

Report to Partnership Meeting 20th September 2024

RESEARCH AND STRATEGY DELIVERY

Fort William Integrated Transport Plan

PURPOSE OF REPORT

To provide Members on progress to undertake an Integrated Transport Plan for Fort William and to seek approval for HITRANS funding support for its development.

Background

The strategic road network in Fort William suffers from reliability and resilience issues, with congestion on the network impacting journey times on the A82 and A830 and also has a negative impact on the environment of the town with the A82 in particular, creating severance between different parts of the town and the town's connection with its waterfront. These routes also form important transport corridors serving not just Fort William but much of the northwest Highlands and Islands.

A number of studies and trials have taken place in the last ten years but the issues persist with evidence that they are having a significant impact on local economy with local businesses indicating that congestion in and around Fort William is preventing them from expanding and the local bus operator having to reduce its service because of the delays it is experiencing.

HITRANS, The Highland Council and Highlands and Islands Enterprise funded the undertaking of the Fort William Strategic Transport Study, Pre appraisal Case for Change in 2018. This was a multi-modal study that adopted the objective-led Scottish Transport Appraisal Guidance (STAG) process that developed a long list of possible options, which were then sifted to identify a short list of options for progression to further appraisal.

In 2019, Transport Scotland, commenced the second Strategic Transport Projects Review (STPR2) to help deliver the vision, priorities and outcomes set out in the [second National Transport Strategy \(NTS2\)](#). STPR2 was published in December 2022.

STPR2 Recommendation 32 focusses on motorway and trunk road renewal for reliability, resilience and safety. It advocates for continued and increased investment in the trunk road and motorway network over and above current maintenance levels. Potential measures would include carriageway and structure schemes as well as ancillary assets. An Integrated Transport Plan (ITP) for Fort William has been identified as an example of how Recommendation 32 of STPR2 can be delivered:

“Integrated Transport Plan for Fort William to increase resilience and reliability on the trunk road to improve sustainable transport and enhance the sense of place in the local community. This could potentially include improvements online and/or a new link road to enable enhanced sustainable transport provision.”

Fort William Integrated Transport Plan

Local partners have been engaging with Transport Scotland in recent months to establish the governance and scope for developing the STPR2 commitment of an Integrated Transport Plan for Fort William with work feeding into the Fort William 2040 (FW2040) Steering Group which is an ongoing project to co-ordinate and deliver a shared Vision for the future of Fort William and Lochaber.

A full definition of the Fort William ITP and its scope is yet to be established. However, this will focus on determining a long-term solution and seek to build on previous work already undertaken.

Transport Scotland have proposed to establish an ITP Client Delivery Group and asked if HITRANS would be willing to chair this group and lead the procurement of the commission. The Client Delivery Group will ensure the appropriate planning, preparation, procurement and client management and direction of the ITP.

The group will provide scrutiny and oversee the following stages of the Fort William ITP:

- Development of indicative Scope;
- Procurement;
- Tendering and award;
- Client-side project direction and management; and
- Technical advice, guidance and links to specialist input, as required.

Transport Scotland have also requested that each local partner organisation considers any potential funding contribution that they may be able to offer towards the undertaking of the study.

Improving the resilience and reliability of the transport network in and around Fort William has been a long-standing priority within HITRANS Regional Transport Strategy. It is anticipated that the next stage of appraisal required to identify a long-term solution will be a substantial commission and it is important to demonstrate the commitment of local partners to addressing the problem. It is therefore proposed that HITRANS contributes up to 25% of the funding towards the ITP up to a value of £100,000 over the next three financial years based on an estimated start date of January 2025.

Recommendation

Members are asked to:

- i. Note this report;
- ii. Approve that HITRANS supports the undertaking of the Integrated Transport Plan by chairing the Client Delivery Group and leads on the procurement and project management of the commission
- iii. Approve that HITRANS contributes 25% of the funding up to a value of £100,000 towards the undertaking of the Integrated Transport Plan for Fort William over the next three financial years.

Risk Register

RTS Delivery

Impact - Positive

Comment – This work supports RTS Strategic priorities to enhance regional connectivity.

Policy

Impact - Positive

Comment – This work supports several policies set out in the RTS including; improving journey time reliability and network resilience, promotion of sustainable transport options in Fort William.

Financial

Impact – Positive

Budget line and value – HITRANS will allocate 25% of funding up to a value of £100,000 towards the undertaking of the next stage of an Integrated Transport Plan for Fort William over the next three financial years.

Equality

Impact – Positive

Comment – Improving regional connectivity helps improve the competitiveness of businesses in the West Highlands and improving journey times in Fort William helps local bus operators provide more reliable public transport services.

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