders had been approved at the Partnership meeting on 12 November 2021. The Report further stated that in discussion with Audit Scotland on the Audit of the 2022/23 Accounts it had been noted that the Contract Standing Orders available at that time were dated 2017 and Highland Council had subsequently updated their Contract Standing Orders. The latest Contract Standing Orders were presented for the Board's consideration.

It was agreed:

- (1) To approve the application to HITRANS of the Highland Council Contract Standing Orders January 2023, and to be implemented forthwith; and**
- (2) that all governance documents would be reviewed during each term.**

RESEARCH AND STRATEGY DELIVERY

Research/Strategy Development Programme for 2022/23	7	<p>With reference to item 6 of the Minute of Meeting of 21 April 2023 Mr Ranald Robertson, Partnership Director, submitted a Report providing an update on progress on delivering the Research and Strategy Development programme and sought approval of amendments to the programme to reflect commitments made, changing priorities and funding opportunities identified since approval of the 2023/24 Business Plan at the Partnership meeting on 21 April 2023.</p> <p>The Report indicated that with external funding from EU and Scottish Government in place and added to the Research and Strategy Delivery programme budget identified in the core programme there was currently sufficient funding in place to meet a £2,025,000 programme. This was made up of £350,000 core budget and a draw down against funds secured from EU projects, MaaS Investment Fund, Regional Active Travel Grant, Sestrans Partnership Programme and Smarter Choices Smarter Places.</p> <p>It was agreed to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (1) note the amendments to the Research and Strategy Development Programme 2023/24 as detailed in the Appendix to the Report; and (2) authorise the Chair and Partnership Director to make representations to COSLA raising the concerns expressed by Members and Advisors regarding the formula used to allocate funding for the Community Bus Fund.
Regional Transport Strategy Update	8	<p>With reference to item 10 of the Minute of Meeting of 21 April 2023 Mr Neil MacRae, Partnership Manager, submitted a Report providing an update on the development of a new Regional Transport Strategy (RTS). The Report stated that the next stage of developing the RTS would be an options appraisal involving generating, developing and appraising a set of high-level options that could be considered. Members were invited to comment on the Preliminary Appraisal Report which set out the options packages. The final RTS would be accompanied by a Delivery Plan, which would highlight actions that HITRANS would take to progress each policy developed.</p> <p>It was agreed to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (1) note the Report; and (2) consider and provide feedback on the draft Preliminary Appraisal Report attached at Appendix A to the Report.
Fastline Faslane	9	<p>With reference to item 11 of the Minute of Meeting of 4 February 2022 Mr Frank Roach, Partnership Manager, submitted a Report providing an update on progress with the Faslane project. The Report detailed the options proposed to be taken forward to the Preliminary Options Appraisal and stated that the Case for Change had been submitted to Transport Scotland in March 2021, and feedback had recently been received.</p> <p>The Report provided an update on the station development stating that HITRANS had engaged with Douglas Binns Ltd to produce an outline feasibility Report into the siting of a railway station to provide access to His Majesty's Naval Base Clyde. The Report was now the subject of discussions with MOD.</p> <p>It was agreed to note the Report.</p>
Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Shared Service	10	<p>With reference to item 12 of the Minute of Meeting of meeting of 21 April 2023, Mr Ranald Robertson, Partnership Director, presented a Report providing an update on regional activity by a project management shared service under the Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Fund (EVIF) which was a shared service covering Comhairle nan Eilean Siar, Moray Council, Orkney Islands Council and Shetland Islands Council.</p>

It was agreed to note the Report.

Bottlenecks 11 Mr Frank Roach, Partnership Manger, submitted a Report informing the Board of a new whisky logistics study, Bottlenecks! The Report stated that MVA Consultancy and Caledonian Solutions had been commissioned by HITRANS in 2011 to review the current and future logistics requirements of the whisky industry and the corresponding impacts on the strategic transport network in the HITRANS area. The study led to the successful Lifting The Spirit rail trials in 2013.

The Report further stated that HITRANS had been asked by the Scottish Whisky Association (SWA) to update the work in light of increased output, new production sites and changes to the freight network, including ferries. Bottlenecks! would seek to identify current and future freight needs of the industry, identify any related freight transport issues, and make recommendation for addressing those issues. The Report indicated that HITRANS would procure the study (valued at £45k) which would be funded and manged jointly by HITRANS and SWA.

It was agreed to:

- (1) note the Report; and**
- (2) approve the £22.5k contribution to the Bottlenecks Project.**

Local Authority 12 Mr Ranald Robertson, Partnership Director, submitted a Report providing an update on work to set out the case for capital investment to support resilience on local authority operated lifeline ferry services. The Report stated that local authorities which operated 'lifeline' ferry services had worked with partner Regional Transport Partnerships to develop a briefing paper setting out the current capital funding context and future financial requirements for necessary investment in vessels and infrastructure. Reference Economic Consultants had been appointed by HITRANS to pull together information on the key issues of finding capital funding for new vessels and infrastructure.

Local Authority
Ferries – Capital
Funding Case for
Change

In discussion it was emphasised that the UK and Scottish Governments should provide the full capital costs for ferry replacement as local authorities had no scope to allocate match funding. The UK Government should also fund the element of capital funding that would previously be available through ERDF which was no longer available following Brexit. The urgency in relation to the requirement for a replacement vessel for the Corran service should be highlighted.

It was agreed to:

- (1) note the Report; and**
- (2) approve the inclusion of the comments from Members in the Briefing Paper.**

Active Travel 13 With reference to item 8 of the Minute of Meeting of 21 April 2023, Mr Neil Macrae, Partnership Manager, presented a Report providing an update on Active Travel Projects in which HITRANS were currently involved. The Report stated that for the 2023/24 financial year HITRANS had been awarded £955,000 from Transport Scotland's Regional Active Travel Fund to include the following programmes:

Active
Update

Travel

- Monitoring
- Transport Integration
- AT Masterplans & 20 Min Communities
- Mobility Hubs and Micromobility
- Quiet Routes & NCN

- Path Improvement
- Resource Support

The Report provided an update on the progress of each project.

The Report stated that the Active Travel Officer continued to co-ordinate the Active Travel Advisory Group, was involved in active and sustainable travel working groups in Comhairle nan Eilean Siar, Orkney and Fort William and had joined the steering group for Places for Everyone funded projects in Oban and Jura. The Report further indicated that a Business Support Assistant had been in post since April 2023 and the Report provided an overview of the work that had been carried out within that time.

It was agreed to note the Report.

Skyefall	14	Mr Frank Roach, Partnership Manager provided a video presentation on the Skyefall Project. Mr Roach provided background to the Project which sought to allow the safe operation of passenger trains while allowing road traffic to use the railway alignment to bypass known and potential rockfall sites on the A890. The concept had been passed to Network Rail and could provide solutions in other parts of the United Kingdom.
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It was agreed to note the update.

Bus Partnership Fund	15	Mr Ranald Robertson, Partnership Director and Ms Julie Cromarty, Project Manager – Bus Partnership Fund, submitted a Joint Report providing an update on progress with delivering Bus Partnership Fund projects successfully bid for by Highland Council and Argyll and Bute Council. The Report stated that the Scottish Government committed to providing a long-term investment of over £500m to deliver targeted bus priority measures on local and trunk roads which was intended to reduce the negative impacts of congestion on bus services and address the decline in bus patronage.
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It was agreed to note the Report.

Security of Lifeline Air Services	16	Mr Ranald Robertson, Partnership Director, submitted a Report which invited Members to consider work that HITRANS and partners should undertake to help secure lifeline air services both within and to/from the region in the future. The Report stated that concerns had recently been raised over the decision by Loganair to bring forward the winter timetable schedule on the Benbecula to Glasgow and Kirkwall to Edinburgh routes. The Report indicated that this change was the result of delayed aircraft deliveries as Loganair introduce a newer fleet of larger ATR aircraft.
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The Report detailed that calls had been made for the opportunity to secure service levels through a PSO to be looked at on each of the affected routes. The Report further indicated that other route aspirations included connecting Wick to Edinburgh and there remained an interest in re-introducing a Stornoway to Aberdeen route.

It was agreed to:

- (1) note the Report; and**
- (2) consider how HITRANS and local partners best engage with HIAL, Transport Scotland and the wider aviation sector to secure lifeline air services within the region and to other key destinations within Scotland.**

SATE Project Meeting Update	17	Ms Rebecca Wallace, SATE Project Officer, submitted a Report providing an update on HITRANS involvement in the Innovate UK Sustainable Aviation Test Environment (SATE)
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Project. The Report provided a detailed overview of the Project and highlighted HITRANS role. The Report stated that progress had been made of the following deliverables:

- Rural transit
- Intra-City
- Autonomous Delivery of Goods
- Rapid Air Transfer

The Report stated that additional activities HITRANS would undertake as part of the project was the installation of a charge point at Kirkwall Airport, and electric car club vehicles – both recommendations identified in the Low Carbon Surface Access Report completed as part of SATE phase 1.

Mr David Holden and Mr Lukas Princ gave a presentation providing an update on SATE Project.

It was agreed to:

- (1) note the Report; and**
- (2) approve in principle the transfer of SATE 2 Lead Partner role to HITRANS along with the budget for this activity and staff costs, subject to the transfer of grant funding for these work package delivery areas from HIAL to HITRANS .**

EUROPEAN PROJECTS

EU Funding Consolidation Update	18	With reference to item 13 of the Minute of Meeting of 21 April 2023, Mr Ranald Robertson, Partnership Director, submitted a Report providing an update on HITRANS involvement in European funded projects. This included Interreg North Sea Region, Interreg VA Cross Border, Interreg North-West Europe and Horizon Europe. The appendix to the Report provided details on all projects including status, timelines, description of main activities, a Gantt Chart showing involvement into 2023 and a consolidated budgets table.
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It was agreed to note the Report.

RURALITIES Horizon Europe	– 19	Mr Ranald Robertson, Partnership Director, submitted a Report providing an update on a proposed change to HITRANS role in the RURALITIES project following the loss to the project of another UK Partner and sought approval of HITRANS taking on additional responsibilities and budget. The Report indicated that this had required a re-evaluation of the project's work plan, specifically concerning the redistribution of tasks, deliverables, and other responsibilities initially designated to ASPI.
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The Report indicated that that after extensive evaluation of the potential for another UK Partner to take on ASPI responsibilities and budget the Lead Partner had concluded HITRANS would be best placed to do so as the other UK Partner did not have capacity. The Report detailed that for HITRANS part an evaluation had identified an opportunity for the activities to be embedded within the Scottish Islands Passport project ensuring the initial project budget allocated to ASPI could transfer to HITRANS on the same 100% funded basis that applies to the Horizon Europe Guarantee activities.

It was agreed to approve the proposal that HITRANS take on additional tasks and budget within the RURALITIES project as set out in the Report.

PARTNERSHIP

Programme of Meetings 2024	20	Mr Ranald Robertson, Partnership Director, submitted a Report detailing proposed dates for Partnership Board and Permanent Advisors meetings in 2024.
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It was agreed that HITRANS Partnership and Advisors meet in 2024 on the following dates and locations:

Date	Partnership Meeting	Advisors Meeting	Location
18 January 2024		Morning	Virtual
2 February 2024	Partnership Board Meeting		Inverness
28 March 2024		Morning	Virtual
26 April 2024	Partnership Board Meeting		Virtual
22 August		Morning	Virtual
12 & 13 September 2024	Evening Meeting followed by full Partnership Meeting on Friday morning		Western Isles
24 October 2024		Morning	Virtual
7 & 8 November 2024	Evening Meeting followed by full Partnership Meeting on Friday morning		Argyll and Bute

Programme for Government 2023/24

for 21

Mr Ranald Robertson, Partnership Director, submitted a Report which summarised the key transport related aspects of the Programme for Government (PfG) published on 5th September 2023. The Report noted that the 2023-24 Programme for Government was titled 'Equality, Opportunity, Community'. This builds on the three missions set out by the First Minister shortly after taking office. These were for Government to deliver:

- Equality - Tackling poverty and protecting people from harm.
- Opportunity - Building a fair, green and growing economy.
- Community - Delivering efficient and effective public services.

The Transport commitments within the Programme for Government were set out under the chapter from the Cabinet Secretary for Transport, Net Zero and Just Transition. The Transport activity planned for 2023/24 was summarised within the Report.

It was agreed to note the Report.