

Report to Partnership Meeting 25 April 2025

PARTNERSHIP

JUST TRANSITION – DRAFT PLAN FOR TRANSPORT IN SCOTLAND

Purpose of Report

This report provides an overview to Board Members and Advisors of the consultation process, key questions for input, and the potential impact of the Just Transition draft plan for transport in Scotland on the Highlands and Islands. It summarises the consultation process and questions which HITRANS will develop a response to in advance of the consultation closing on 19 May 2025.

Introduction

The Scottish Government has released a draft Just Transition Plan for Transport that outlines a vision and set of outcomes to guide the decarbonisation of Scotland's transport sector. This draft plan aims to create a fair, sustainable, and inclusive transition toward net-zero emissions, addressing the social, economic, and environmental impacts of this transformation. The plan is subject to consultation, and feedback is being solicited from a broad range of stakeholders, including the public, businesses, workers, and community representatives.

This report summarises key elements of the draft plan, focusing on its vision, outcomes, and the impact on the Highlands and Islands. It also highlights the consultation questions and timelines for engagement.

Vision and Outcomes for Transport

The draft vision for transport in Scotland is a fair and equitable system that meets the needs of all people and communities while decarbonising and contributing to the climate emergency response. This includes:

- Reduced carbon emissions across all transport sectors.
- Increased access to sustainable transport options, including active travel, public transport, and demand-responsive services.
- Affordability and inclusivity, ensuring that all groups, particularly vulnerable or low-income communities, can access affordable and safe transport.
- The draft outcomes for transport are structured around the following pillars:
 - **People and Communities:** Ensuring that communities benefit from the transition and face minimal disruption.
 - **Workers:** Supporting the workforce in adapting to new skills and opportunities as the sector decarbonises.
 - **Businesses and Organisations:** Enabling businesses to transition to zero-emission vehicles and sustainable practices.

Impact on Transport and Places in the Highlands and Islands

The draft Just Transition Plan will have significant implications for the Highlands and Islands, a region where transport challenges are particularly pronounced due to geographic and infrastructural constraints. The region faces unique challenges in decarbonising transport, including:

- **Distance and Accessibility:** Many communities in the Highlands and Islands are remote, with limited access to public transport. Ensuring that these communities are not left behind in the transition will require tailored solutions such as demand-responsive transport and investments in regional connectivity.
- **Active Travel:** Promoting active travel (e.g., cycling and walking) in rural areas could be difficult due to the dispersed nature of settlements. However, prioritising active travel infrastructure where possible will be crucial for reducing reliance on private vehicles.
- **Transport Infrastructure and Charging Networks:** The rollout of electric vehicle (EV) charging infrastructure across the Highlands and Islands must be prioritised to ensure seamless access to low-emission alternatives. Businesses and residents will require assurances about the availability and reliability of EV charging networks.
- **Economic Transition:** The region's economy is dependent on industries such as tourism, agriculture, and fishing, which rely heavily on transport. The Just Transition Plan should consider how these sectors can be supported during the decarbonisation process without losing economic vitality.

Consultation Process and Timelines

The Scottish Government is currently seeking feedback on the draft Just Transition Plan for Transport. The consultation process is open to all stakeholders and is designed to ensure that the voices of those most affected by the transition are heard. The consultation questions focus on gathering views on the draft vision, outcomes, and proposed actions to address challenges for people, workers, businesses, and organisations.

Consultation Timeline:

- The consultation is open for a specified period (please refer to the Scottish Government's website for details).
- Responses to the consultation will be analysed, and a final version of the Just Transition Plan will be published following the consultation period.

Consultation Questions

Vision and Outcomes Consultation Questions:

- Question 1A: Do the draft outcomes reflect what the Plan should be aiming to achieve? Please give reasons for your answer.
- Question 1B: Is anything missing from the draft outcomes in the Plan?
- Question 2: Do you agree or disagree with the draft statements in the Plan? (Strongly agree, agree, neither agree nor disagree, disagree, strongly disagree, don't know)
- Question 3: Are you involved in any organised groups that consider how the transport sector is changing or could change in future?
- Question 3A: How could existing transport groups consider just transition issues?

People and Communities Consultation Questions:

- Question 4: Are there any gaps in our priority actions to support people and communities in the transition of the transport sector?
- Question 5: Which of the following priorities would be most helpful to reduce the frequency or distance of private car use?
 - Options include active travel infrastructure, access to online services, demand-responsive transport, car clubs, and pricing mechanisms.
- Question 6: Does the draft Plan take all groups in society into account in setting out a vision for a future transport system?
- Question 7: Is there anything else you would like to see in the draft Plan for those facing challenges accessing affordable, convenient, and safe travel?
- Question 8: Which principles should guide the development of a fair system of payment for a just transition to net-zero?
 - Options include emissions-based payment, income-based payment, and incentives.

Workers Consultation Questions:

- Question 9: Are there any gaps in our priority actions to support workers in the transport sector transition?
- Question 10: How important are the following actions to make transport jobs more attractive to people from underrepresented groups?
 - Options include STEM promotion for women and girls, diversity and inclusion initiatives, and pay gap actions.
- Question 11: Actions to improve diversity in the transport sector would be most effective if led by which sector?
- Question 12: Does the summary of priorities for workers in the draft Plan address future workforce and skills challenges as the sector decarbonises?

Businesses and Organisations Consultation Questions:

- Question 13: Are there any gaps in our approach to setting out opportunities and priorities for businesses in the transport sector transition?
- Question 14: What does just transition planning mean for your organisation or industry?
- Question 15: Which of the following priorities would be most important to enable you to transition your vehicles to zero-emission alternatives?
 - Options include low-cost finance, proven technology, infrastructure reliability, and fleet transition collaboration.

Monitoring and Reporting Consultation Questions:

- Question 16A: What are your views on the draft indicators for measuring progress towards the just transition outcomes?
- Question 16B: Make a comment about specific indicators or issues with them.
- Question 17: Are you aware of any other data being collected that could be used to monitor progress?

Conclusion

The Scottish Government's Just Transition Draft Plan for Transport presents an opportunity to shape a sustainable, equitable future for Scotland's transport system. The Highlands and Islands will require careful consideration to ensure the unique challenges of rural and remote areas are addressed. The consultation process provides an important platform for

stakeholders to voice their views and contribute to the development of a just and effective transport system.

HITRANS response to the consultation should seek to provide constructive feedback on how the Just Transition Plan can best meet the needs of communities and businesses in the region.

RISK REGISTER

RTS Delivery

Impact – Positive

Comment – A just transition for Transport should support delivery of the RTS.

Policy

Impact - Positive

Financial

Impact – Positive

Comment – A just transition for Transport should recognise the need to invest in connectivity of the Highlands and Islands particularly to support the transformational potential of key projects in the region.

Equality

Impact – Positive

Recommendation

1. Members and Advisors are asked to note the report.
2. Members and Advisors are asked to consider key areas that should be included in the response to the Questionnaire.

Report by: Ranald Robertson
Designation: Partnership Director
Date: 17th March 2025