



HITRANS ANNUAL REPORT



2023 / 2024

FOREWORD



Ranaid Robertson,
HITRANS Partnership Director

2023/24 was another exciting year for HITRANS.

Highlights included continuing to deliver really strong innovation focussed projects while continuing to work with our partners on supporting sustainable and active travel and improving passenger transport information across the region.

Of course, the year has seen continued challenges in connecting our communities not least those who rely on an ageing fleet of ferries. We have also continued to see the changing impacts on our transport infrastructure from climate change and the need for adaptation and investment just to maintain current levels of connectivity is an added challenge.

We welcomed a new non-Council Board Member in 2023 with the appointment of former Bord na Gaidhlig Chief Executive Officer Shona MacLennan to the Board.

We have continued to work with partner Councils on shared service activity in Public Transport Information, EU projects, UKRI projects and key delivery areas including active travel. We have also commenced a new shared service under the Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Pathfinder programme.

Transport Scotland have provided very welcome support for HITRANS in Active Travel again increasing the level of funding support we are entrusted to deliver our

Regional Active Travel Fund. With the other RTPs we have worked closely with Transport Scotland on the Active Travel Transformation Project and in HITRANS case this support extended to our Partnership Manager being seconded to the programme to represent the interests of local authorities and regional transport partnerships. From 2024/25 we can look forward to an enhanced focus on local delivery of active travel programmes under a framework set out by the Active Travel Transformation programme in what is an exciting new chapter for active travel in Scotland.

At a research and project level we have continued to work innovatively with partners in Scotland, the rest of the UK and across the European Union to deliver meaningful improvements in transport services within the Highlands and Islands. This has included greater emphasis on UKRI funding, and we are delighted that the SATE project has continued as a world leading sustainable aviation programme.

We continue to work with operators and Transport Scotland to support the development of our ferry services. We are well engaged in the development of the Islands Connectivity Plan that will replace the Ferries Plan.

Bus services are the backbone to our public transport system providing vital access to employment, education, health and leisure services and connecting with other modes. In 2023/24 HITRANS has helped improve intelligent transport information systems building on our existing real time information provision. An exemplar of this is our award-winning GO-HI app which is the UK's largest scale Mobility as a Service Platform. GO-HI offers passengers to plan, book and pay for travel on a range of transport modes including Stagecoach bus, rail, air, car club and taxi. It even allows people to book a hotel stay at the same time as their travel. In 2023 GO-HI was recognised at the Scottish Transport Awards, CiTTi Magazine Awards and SCDI Awards for the groundbreaking MaaS technology it has tested.

We would like to thank our many public and private partners for their support in making 2024/24 a successful year and look forward to building upon this in the year ahead.

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BOARD, ADVISORS AND STAFF

The HITRANS Board comprises a Councillor from each local authority area covered by the partnership and 3 non-council members appointed in a personal capacity by the Board and approved by the Minister for Transport following open advertisement and selection. The Board has appointed a group of professional advisers who play an important role, working with the executive team, in developing strategy. The executive team report to the Board.

BOARD

Cllr Uisdean Robertson, Chair (Comhairle Nan Eilean Siar)
Cllr Amber Dunbar, Vice Chair (Moray Council)
Cllr David Dawson (Orkney Islands Council)
Cllr Ken Gowans (Highland Council)
Cllr Andrew Kain (Argyll and Bute Council)
Mrs Naomi Bremner
Ms Shona MacLennan
Mr Robert Andrew

ADVISORS

Jim Buck (Orkney Islands Council)
Grant Campbell (Scottish Council for Development and Industry)
Fergus Murray (Argyll and Bute Council)
David MacLeod (Comhairle Nan Eilean Siar)
Malcolm MacLeod (Highland Council)
Nicky Sobey (Highlands and Islands Enterprise)
Nicola Moss (Moray Council)

STAFF TEAM

Ranald Robertson (Partnership Director)
Katy Cunningham (Business Manager)
Neil MacRae (Partnership Manager)
Vikki Trelfer (Active Travel Officer)
Frank Roach (Partnership Manager)
Robert Wilson (Public Transport Information Officer)
Jayne Golding (Projects and Policy Manager)
Gemma Robinson (Project Officer – FASTER)
Rachael Fraser (Project Officer – Finance)
Clare Harper (Business Support Assistant)
Katy Beasley (Project Manager - Scottish Islands Passport)



HITRANS chair Councillor Uisdean Robertson (right) is pictured with his vice-chair Councillor Amber Dunbar and HITRANS Director, Ranald Robertson

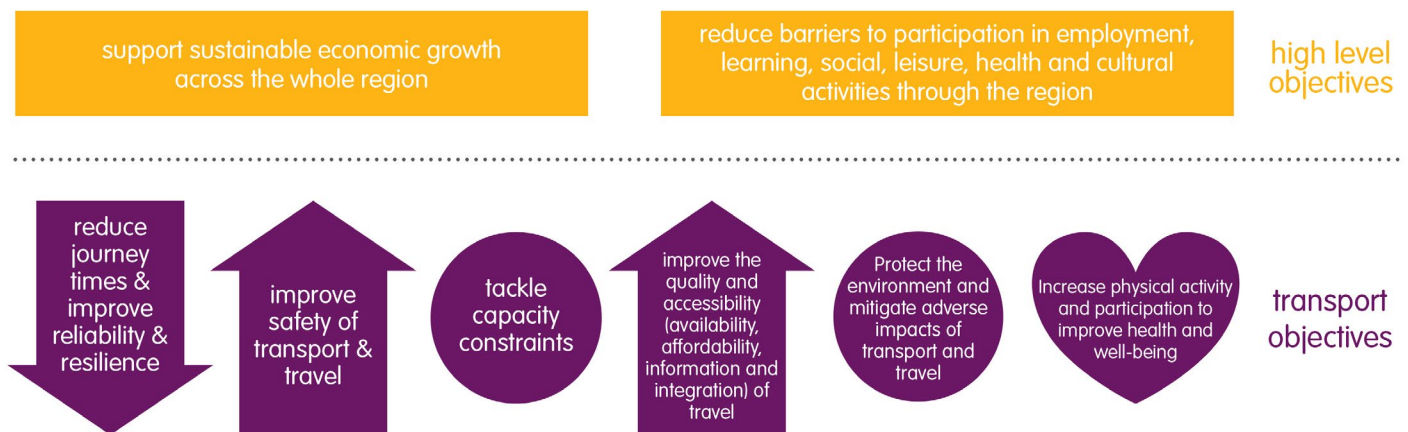
THE REGIONAL TRANSPORT STRATEGY

The Transport Scotland Act 2005 placed the preparation of the Regional Transport Strategy as the first duty of the Regional Transport Partnerships. The Strategies are strategic high-level documents that focus on the transport strategies necessary to support Government's key objectives and the single outcome agreements of the constituent local authorities.

HITRANS updated Regional Transport Strategy (2018), sets out a vision **to deliver connectivity across the region which enables sustainable economic growth and helps communities to actively participate in economic and social activities.**

The RTS objectives were also updated as set out below. They were underpinned by two high level objectives which were to:

- Support sustainable economic growth across the whole region
- Reduce barriers to participation in employment, learning, social, leisure, health and cultural activities throughout the region



Following input from Members at the Partnership meeting on 17th September Officers have commenced the process of developing an updated Regional Transport Strategy that will update our 2018 Strategy to reflect the National Transport Strategy and the emerging STPR2 when that document is published in draft.

SUPPORTING LOCAL OUTCOME IMPROVEMENT PLANS



As a statutory community planning partner HITRANS works across our five CPP areas to provide transportation support to the process. The work of CPPs continues to evolve and Single Outcome Agreements are now to be replaced with Local Outcome Improvement Plans that will enable priority areas to be identified and addressed by Partners.

The modern transport system that is detailed in the Regional Transport Strategy will support a smarter community through better access to learning opportunities. The Strategy and the joint working of the Partnership, its Councils and Community Planning partners will help people across the Highlands and Islands to sustain and improve their health, ensuring faster, more reliable, and more affordable access to healthcare, and greater opportunities to lead an active lifestyle through active travel access to local services and facilities. HITRANS is actively engaging in the SOA process covering each of the five Community Planning Partnerships in our region.

RESEARCH AND STRATEGY DELIVERY



The Regional Transport Strategy (RTS) and its associated RTS Delivery Plan set out the key priorities, proposals and interventions required to support successful implementation and realisation of the Strategy's Vision and Objectives. Each year the Partnership approves a Business Plan which sets out the Partnership's key delivery priorities for the financial year concerned.

The Business Plan details the projects the Partnership is involved in, and an update is reported to the Partnership Board which meets four times per annum. These projects link to the aims of the strategy and the Annual Report provides a report of performance against objectives, targets and performance indicators as outlined in the Regional Transport Strategy.

During 2023/24 the Business Plan set out a wide range of regional, local regional and national scale projects that have been delivered. These include:

- Ongoing development, monitoring and refresh of the RTS
- Argyll and Bute Internal Ferries Upgrade Programme
- Scottish Islands Passport
- Real Time Passenger Information
- Inverness Airport (Dalcross) Station Sustainable Travel Connectivity Blueprint
- Inverness Station Masterplan
- Bottlenecks! Whisky Logistics Study
- Fastline Faslane local rail development
- Green Freeport
- Bus Partnership Fund Projects – Highland and Argyll & Bute
- HiTravel Shared Service Travel Information Project
- GO-HI MaaS Project (MaaS Investment Fund)

- MOOVE Flexi Digital Demand Responsive Transport
- G-PaTRA North Sea Area Project
- RURALITIES Horizon Europe Project
- FASTER SEUPB Programme Project
- eHubs North West Europe Project
- ERDF Smart Cities – Scotland's 8th City ERDF
- Low Carbon Transport and Travel ERDF
- Sustainable Aviation Test Environment Project (SATE) - UKRI

HITRANS also received direct budget from Transport Scotland to support the delivery of a Regional Active Travel Fund and at the end of the financial year an allocation from the unallocated Transport Scotland Active Travel programme to deliver the following projects:

- HI Bike – Inverness and Fort William
- Feasibility and Design of Active Travel Routes
- Bikes on Buses
- Mobility Hub Development
- Quiet Routes Pilot Development
- Active Travel Masterplan Implementation
- Path Improvement Fund

In addition to its principal focus on developing and delivering the RTS through work on the Research and Strategy Delivery Programme a significant proportion of staff time and resource was committed to supporting Community Planning engagement and to work on activity in all five partner Council areas. Further information on the Partnership's activity, the Regional Transport Strategy and our Revenue and Strategy Delivery Programme work can be obtained by visiting our website www.hitrans.org.uk.

EQUALITIES SCHEME

HITRANS as the Transport Partnership for the Highlands and Islands has statutory duties to have an Equalities Scheme and take very seriously engagement in matters relating to equality. Since the Partnership was established at the beginning of 2006, we have made significant progress in adopting and implementing policies in the human resources area which have equalities of opportunity enshrined within them. In addition, a major theme throughout our Regional Transport Strategy is the need for equality of access to transport facilities and services and through these to jobs, health care, education, shopping and social activities.

We have a statutory duty to publish an equalities scheme under legislation covering Race, Gender and Disability and we chose to introduce a single scheme addresses what we intend to do in these areas. It also addresses our proposals in other areas as well, for example age, religion/belief and sexuality.

We have chosen to combine these commitments in one equalities scheme rather than publish a series of individual schemes addressing specific legal duties, but we have made it clear in the scheme which sectors of society should benefit from our proposals. The publication of this scheme is not the end of our duty to promote equal opportunities but simply the beginning. We hope that stakeholders and service users find this scheme informative, and we welcome constructive feedback with a view to its improvement.

STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

ACTIVE TRAVEL ADVISORY GROUP

The Active Travel Advisory Group (ATAG) meets twice per year. The Group is attended by local authority transport officers, Sustrans, Cycling Scotland, cycle campaigners, access officers, and representatives from the health sector and transport operators.

The group has been engaged in the Active Travel Town Audit/Masterplan process and acts as a forum for those interested in the greenest form of transport to share ideas and expertise at a regional level.



FERRY CONSULTATION ARRANGEMENTS

The Scottish Government tasked the Regional Transport Partnerships to put in place arrangements to provide consultative mechanisms between the operator, users and public agencies for the ferry network serving the Clyde, Hebrides, and Northern Isles.

The first line of consultation is between island groups and the ferry operator (Tier 1), with three second tier committees largely concerned with longer term planning and route development. The arrangements are now well established, and the Tier 1 groups meet two to three times per annum.

There are four ferry user groups. These are:

- Clyde, Kintyre and Islands
- Argyll, Lochaber, Skye, Raasay and Small Isles
- Hebrides
- Orkney Transport and Travel Forum

AVIATION CONSULTATION GROUP

Our strategy for aviation is to enhance connectivity within the region and to our national gateways; to increase links with countries outside the UK; to retain the London services particularly through Heathrow and Gatwick; and to manage the environmental impact of aviation on the region without adversely affecting economic growth and sustainability of our communities.

To help us take forward these strategic aspirations HITRANS has established the Aviation Consultation Group with membership drawn from representatives of our key aviation stakeholders. The Group is chaired by HITRANS Board Member Wilson Metcalfe who brings a wealth of practical real-world experience to the Group.

FREIGHT FORUM

Meeting yearly the HITRANS Freight Forum (HFF) draws together local authority representatives, logistics providers and users of freight services. The Forum concentrates on practical Highland issues and has involved visits to new freight infrastructure and terminals. It was involved in the Lorry Parking and Whisky Logistics Studies.

TRANSPORT COORDINATORS GROUP

The HITRANS Transport Coordinating Officers Group (HITCOG) is formed of officers from HITRANS and local authority transport officers and aims to deal with technical issues and share good practice in relation to the management and delivery of passenger transport coordination across the Highlands and Islands. The group meets two or three times each year.

FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE

The Audited Annual Accounts presented a public statement on the stewardship of funds for the benefit of both members of the Transport Partnership and the public. The Partnership is funded by The Highland Council, Moray Council, Comhairle Nan Eilean Siar, Orkney Islands Council and Argyll & Bute Council (excluding Helensburgh and Lomond).

The Partnership's financial results for the year, compared against budget, are as shown below. The full Audited Accounts are available at this [link](#).

BUDGET PERFORMANCE STATEMENT FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2024

2023/24			
	Budget £000	Actual £000	Variance £000
Staff costs	450	402	47
Property costs	22	18	4
Travel and subsistence costs	20	33	(13)
Administration and meeting costs	25	26	(1)
Research and strategy development costs	1,348	1,305	43
Publicity costs	10	9	1
European projects costs	151	2,354	(2,203)
Support services	40	57	(17)
Gross expenditure	2,066	4,204	(2,138)
Government grants	(1,578)	(1,574)	(4)
Other grants	(288)	(2,048)	1,760
Other income	0	(389)	389
Constituent Council requisitions	(200)	(200)	0
Gross income	(2,066)	(4,211)	2,145
Net deficit/(surplus)	0	(7)	7

The position in the year was a surplus of £0.007m and this sum was transferred to the General Fund Reserve with the main variations from budget during the year being as follows:

- Other grants exceeded their target. The excess was specific to particular European projects included in the research and strategy development costs budget.
- The overspends in European projects costs are offset by third party contributions, included in other income, for project work and other grant income received in respect of European projects. Given the nature of the unpredictability of both the expenditure and income profiles at budget setting time it is very hard to set a

definitive budget. Going forward, a realistic budget will continue to be set based on current knowledge and adjusted through the regular financial monitoring reported to the Partnership Board.

- Travel and subsistence costs are higher than budgeted due to more in person meetings both for projects and board meetings.
- Support services costs are higher than budgeted due to increases in staff pay in line with pay awards and the time allocated to HITRANS in the recharge from Highland Council.
- The last two points above have been reviewed and realigned during the 2024/25 budget setting process.

PUBLIC SERVICES REFORM (SCOTLAND) ACT 2010

HITRANS 2023/24

Section 32(1)(a) of the Public Services Reform (Scotland) Act 2010 provides that as soon as reasonably practicable after the end of each financial year each listed public body must publish a statement of the steps it has taken during the financial year to promote and increase sustainable growth through the exercise of its functions.

HITRANS, as a statutory Regional Transport Partnership, is a listed body within the Act.

During 2023/24 HITRANS has continued implementing a number of initiatives that have improved efficiency, effectiveness and economy and these are outlined below, following on from our actions the previous year. The table below details the information we publish under the Public Service Reform (Scotland) Act 2010 which can also be accessed at this [link](#).

HITRANS Public Reforms Act Information Period covering 01/04/2023 - 31/03/2024				
1) Public Relations Statement - 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024				
	Category	Supplier	External costs - invoiced	Supplier Total
	Annual Membership - MaaS Scotland	Technology Scotland	£550.00	
	ATCO Membership (Voting) for the period April 2023 - Mar 24 Randal Robertson	ATCO	£50.00	
	ATCO Membership (Voting) for the period April 2023 - Mar 24 Neil Macrae	ATCO	£50.00	£100.000
	Annual Membership subscription to Scottish Council for Development and Industry 2023 - 2024	SCDI	£1,210.00	
	News release promoting GO-HI app & Scottish Transport Awards	Gordon Fyfe	£105.00	
	Autumn newsletter & News release	Gordon Fyfe	£245.00	£350.000
	Support services for HITRANS website	Velocity	£1,200.00	
	Support services for HITRANS website	Velocity	£1,200.00	
	Renewal - of Highland Chamber Memberships - 01/11/2023 -31/10/2024	Inverness Chamber of Commerce	£1,490.00	
	Autumn newsletter	ELLENP Design	£35.00	
	Go-Hi project evaluation	ELLENP Design	£175.00	£210.000
	Membership	Railway Industry Association	£950.00	
	Public Sector Membership	Modeshift	£499.00	
	Total		£7,759.00	£560.000

2) Overseas Travel								
	Reason	Origin / Destination	No. Employees	Travel Costs	Subsistence	Accommodation / Meals	Other Expenditure	Total
	Total							

3) Hospitality & Entertainment		
Date	Reason	Cost
Thyme Deli Bistro, Errichel Farm	Gift for Chair of recently Disbanded Highland Bus Partnership Fund	£65.62
Total		£65.62

4) External Consultancy			
Supplier	Project / Service	Total	Supplier Total
AECOM	Evanton railway study	£8,874.00	
Douglas Binns	Faslane Station walkout	£718.33	
Douglas Binns	Faslane Station review of estimate	£267.50	
Douglas Binns	Faslane Station feasibility report	£5,040.00	£6,025.83
Mainspring Enterprises Ltd	Skyefall Project	£6,340.51	
SLC Rail	Faslane Capital Cost estimate	£4,960.00	
Stantec	Fort Transit - Appraisal	£9,995.00	
Stantec	Fort Transit - Appraisal	£9,995.00	
Stantec	Faslane Detailed Options Appraisal	£42,500.00	
Stantec	Faslane Detailed Options Appraisal	£42,500.00	
Stantec	HITRANS RTS Refresh	£1,000.00	
Stantec	Oban Bus Partnership Fund Design work	£17,000.00	
Stantec	Oban Bus Partnership Fund Design work	£3,000.00	
WSP	HITRANS Whisky Logistics Study	£20,000.00	
WSP	HITRANS Whisky Logistics Study	£15,995.00	£35,995.00
Reference Economic Consultants	Local authority local services paper	£2,600.00	
Bax & Co	Proposal Development Support for InverMove	£5,000.00	
E-Rail	Strategic Property Review of proposed Inverness Station Masterplan	£5,000.00	
The city of Edinburgh Council	ECMA Contribution	£1,500.00	
Zurich	AV Car Insurance	£1,508.09	
Tom Davy	Support for Hitrans in connection with BPF funded projects	£700.00	
Tom Davy	Bus Partnership Fund - Highland and Argyll & Bute	£1,242.17	
Total		£205,735.60	£42,020.83

5) Payments in Excess of £25,000				
	Payee	Commodity / Service Description	Payment Date	Amount
	FOD Mobility Group	GO-HI App Integrations - MaaS	16/06/2023	£70,000.00
	FOD Mobility Group	GO-HI Liftango Integration - G-Patra	20/06/2023	£30,000.00
	Mott Macdonald	HITRANS EVCI Strategy and Expansion Plan	04/09/2023	£42,936.00
	Stantec	Faslane Detailed Options Appraisal	09/11/2023	£42,500.00
	Scottish Power	Supply and Installation of EV chargers - FASTER	12/12/2023	£27,542.00
	Scottish Power	Supply and Installation of EV chargers - FASTER	18/12/2023	£349,989.32
	Scottish Power	Supply and Installation of EV chargers - FASTER	19/12/2023	£196,322.25
	Scottish Power	Supply and Installation of EV chargers - FASTER	20/12/2023	£72,085.85
	The Highland Council	Grant for purchase and installation of Vivacity Monitoring Sensors - Active Travel	20/12/2023	£31,168.00
	Vivacity	Installation of Traffic Sensors - Active Travel	05/01/2024	£38,885.00
	Scottish Power	Supply and Installation of EV chargers - FASTER	08/01/2024	£363,240.00
	Stantec	HITRANS RTS Refresh - Submission of Draft	08/02/2024	£26,000.00
	Rocky Mountain	Electric assisted bikes and accessories	22/02/2024	£117,632.00
	Vix	Initial Maintenance of new RTPi system supported through ERDF Smart Cities Project	27/02/2024	£54,917.18
	University of Leeds	GO-HI Contribution	29/02/2024	£66,010.95
	FOD Mobility Group	Go-Hi platform licence 1st April to 30th September	06/03/2024	£60,000.00
	The Highland Council	Grant in aid of the installation of Highland Quiet Routes	07/03/2024	£30,000.00
	Orkney Islands Council	Orkney Path Improvement Grant 2023-24	12/03/2024	£45,000.00
	AP Chambers	Counters Quiet Routes Orkney	14/03/2024	£50,483.00
	Stantec	Faslane Detailed Options Appraisal	15/03/2024	£42,500.00
	The Highland Council	Highland Path Improvement Grant	19/03/2024	£31,750.00
	Whereverly	App Annual support & maintenance and hosting 2024 & development work	20/03/2024	48000
	lochdar Community Council	Slighe an Iochdair Grant	20/03/2024	£52,556.00
	3X1	Ongoing PR/comms support for SATE project, website fee, SATE conference fees	21/03/2024	£34,700.00
	Argyll & Bute Council	Cuan Sound / Jura Ferry Programme	22/03/2024	£1,564,000.00
	Total			£3,488,217.55

6) Members or employees who received remuneration in excess of £150,000				
	Nil return.			



The Highlands and Islands
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