



Minute of Meeting held in the Chamber, The
Town House, Inverness and virtually through MS
Teams on Friday 7 February 2025 at 9.30am

PRESENT
Uisdean Robertson, Comhairle nan Eilean Siar (Chair)
Amber Dunbar, Moray Council (Vice-Chair)
John Armour, Argyll and Bute Council
Kristopher Leask, Orkney Islands Council
Paul Oldham, The Highland Council
Naomi Bremner, Non-Councillor Member

APOLOGIES
Ken Gowans, The Highland Council
Robert Andrew, Non-Councillor Member
Shona MacLennan, Non-Councillor Member
Tracey Urray, The Highland Council
Fergus Murray, Argyll and Bute Council

IN ATTENDANCE
Ranald Robertson, Partnership Director
Frank Roach, Partnership Manager
Carolyn Pieraccini, Partnership Treasurer
Nicola Moss, Moray Council
Gordon Blair, Argyll and Bute Council
Gareth Waterson, Orkney Islands Council
Laura Cromarty, Orkney Islands Council
Jennifer Johnstone, The Highland Council
Colm Fraser, Comhairle nan Eilean Siar
Linda Cunningham, Comhairle nan Eilean Siar
Nicholas Sobey, HIE
Grant Campbell, Prosper
Rebecca Wallace, SATE Project Officer
Vikki Trelfer, HITRANS
Gemma Robinson, HITRANS
Kate Beasley, HITRANS
Robert Wilson, HITRANS
Colin Young
Donald Morris
David Burt, Transport Scotland
Carolyn Mitchell, Transport Scotland
Moganambal Poovin, Transport Scotland
Euan Barr,
Ted Doherty,
Derek Mackay, Partnership Secretary
Jayne Golding, SATE Project
Julie Cromarty, Highland Council

Declaration of Interests of There were no declarations of interest.

MINUTES

Minute of Meeting of 8 November 2024 1 The Minute of Meeting of 8 November 2024 was **approved**.

Matters Arising 2 Mr Ranald Robertson provided the following updates:

6 (2) Mr Robertson thanked Cllr Ken Gowans for circulating the Highland Council presentation on 20mph zones.

6 (3) Mr Roberston confirmed that bikes could be booked on Citylink services, subject to availability of space.

(9) A short-term Working Group had been established and would meet with the Chair of NHS Highland. Work was progressing in relation to improving accessibility on inter-island air services. HITRANS had met with Members of the Aviation Accessibility Task and Finish Group which is led by Baroness Grey-Thompson to underline the importance of regional aviation and that our lifeline services should also feature in the work of the Group.

(14) The Risk Management Strategy would be updated and presented to the next meeting of the Board.

It was agreed to note the update.

FINANCE

Revenue Budget Monitoring Report 1 April 2024 to 31 December 2024 3 With reference to item 3 of the Minute of Meeting of 8 November 2024, Ms Carolyn Pieraccini, Partnership Treasurer, submitted a Report which set out the revenue monitoring position for the period to 31 December 2024 and the projected year end position.

It was agreed to approve the revenue monitoring position for the period to 31 December 2024 as detailed in the Report.

Revenue Budget Proposal 2025/2026 4 Ms Carolyn Pieraccini, Partnership Treasurer and Ms Jennifer Johnston, Accountant submitted a Joint Report detailing the Revenue Budget Proposal 2025/26. Appendix 1 to the proposed budget for 2025/26 which detailed the Partnership's running costs and Research and Strategy Development Programme costs, and the income from Partner Councils, the Scottish Government, and other external agencies to cover those costs. It was indicated that representations had been made to the Scottish Government requesting that Regional Transport Partnerships receive funding support to cover the increase in employers' national insurance on the same basis as Local Authorities.

It was agreed to approve the Revenue Budget 2025/26 as detailed in the Report.

Medium Term Financial Plan 5 Mr Ranald Robertson, Partnership Director submitted a Report requesting the Partnership to note the Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP). The Report stated that planning over the medium term was essential to enable HITRANS to manage any risks or threats to financial sustainability. The MTFP sought to provide a range of scenarios for key variables used in budgeting and financial planning. The Report considered the wider economic outlook and how this might impact on HITRANS over the medium-term. The Management commentary also sought to underline the role HITRANS sought to play in wider public service reform and how this had been framed within the new Regional Transport Strategy.

It was agreed to:

- (1) note the Report;**
- (2) consider the principles set out in the Report; and**
- (3) delegate preparation of the final Medium Term Financial Plan to the Partnership Treasurer and Partnership Director, taking on board the comments of members, and for this to be included in the 2025/26 Business Plan that would be taken to the April 2025 Partnership Meeting for approval by the Partnership Board.**

RESEARCH AND STRATEGY DELIVERY

Research/Strategy Development Programme for 2024/25 6 With reference to item 5 of the Minute of Meeting of 8 November 2024, Mr Ranald Robertson, Partnership Director, submitted a Report which provided an update on progress on delivering the Research and Strategy Development programme and sought approval of amendments to the programme to reflect commitments made and changing priorities and funding opportunities identified since approval of the 2024/25 Business Plan at the Partnership meeting on 26 April 2024.

It was agreed to note the amendments to the Research and Strategy Development Programme 2024/25 as detailed in the Appendix to the Report.

Research, Development and Delivery Programme for 2025/26 7 Mr Ranald Robertson, Partnership Director, submitted a Report to facilitate discussion on what Research, Development and Delivery activities were to be taken forward by HITRANS in 2025/26. The provisional programme for Research, Development and Delivery in 2025/26 was listed within the Report. The Report indicated that, as with previous years, the programme was projecting an overspend on estimated budget to allow for the contingency of several projects not progressing due to changes in circumstances over the year.

It was agreed to:

- (1) note the Report;**
- (2) approve the draft programme as proposed in the table;**
- (3) consider projects that could be added to the draft programme; and**
- (4) authorise the Chair and Partnership Director to finalise the Programme for inclusion in the 2025/26 Business Plan which would be tabled at the April Partnership Board Meeting.**

Active Travel Update 8 With reference to item 6 of the Minute of Meeting of 8 November 2024, Ms Vikki Trefler, Active Travel Officer submitted a Report providing an update on Active Travel Projects in which HITRANS and Partner Local Authorities were currently involved. The Report provided an update on the People and Place Programme and Capital Projects.

It was agreed to note the Report and approve the proposed People and Place Programme for 2025/26.

People and Places Programme 2025/26 9 Ms Vikki Trefler, Active Travel Officer submitted a Report which provided an update on the proposed People and Places Programme for 2025/26, funded by Transport Scotland. The Report stated that the budget for the People and Place Programme in 2025-26 was set to increase by £2.4 million, although the majority of this (£1.6million) was capital, making it challenging to deliver a comprehensive revenue-based behaviour change programme.

The Report indicated that the programme proposals had been submitted to Transport Scotland, and they would be confirmed following the Scottish Budget after 25 February 2025.

It was agreed to approve the proposed People and Place Programme for 2025/26.

CHFS 3 – Subsidy Advice Unit Report 10 Mr Ranald Robertson, Partnership Director, submitted a Report which provided an update on progress following the announcement by Scottish Ministers of the proposal to make a direct award for the third Clyde and Hebrides Ferry Service Contract. The Report provided a summary of the Consultation on the proposal and summarised the Report from the Competition and Markets Authority Subsidy Advice Unit Report on the proposals. It was indicated that the Chairs of the Ferry Stakeholder Groups had written to the Cabinet Secretary for Transport expressing concerns at the lack of meaningful engagement with the Stakeholder Groups and communities.

It was agreed to note the Report.

Regional Transport Strategy / Delivery Plan 11 With reference to item 7 of the Minute of Meeting of 8 November 2024 Mr Neil Macrae, Partnership Manager, submitted a Report introducing the first Draft Regional Transport Delivery Plan and providing an update on the development of a new Regional Transport Strategy. The Report stated that HITRANS had a statutory duty under the Transport (Scotland) Act 2005 to produce a Regional Transport Strategy (RTS). Working with partners, HITRANS had produced a new RTS for the development of transport in the region over the next circa 20 years with the aim of delivering a transport system that reduces inequalities, takes climate action, helps deliver inclusive economic growth, and improves the health and wellbeing of people in the region.

A draft of the first Delivery Plan was provided at Appendix A to the Report and identified 74 Actions to address each of the policies set out in the updated Regional Transport Strategy and set out timescales for each Action and the outcome sought.

It was agreed to:

- (1) note the Report; and**
- (2) consider those Actions within the Delivery Plan that should be prioritised so that a finalised version of the first Regional Transport Strategy can be submitted for adoption at the next Partnership Meeting on 20 April 2025.**

SATE Project 12 With reference to item 14 of the Minute of Meeting of 20 September 2024 Ms Jayne Golding, SATE Manager, submitted a Report providing an update on development in the Sustainable Aviation Test Environment (SATE) Programme highlighting demonstration flights and technology; airport infrastructure and operational systems; events; development of a dedicated test environment airspace; impact and policy; and awards.

It was agreed to note the Report.

National Transport Strategy – 4th Delivery Plan 13 With reference to item 12 of the Minute of Meeting of 2 February 2024 Mr Ranald Robertson, Partnership Director, submitted a Report providing an overview of the fourth Delivery Plan for the National Transport Strategy, with particular reference to those measures that related directly to the HITRANS area. The Report indicated that HITRANS would consider within its Business Plan 2025/26 work that would support and align with the NTS Delivery Plan.

It was agreed to note the Report.

Regional Update Rail 14 Mr Frank Roach, Partnership Manager gave a presentation on rail developments in the Highlands area. The presentation highlighted journey times across the Highland Main Line and Inverness to Aberdeen Line, the age of trains, levels of performance and future opportunities.

It was agreed to note the Presentation.

A96 Corridor Review Consultation 15 Mr Neil Macrae, Partnership Manager, submitted a Report in respect of the Transport Scotland public consultation on the A96 Corridor Review and inviting members to consider the key areas that HITRANS should include in submitting a response. The Report stated that the Review covered the transport corridor from Raigmore Interchange at Inverness to Craibstone Junction at Aberdeen. The Review had been carried out in accordance with the Scottish Transport Appraisal Guidance (STAG) and considered all transport modes including active travel, public transport, rail and road transport.

Representatives of the A96 Corridor Review Team from Transport Scotland gave a presentation on the Review and detailed the evaluation of each of the options.

It was agreed:

- (1) To note the Report;**
- (2) To consider the priority areas HITRANS should include in responding to the A9 Corridor Review; and**
- (3) that Officers would circulate a final version of the draft response for approval prior to submission by the consultation deadline on 21 February 2025.**

National Speed Management Review Consultation 16 Mr Neil Macrae, Partnership Manager submitted a Report in respect of the Scottish Government consultation on the National Speed Management Review (NSMR) and invited Members to consider the key areas that HITRANS should include in submitting a response. The Report stated that the NSMR consultation sought to gather public and stakeholder input on proposed changes to Scotland's speed limits and supported Scotland's Road Safety Framework 2030 by aiming to reduce casualties, enhance road safety and promote efficient travel for all road users.

Transport Scotland were inviting public and stakeholder participation and feedback submitted through a variety of channels, with the consultation open from 27 November 2024 to 5 March 2025. The draft HITRANS response to the NSMR was provided in the Appendix to the Report.

It was agreed to

- (1) note the Report;**
- (2) consider HITRANS draft response to the National Speed Management Review attached as Appendix A to the Report; and**
- (3) authorise the Partnership Director to finalise the response, taking on board the comments of Members.**

Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Fund Shared Service Update 17 With reference to item 8 of the Minute of Meeting of 8 November 2024 Ms Gemma Robinson, EVIF Project Manager submitted a Report providing an update on regional activity by a project management shared service under the Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Fund (EVIF). The shared service covered Comhairle nan Eilean Siar, Moray Council, Orkney Islands Council and Shetland Islands Council. The Report provided an update on contactless regulations and on the draft implementation plan for Scottish government's Vision for Scotland's EV charging network.

Transport Scotland had drafted an Implementation Plan for the vision behind the EVIF programme and it was currently in its consultation period. HITRANS draft response to the consultation was provided as Appendix A to the Report and the referenced draft implementation plan and integrated impact assessments were provided at Appendix B and C to the Report.

It was agreed to note the Report and approve the HITRANS response to the consultation on the draft Implementation Plan on the vision for Scotland's public electric vehicle charging network.

PARTNERSHIP

It was agreed that the public, including the press, be excluded from the Meeting during consideration of the following item on the grounds that exempt information as defined in Paragraph 1 of Schedule 7A to the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 namely information relating to a particular employee, former employee or applicant to become an employee, or a particular officer holder or former officer holder, or applicant to become an office holder under, the Comhairle would be disclosed.

Staffing Report

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Mr Ranald Robertson, Partnership Manager submitted a Report seeking approval to amend the grade of two staff members to reflect increased responsibilities following changes across the organisation staff and additional responsibilities following the establishment of the Regional People and Place Programme established from 1 April 2024. The Report provided background information and set out the financial implications of the proposed re-grading.

It was agreed to:

- (1) note the Report; and**
- (2) approve the re-grading of staff members as set out in the Report, subject to assessment by Human Resources on proposed grading.**

Sustainable
Transport Audit

Mr Ranald Robertson, Partnership Director, submitted a Report detailing the key messages and recommendations relevant to Regional Transport Partnerships and Local Authorities from the Audit Scotland report on Sustainable Transport which was published on 30 January 2025. Officers had met with Transport Scotland, CoSLA and the Scottish Collaboration of Transportation Specialists to discuss how as a sector to respond to the recommendations.

It was agreed to note the Report.