

The Highlands and Islands

Transport Partnership

Annual Accounts

2024-2025

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Management Commentary

The management commentary is intended to assist users in understanding the objectives and strategy of the Partnership, and to provide a review of its business and financial performance in the year. In addition, it provides information on the principal risks and uncertainties which are likely to affect the future development and performance of the Partnership.

Background

The Highlands and Islands Transport Partnership (HITRANS) was established under the Regional Transport Partnership (Establishment and Constitution) (Scotland) Order 2005, effective 5 December 2005. The power granted to the new statutory body came into force on 1 April 2006.

The Partnership was established as one of the seven Scottish Regional Transport Partnerships. The Transport Scotland Act 2005 requires these Partnerships to prepare Transport Strategies for their regions which will enhance economic wellbeing; promote safety, social inclusion and equal opportunity; plan for a sustainable transport system; and integrate across boundaries with other Partnerships. These Strategies must take account of future needs and set priorities for transport development and improvement and will set the framework for investment in strategic transport infrastructure and services for the next 5 to 10 years.

The Regional Transport Strategy was fully reviewed and refreshed and following approval by the HITRANS Partnership Board when they met in September 2024 the Strategy and its associated documents were submitted to Scottish Ministers for their consideration and approval in October 2024.

In working towards the publication of the final RTS, several interim milestones were delivered:

- A Strategic Environmental Assessment Scoping Report was submitted to the SEA Gateway on 30th June 2022
- The RTS Case for Change was approved for consultation by the HITRANS Board. The RTS Case for Change SEA Interim ER and Equalities Duties Report were consulted upon between 16th March 2023 and 27th April 2023
- The Draft RTS was approved for consultation by the HITRANS Board and the Statutory consultation on the Draft RTS, the ER, ER Non- Technical Summary (NTS) and Equalities Duties Report took place between 22nd April 2024 and the 14th June 2024
- On 20th September 2024, the HITRANS Board approved the final version of the RTS. The RTS was then submitted to Scottish Ministers for approval on 4th October 2024 in compliance with the requirements of the Transport (Scotland) Act 2005 and the statutory guidance on the preparation of an RTS. Ministerial approval was granted on 13th May 2025.

The RTS Case for Change set out the policy context within which the RTS was developed, highlighting how the transport network and services in the HITRANS region contribute to the delivery of a wide range of social, environmental, economic and health outcomes. The policy and planning context is summarised in Chapter 2 of the RTS. At the heart of the RTS is a core alignment with the four 'Priorities' and the Sustainable Travel Hierarchy defined in the Scottish Government's National Transport Strategy 2 (NTS2), which was published in February 2020. The four NTS2 'Priorities' are:

- Reduces inequalities
- Takes climate action
- Helps deliver inclusive economic growth
- Improves our health and wellbeing

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The RTS establishes:

- A **Vision** for the transport network in the HITRANS region
- Six **Strategy Objectives** which support the **Vision**
- Eleven **Themes** setting out how the **Vision** and **Strategy Objectives** will be achieved – these Themes were used to shape the structure of the RTS, with separate chapters of the document covering each Theme
- A set of associated **Policies** under each Theme – these set out the ‘broad direction of travel’ across a range of transport issues affecting the HITRANS region over the period of the Strategy, circa 20-years

The RTS therefore provides a structure within which any future policy, programme or project delivered in the HITRANS region over the next circa 20-years must align.

The Partnership comprises The Highland Council, Moray Council, Comhairle Nan Eilean Siar, Orkney Islands Council and Argyll & Bute Council (excluding Helensburgh and Lomond).

The 2005 Order, referred to above, states the membership will be made up from one Member from each constituent Local Authority, and two or three other (Non-Councillor) Members. The (Non-Councillor) Members were first appointed in 2007 by the Scottish Ministers and have subsequently been appointed by the Partnership with the approval of Scottish Ministers.

Voting is weighted with Highland Council having three votes, Moray Council two and the remaining Councils one vote each. External Members are entitled to vote on such matters as the Partnership determines appropriate but not on financial matters.

Operational control of the Partnership is the responsibility of the Partnership Director, Ranald Robertson. The Highland Council provides financial and computing services with Brian Porter as the Partnership Treasurer, and Comhairle Nan Eilean Siar provides administrative, personnel and legal services.

Board Composition

The Board Members for 2024/25 as at 31st March 2025 are named in the following table:

Council	Substantive Member	Substitute Member
Highland Council	Cllr Ken Gowans	Cllr Michael Green
Moray Council	Cllr Amber Dunbar (Vice-Chair)	Cllr Paul McBain
Argyll & Bute Council	Cllr John Armour	Cllr Gordon Blair
Comhairle Nan Eilean Siar	Cllr Uisdean Robertson (Chair)	Cllr Susan Thomson
Orkney Islands Council	Cllr Kristopher Leask	Cllr Melissa Thomson
Non-Council Board Member	Mrs Naomi Bremner	
Non-Council Board Member	Mr Robert Andrew	
Non-Council Board Member	Ms Shona MacLennan	

Statutory Framework

The accounting framework defines local authorities as councils constituted under section 2 of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1994 and the Valuation Joint Boards (Scotland) Order

1995; the Strathclyde Partnership for Transport and those bodies to which section 106(1) of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 applies (i.e. committees, joint committees and joint boards, the members of which are appointed by local authorities and charities, etc).

In Scotland the local authority accounting framework is enacted as follows:

- the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973, section 96, requires Scottish authorities to keep accounts; The Local Government in Scotland Act 2003, section 12 places a duty of Best Value on the authority and also a duty to observe proper accounting practices; the Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2024/25 (the Code) supported by International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS), other statutory guidance issued under section 12 of the 2003 Act, defines proper accounting practices for local authorities in the UK;
- the Local Authority Accounts (Scotland) Amendment Regulations 2014 (SSI No.2014/200) require local authorities in Scotland to prepare a Remuneration Report as part of the annual statutory accounts; under paragraph 21 of the Local Authority Accounts (Scotland) Regulations 2014 (Finance circular 7/2014) the Chief Officer is responsible for certifying that the Financial Statements give a true and fair view of the financial position of the local authority and its group for the year then ended. The certification includes a statement to this effect as part of the Statement of Responsibilities and by signing the Balance Sheet. This certification is required before the Annual Accounts are submitted to the appointed auditor. The proper officer re-certifies the audited Annual Accounts after they have been approved for signature by the local authority or a committee of the local authority, in this case the Highlands and Islands Transport Partnership. The proper officer, known as the Treasurer, is the Head of Corporate Finance of Highland Council.

The Code reiterates the primacy of legislative requirements whereby the overriding principle of public sector accounts is that where an accounting treatment is prescribed by law, the legal requirement must be applied.

The overriding requirement of the Code is that the Annual Accounts provide a true and fair view of the financial position and the financial transactions of the Partnership.

Review of 2024/25 Developments and Achievements

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 2024/25 the Business Plan set out a wide range of, local regional and national scale projects that have been delivered. These include:

- Assumption of Lead Partner duties for the Sustainable Aviation Test Environment Project (SATE) which is funded through UKRI Future Flight Challenge.
- Ongoing development, monitoring and refresh of the RTS
- Scottish Islands Passport
- Real Time Passenger Information
- Inverness Station Masterplan
- Bottlenecks! Whisky Logistics Study
- Fastline Faslane local rail development

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- 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
- RURALITIES Horizon Europe Project
- FASTER SEUPB Programme Project
- ERDF Smart Cities – Scotland's 8th City ERDF
- Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Fund Pathfinder Project
- Zero Emissions Vessels Orkney Project support
- Website Development

HITRANS also received a new grant award from Scottish Government (through Transport Scotland) to directly deliver a new behaviour change programme at a regional level under the People and Place Programme which was established as a key output from the Active Travel Transformation Programme. This grant award in 2024/2025 amounted to an initial budget of £1,626,186 for the year. The programme supported a wide range of sustainable travel interventions for the following projects:

- HI Bike – Inverness and Fort William
- Living Streets WOW and Travel Tracker
- Access to Cycles and Bikeability
- Cycle Parking Programme
- Employers Sustainable Travel Grant
- Workplace Travel Planning
- Access to non-standard cycles trial.
- Neighbourhood Hubs
- Cycling UK Programme
- Building Capacity and Capability in HITRANS and LA Teams
- Behaviour Change Strategy

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.

Going Concern

Note 14 to the Core Statements details the income and expenditure charged to the income and expenditure account under IAS 19 in respect of the Local Government Pension Scheme, based upon assessments provided by the Actuary to the Scheme. The IAS 19 Pension Benefit Assets (£0.000m 2024/25 due to Asset Celling adjustment, 2023/24: £0.256m) have a substantial impact on the net worth of the Partnership as recorded in the Balance Sheet, resulting in an overall balance of £0.191m (2023/24: £0.684m). Future actuarial valuations of the pension scheme will consider the employer's rate to meet the commitments of the Scheme. In addition, the constituent authorities of the Board are required to fund the liabilities as they fall due. For these reasons, a going concern basis has been adopted in the preparation of the financial statements.

The constituent authorities of the Partnership are required to fund the liabilities of the Partnership as they fall due.

Primary Financial Statements

The Partnership is required to prepare Annual Accounts by the Local Authority Accounts (Scotland) Regulations 2014 and section 12 of the Local Government in Scotland Act 2003

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requires that they be prepared in accordance with proper accounting practices. These practices primarily comprise the Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2024/25 and the Service Reporting Code of Practice 2024/25, supported by International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS).

A description of the purpose of the Primary Financial Statements has been included immediately prior to the four statements: the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement, Movement in Reserves Statement, Balance Sheet and Cash Flow Statement. These four Statements are accompanied by Notes to the Accounts which set out the Accounting Policies adopted by the Partnership and provide more detailed analysis of the figures disclosed on the face of the primary financial statements.

The Primary Financial Statements and Notes to the Accounts, including the accounting policies, form the relevant Annual Accounts for the purpose of the auditor's certificate and opinion.

Financial Performance

The purpose of the Annual Accounts is to present 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 normally meets four times a year, with its budget meeting taking place in February. The Partnership's budget is its prime annual planning document and actual expenditure is monitored against it during the year.

The Partnership's financial results for the year, compared against budget, are as shown below. The outturn position for the year as shown in the Budget Performance Statement below as £0.061m surplus.

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**Budget Performance Statement
For the year ended 31 March 2025**

	2024/25		
	Budget	Actual	Variance
	£000	£000	£000
Staff costs	401	275	126
Property costs	17	24	(7)
Travel and subsistence costs	25	27	(2)
Administration and meeting costs	25	42	(17)
Research and strategy development costs	1,921	402	1,519
Publicity costs	10	18	(8)
Projects costs	1,117	1,908	(791)
Support services	60	74	(14)
Gross expenditure	3,576	2,770	806
Government grants	(2,259)	(510)	(1,749)
Other grants	(1,117)	(2,113)	996
Other income	0	(8)	8
Constituent Council requisitions	(200)	(200)	0
Gross income	(3,576)	(2,831)	(745)
Net deficit/(surplus)	0	(61)	61

The position in the year was a surplus of £0.061m and this sum was transferred to the General Fund Reserve with the main variations from budget during the year being as follows:

- Within both income and expenditure there has been a movement in activity from Regional Active Travel to the People and Places project which accounts for the under and overspends above within Research and strategy development and project costs and Government and other grants.
- Support services costs are higher than budgeted due to increases in staff pay in line with pay awards and the support time allocated to HiTrans in the recharge from Highland Council.

A reconciliation of the above is shown in the Expenditure and Funding Analysis on page 25 which in turn reconciles to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement on page 21.

Balance Sheet

Highland Council's Loans Fund provides short term borrowing facilities for the Partnership, as and when required. At 31 March 2025 the Partnership had short term borrowing of £1.517m (31 March 2024 - £2.222m) with the Loans Fund. This was down by £0.705m on the previous year. The movement was due to a decrease in short term debtors and creditors principally in the amounts in relation to project funds being received and passed where HiTrans was the agency body.

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Unusable reserves decreased by £0.496m from £0.613m to £0.117m as at 31 March 2025. This was due to a combination of actuarial losses and gains on the Pension Scheme liabilities and assets respectively, along with £0.435m of donated assets for eBikes within 2023/24 not repeated in 2024/25.

During 2023/24, HITRANS was offered, at no cost, a number of eBikes from other local authority areas in Scotland following the closure of their respective eBike schemes. These assets were received as part of a redistribution of publicly funded resources and included both fixed infrastructure (e.g. street docks) and a range of eBikes in varying conditions. All fixed assets received (primarily street docking stations) have been retained and integrated into the HI-Bike system enabling our plans to expand the system in Inverness and Fort William and to introduce a new operating base in Elgin. Over the winter of 2024/25, HITRANS eBike Technicians undertook a detailed assessment of the donated eBikes to determine their suitability for redeployment. The review found that a significant proportion of these bikes had sustained structural damage, particularly to forks and frames, rendering them unsuitable for use in the HI-Bike fleet. Where possible, useable components (such as wheels, tyres, and gearing systems) were recovered for future maintenance use. The unusable bikes have been impaired in the 2024/25 accounts and are scheduled for safe disposal in 2025/26. In parallel, a review of HITRANS' existing HI-Bike fleet concluded that the majority of the original eBikes (excluding those purchased in 2024/25) have reached the end of their operational life. These will also be replaced during 2025/26 as part of the ongoing fleet renewal strategy to maintain safety, performance, and service reliability.

Reserves

Section 122 of the Transport (Scotland) Act 2019 amended previous legislation and now permits the carrying of a General Fund reserve, allowing flexibility across financial years.

The Pensions Reserve absorbs the timing differences arising from the different arrangements for accounting for post-employment benefits and for funding benefits in accordance with statutory provisions.

The funding formula for Council contributions was agreed by the Partnership in July 2006. This is based 50% on voting weight and 50% on population share. The population figures take account of the 2017 position as shown in the General Register Office for Scotland. The 2018 position, the most recent published data, has been reviewed and there has been very little change in the population figures, therefore the percentage share of income to be contributed by each Council remains the same and is as follows:

2023/24		Constituent Authority	2024/25	
£000	% share		£000	% share
91	45.5	The Highland Council	91	45.5
47	23.4	Moray Council	47	23.4
26	13.1	Argyll and Bute Council	26	13.1
19	9.5	Comhairle Nan Eilean Siar	19	9.5
17	8.5	Orkney Islands Council	17	8.5
200	100.0	Total	200	100.0

Retirement Benefits

International Accounting Standard (IAS 19) has been fully adopted in preparing the accounts of the Partnership. The standard prescribes how employing organisations are to account for pension benefits earned by employees in the year and the associated pension assets and liabilities.

Employees are eligible to join the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS), administered by the Highland Council. Note 13 to the Core Statements details the income and expenditure charged to the income and expenditure account under IAS 19 in respect of the Local Government Scheme, based upon assessments provided by the Actuary to the Scheme.

The Balance Sheet on page 23 shows that the Board has a net pension asset/liability of £0.000m as at 31 March 2025 (31 March 2024 net pension asset £0.256m) due to the accrual of pension liabilities in accordance with IAS 19 and adjusted by the asset ceiling adjustment of £0.738m.

The pension asset represents the best estimate of the current value of pension benefits that will have to be funded by the Partnership. The asset relates to benefits earned by existing or previous employees up to 31 March 2025.

These benefits are expressed in current value terms rather than the cash amount that will actually be paid in/out. This is to allow for the 'time value of money', whereby the value of cash received now is regarded as higher than cash received in the future. In order to adjust the pension asset cash flows for the time value of money a discount factor based on corporate bond rates is used.

Financial Outlook

The current economic climate has led to funding pressures within the public sector, consequently placing challenges on the Partnership to continue to deliver the most effective and efficient services possible. Regional Transport Partnerships face substantial real-term pressures in finance in the coming years coupled with rising costs. Public finance and the funding pressures associated with reductions continue to provide challenges but real progress is being made in developing efficient working practices and models through partnership working.

A core aim of the Partnership is to support its partner Local Authorities, Scottish Government and other key public and private sector partners in delivering improved transport services across the Highlands and Islands. The Partnership will continue to work hard to attract external funding and focus on a partnership approach to delivery.

On 7 February 2025, the Partnership's Board agreed a revenue budget for 2025/26, which made provision for £0.505m of core service costs and £4.066m of project expenditure in support of Regional Transport Strategy and European funded projects. In recognition of the current financial constraints faced by public sector organisations, the 2025/26 budget makes provision for no increase in constituent council requisitions. Council and Scottish Government funding is confirmed for a period of one year.

Recognising the continuing pressure on public finances it is very welcome that HITRANS budget from Scottish Government to deliver the regional People and Place Program has increased by 50% year on year to £2.432m in 2025/26. However, the single year public budgeting environment makes it very difficult for the Partnership to plan ahead with certainty. There is a significant risk to the level of work that the Partnership will be able to complete should resources reduce. The Partnership will continue to work with its Constituent Authorities, and the Scottish Government, to get clarification of future funding levels.

The Partnership's financial position requires stringent management and at times difficult decisions over resource priorities. It is important, therefore, that the maximum amount of

resources is channelled into achieving the Partnership's objectives. There are, however, risks to achieving these objectives. Risks are inevitable and, in practice, cannot be avoided. Risks, therefore, must be managed, understood and controlled if the Partnership is to meet its objectives.

Risk management is about managing the Partnership's exposure to risk, the probability of it occurring and the impact it would have. It involves identifying the risks, assessing them and responding to them. Risk management is not restricted to limiting adverse outcomes and it can be used to achieve desirable outcomes.

Consequently, the Partnership needs to be pro-active and prepared in the way it manages its risk portfolio. Incorporating a more formal approach to risk management in its day-to-day operations will enable it to deliver its responsibilities and work towards achieving its objectives. In fact, management of risks is fundamental to ensuring that objectives are fulfilled.

The Partnership operates a Risk Management Framework with a Risk Register which is reviewed regularly. This framework is firmly embedded in the work of the Partnership and is subject to annual review through the Partnership board meeting process. The Risk Register was updated in November 2024 and the overarching Framework was reviewed and refreshed in April 2025.

HITRANS officers have also conducted a review and refresh of a number of Governance documents to ensure that the guiding policy documents are up to date and reflect the contemporary environment for public service delivery. The following documents have been updated:

- HITRANS Privacy Notice
- Anti Fraud and Anti Corruption Policy
- Anti Bribery Procedure
- Anti Bribery Policy
- Risk Management Framework
- Asset Management Plan
- Mainstreaming Equalities Duty
- Equalities Outcomes Report
- Corporate Hospitality Policy
- Complaints Policy
- Records Management Policy
- Information Management Policy

The financial outlook for all public sector spending will be affected by the ongoing crisis caused by the cost-of-living crisis creating inflationary pressures. In common with all public bodies HITRANS will need to include these impacts in its management of risk. HITRANS has already made the case for its role to be enhanced to improve governance and decision making by devolving areas of transport planning from the centre to a more local regional level with an example of this opportunity being the increased budget the organisation received from 2025/26 to deliver the Regional People and Place Programme.

Events after the Balance Sheet

Events after the Balance Sheet date until the date of signing the accounts have been taken into consideration.

Acknowledgements

During the 2024/25 financial year the Partnership's financial position has undertaken regular scrutiny and strict budgetary control. We would wish to place on record our appreciation of the excellent work carried out by the Partnership's officers, supported by the officers of Highland Council in the financial management of the Partnership and in the preparation of the 2024/25 Annual Accounts.

Councillor Uisdean Robertson

Cllr Uisdean Robertson
Chair of the Partnership Board
07 November 2025

Brian Porter

Brian Porter CPFA
Treasurer
07 November 2025

Ranald Robertson

Ranald Robertson
Partnership Director
07 November 2025

Statement of Responsibilities for the Annual Accounts

Responsibilities of the Partnership

The Partnership is required to:

- (i) Make arrangements for the proper administration of its financial affairs and to ensure that one of its officers has the responsibility for the administration of those affairs. In the Highlands and Islands Transport Partnership that officer is the Treasurer to the Partnership.
- (ii) Manage its affairs to secure economic, efficient and effective use of resources and safeguard its assets.
- (iii) Ensure the Annual Accounts are prepared in accordance with legislation (The Local Authority Accounts (Scotland) Regulations 2014), and so far as is compatible with that legislation, in accordance with proper accounting practices (section 12 of the Local Government in Scotland Act 2003).
- (iv) Approve the Annual Accounts for signature.

I confirm that these Annual Accounts were approved for signature by the Partnership Board at its meeting.

Councillor Uisdean Robertson

Cllr Uisdean Robertson
Chair of the Partnership Board
07 November 2025

The Treasurer's Responsibilities

The Treasurer is responsible for the preparation of the Partnership's Annual Accounts in accordance with proper practices as required by legislation and as set out in the CIPFA/LASAAC Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom (the Accounting Code).

In preparing the Annual Accounts, the Treasurer, has:

- (i) Selected suitable accounting policies and then applied them consistently
- (ii) Made judgements and estimates that were reasonable and prudent
- (iii) Complied with legislation
- (iv) Complied with the local authority Accounting Code (in so far as it is compatible with legislation)

The Treasurer has also:

- (i) Kept adequate accounting records which were up to date
- (ii) Taken reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities

I certify that the financial statements give a true and fair view of the financial position of the Partnership at the reporting date and the transactions of the Partnership for the year ended 31 March 2025

Brian Porter

Brian Porter CPFA
Treasurer
07 November 2025

Annual Governance Statement

Scope of Responsibility

The Highlands and Islands Transport Partnership's aim is to develop a transportation system for the region covering Highland, Moray, Comhairle Nan Eilean Siar, Orkney Islands and Argyll & Bute (excluding Helensburgh and Lomond) Council areas, as outlined in the Partnership's Regional Transport Strategy 2025 to 2045.

The Partnership is responsible for ensuring that its business is conducted in accordance with the law and proper standards, and that public money is safeguarded, properly accounted for, and used economically, efficiently and effectively. The Partnership also has a duty to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the way its functions are carried out.

In discharging these overall responsibilities, the Partnership is responsible for implementing proper arrangements for the governance of its affairs, and facilitating the effective exercise of its functions, including arrangements for the management of risk, counter fraud and anti-corruption arrangements which are in accordance with Code of Practice on Managing the Risk of Fraud and Corruption.

The Partnership has approved and adopted a set of governance documents which is consistent with appropriate corporate governance. These documents are reviewed every 2 to 3 years with the last review taking place in April 2025.

The Partnership's Governance Framework is consistent with the principles of the CIPFA/SOLACE framework 'Delivering Good Governance in Local Government', and the assurance arrangements conform with the Role of the Head of Internal Audit.

The function of the audit committee are performed by the Board and are undertaken as identified in Audit Committees Practical Guidance for Local Authorities, and they meet the requirements set out.

This statement explains how the Partnership delivers good governance and reviews the effectiveness of these arrangements.

The Partnership's Governance Framework

The governance framework comprises the systems and processes, and cultures and values, by which the Partnership is directed and controlled, and the activities used to engage with and lead the community. It enables it to monitor the achievement of its strategic objectives and to consider whether those objectives have led to the delivery of appropriate, cost-effective services.

The framework reflects the arrangements in place to meet the seven supporting principles of effective corporate governance:

1. Behaving with integrity, demonstrating strong commitment to ethical values, and respecting the rule of law.
2. Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement.
3. Defining outcomes in terms of sustainable economic, social and environmental benefits.
4. Determining the interventions necessary to optimise the achievement of the intended outcomes.
5. Developing the partnership's capacity including the capability of its leadership and the individuals within it.

6. Managing risks and performance through robust internal control and strong public financial management.
7. Implementing good practices in transparency, reporting and audit to deliver effective accountability.

Focusing on the purpose of the Partnership and on outcomes for the community, and creating and implementing a vision for the area:

- Members and officers working together to achieve a common purpose with clearly defined functions and roles;
- Promoting values for the Partnership and demonstrating the values of good governance through upholding high standards of conduct and behaviour;
- Taking informed and transparent decisions which are subject to effective scrutiny and managing risk;
- Developing the capacity and capability of members and officers to be effective;
- Engaging with local people and other stakeholders to ensure robust public accountability.

The Partnership recognises that good governance is essential to any public body and their arrangements are set out in their business plan. This details the various policies and procedures within the Partnership including their Scheme of Delegation, Contract Standing Orders, Financial Regulations, through to their arrangements for interaction with stakeholders and the Partnership's powers and functions.

An updated Risk Management Framework, which sets out the aims and objectives of the Partnership and the management of its risks in the short to medium term, was approved by the Partnership Board in April 2025. Annual updates on the Risk Register are provided to the Board, most recently in November 2024.

The system of internal control is a significant part of that framework and is designed to manage risk to an acceptable level, and provide reasonable, but not absolute, assurance that policies, aims and objectives can be delivered. The system of internal control is based on an ongoing process designed to identify and prioritise the risks being realised, and the impact should they be realised, and to manage them efficiently, effectively and economically.

Determining the Partnership's Purpose, Its Vision for the Local Area and Intended Outcomes for the Community

The Partnership aims to develop a transportation system for the region covering Highland, Moray, Comhairle Nan Eilean Siar, Orkney Islands and Argyll & Bute (excluding Helensburgh and Lomond) Council areas, which will enable business to function effectively and provide everyone living in the region with improved access to health care, education, public services and employment opportunities. The vision for achieving this is outlined in the Regional Transport Strategy.

The Annual Research and Strategy Development Programme detail the projects the Partnership is involved in and an update is reported to each Partnership Board. These projects link to the aims of the strategy and the Annual Business Plan provides a report of performance against objectives, targets and performance indicators as outlined in the Regional Transport Strategy.

Review of Effectiveness

Highlands and Islands Transport Partnership has responsibility for conducting, at least annually, a review of the effectiveness of its governance framework including the system of internal control. The system of internal financial control is based on a framework of regular management information, financial regulations, administrative procedures (including segregation of duties), management supervision, and a system of delegation and accountability. Development and maintenance of the system is undertaken by managers within the Partnership and The Highland Council. In particular, the internal control system includes:

- Comprehensive budgeting systems;
- Regular reviews of periodic and annual financial reports which indicate financial performance against the forecasts;
- Setting targets to measure financial and other performance;
- The preparation of regular financial reports which indicate actual expenditure against the forecasts.

The Treasurer to the Partnership has overall responsibility for Internal Audit in Highlands and Islands Transport Partnership. The Highland Council's Corporate Audit Manager is responsible for the day to day management of the service and reports to the Treasurer on management and performance issues. In accordance with the principles of Corporate Governance, an annual report is made to the Partnership. The Internal Audit Service operates in accordance with the Code of Practice for Internal Audit (the standards) which came into effect from 1 April 2013 and applies to all internal audit service providers. These Standards have been developed through collaboration between the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) and the Chartered Institute of Internal Auditors (CIIA).

The Corporate Audit Manager prepares an Annual Report containing a view on the adequacy and effectiveness of the system of internal control.

The review of the effectiveness of the system of internal financial control is informed by:

- The work of managers within the Transport Partnership;
- The work of the internal auditors as described above, and
- The external auditors in their annual audit letter and other reports.

In order to inform the Corporate Audit Manager's annual Statement of Internal Control, work was undertaken to review the Highland Council's financial systems, which are also used to administer HITRANS' transactions. This consisted of:

- A review of the adequacy and effectiveness of the systems of internal control for the financial year 2024/25.
- Review of a random sample of financial transactions during the year to verify that the expected controls had been complied with. This comprised of both income and expenditure transactions. The income transaction was received in full and promptly recorded in the ledger. For the expenditure transactions these were procured and paid correctly, with the correct information recorded in the financial ledger.

Audit recommendations are action tracked to ensure that the management agreed actions have been satisfactorily implemented. There are no outstanding agreed actions from previous reports.

On the basis of the work undertaken during the year, it is considered that the key systems operate in a sound manner and that there has been no fundamental breakdown in control resulting in material discrepancy. However as no system of control can provide absolute assurance against material loss, nor can Internal Audit give that assurance, it is the audit opinion that Reasonable Assurance can be placed upon the adequacy and effectiveness of the HITRANS' framework of governance, risk management and control for the year to 31 March 2025.

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In 2010 CIPFA issued its Statement on the Role of the Chief Financial Officer in Local Government together with an application note enabling authorities to review the effectiveness of their own governance arrangements by reference to best practice and using self-assessment. This review has been undertaken and the arrangements within the Partnership are broadly compliant with the CIPFA Statement. One area of exception is the requirement for the Chief Financial Officer (ie the Treasurer) to report directly to the Chief Executive (ie the Partnership Director) and be a member of the leadership team. With regard to the Partnership the following arrangements are in place which contribute to delivering the same impact:

- The Partnership's Financial Regulations recognise the Treasurer as being "responsible for the proper financial administration of the Partnership's affairs, and acts as financial adviser to the Partnership". In addition, the Regulations require:
 - That the Partnership Director ensures that all spending conforms to proper accounting standards and will seek appropriate clarification on such matters from the Treasurer.
 - The accounting procedures, records of the Partnership and Annual Accounts to be prepared in accordance with directions provided by the Treasurer.
 - Reports to the Partnership containing financial implications to be discussed with the Treasurer.
- The Treasurer's staff work closely with the Partnership's staff regarding financial matters.

Following on from the COVID-19 Pandemic where the Board operated virtually, it now operates in a hybrid environment. It remains confident sound governance continues to operate and is fully committed to maintaining the system to deliver this.

Councillor Uisdean Robertson

Cllr Uisdean Robertson
Chair of the Partnership Board
07 November 2025

Ranald Robertson

Ranald Robertson
Partnership Director
07 November 2025

Remuneration Report

All information disclosed in the tables at paragraphs 3 and 4 in the Remuneration Report will be audited by Audit Scotland. The other sections of the Remuneration Report have been reviewed by Audit Scotland to ensure that they are consistent with the financial statements.

1. Appointments

Appointment of the senior employee (Partnership Director) in the Transport Partnership is made by the Partnership Board. The Director is responsible for making any further appointments and ensuring that they are made in accordance with staff structures approved by the Partnership.

2. Remuneration Policy

2.1 Senior Employees

There is no national salary mechanism in place for Regional Transport Partnerships. It is up to individual authorities and Transport Partnerships to determine these salaries. As such, the salary of the senior employee (Partnership Director) is set and approved by the Partnership, based on advice received from the Comhairle Nan Eilean Siar's Personnel Service. The current grading of the senior post was agreed by the Partnership in June 2012.

2.2 Senior Councillors

The Chair and Vice-chair of the Highlands and Islands Transport Partnership are remunerated by the Council of which they are a council member.

The remuneration of councillors is regulated by the Local Government (Scotland) Act 2004 (Remuneration) Regulations 2007 (SSI No. 2007/183). The regulations provide for the grading of councillors for the purpose of remuneration arrangements, as either the Leader of the Council, The Civic Head, Senior Councillors or Councillors. The regulations are silent on the payment of the Chair and Vice Chair of Regional Transport Partnerships. Therefore, on the basis there is no specific provision in legislation, the Highlands and Islands Transport Partnership does not remunerate the Chair or Vice Chair of the Partnership.

3. Remuneration

3.1 Remuneration of Senior Employee of the Partnership

Name and Post Title	Salary, Fees and Allowances	Total Remuneration 2024/25	Total Remuneration 2023/24
	£	£	£
Ranald Robertson, Partnership Director	99,570	99,570	96,110
Total	99,570	99,570	96,110

The senior employee did not receive any taxable expenses.

The table includes any senior employee:

- Who has responsibility for management of the Partnership to the extent that the person has power to direct or control the major activities of the Partnership (including activities involving the expenditure of money), during the year to which the report relates, whether solely or collectively with other persons;
- Who holds a post that is politically restricted by reason of section 2(1) (a), (b) or (c) of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989; or
- Whose annual remuneration is £150,000 or more.

3.2 Remuneration by Pay Band

Analysis of Employees Earning Over £50,000

	2024/25	2023/24
Salary Band	Number	Number
£50,000-£54,000	-	1
£55,000-£59,999	1	-
£60,000-£64,999	2	-
£65,000-£69,999	-	1
£70,000-£74,999	-	-
£75,000-£79,999	-	-
£80,000-£84,999	-	-
£85,000-£89,999	-	-
£90,000-£94,999	-	-
£95,000-£99,999	1	1

3.3 Senior Councillors and Chairs and Vice Chairs of Regional Transport Partnerships

There were no Salaries, Fees, Allowances or non cash expenses and benefits in kind paid to the Chair and Vice Chair of the Highlands and Islands Transport Partnership.

3.4 Remuneration Paid to Councillors

There were no salaries, allowances and expenses paid by the Partnership to any councillors (including the senior councillors above) during the year.

The annual return of Councillors' salaries and expenses for 2024/25 is available for any member of the public to view at all public offices and is also available on the Constituent Councils (Highland Council; Moray Council; Argyll and Bute Council; Comhairle Nan Eilean Siar; and Orkney Islands Council) websites.

3.5 Exit Packages

There were no Exit Packages issued during the year 2024/25.

4. Pension Benefits

The pension entitlement of the senior employee for the year to 31 March 2025 is shown in the table below, together with the contribution made by the Partnership to the Senior Employee's pension during the year

	In-year pension contributions			Accrued Pension Benefits		Difference between Accrued pension at the start and end of year
Name and Post Title	For year to 31 March 2025	For year to 31 March 2024		As at 31 March 2025	As at 31 March 2024	
	£	£		£000	£000	£000
Ranald Robertson, Partnership Director	15,022	18,741	Pension	42	39	3
			Lump Sum	36	36	0
Total	15,022	18,741		78	75	3

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The senior employee shown in the table above is a member of the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS).

The pension figures shown in the table relate to the benefits that the person has accrued as a consequence of their total local government service. The employees' contribution rates in 2024/25 are shown in the following tables with prior year comparisons:

The 2024/25 contribution tiers and rates are as follows:

Pensionable pay	Contribution rate
On earnings up to and including £27,500	5.50%
On earnings above £27,501 and up to £33,600	7.25%
On earnings above £33,601 and up to £46,100	8.50%
On earnings above £46,101 and up to £61,400	9.50%
On earnings above £61,401	12.00%

2023/24 contribution tiers and rates:

Pensionable pay	Contribution rate
On earnings up to and including £25,300	5.50%
On earnings above £25,301 and up to £31,000	7.25%
On earnings above £31,001 and up to £42,500	8.50%
On earnings above £42,501 and up to £56,600	9.50%
On earnings above £56,601	12.00%

The employer's contribution rate in 2024/25 is 16% of the pensionable salary (2023/24: 19.5%).

Councillor Uisdean Robertson

Cllr Uisdean Robertson
Chair of the Partnership Board

07 November 2025

Ranald Robertson

Ranald Robertson
Partnership Director

07 November 2025

Independent auditor's report to the members of The Highlands and Islands Transport Partnership and the Accounts Commission

Reporting on the audit of the financial statements

Opinion on financial statements

I certify that I have audited the financial statements in the annual accounts of the Highlands and Islands Transport Partnership for the year ended 31 March 2025 under Part VII of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973. The financial statements comprise the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement, Movement in Reserves Statement, Balance Sheet, Cash Flow Statement and notes to the financial statements, including material accounting policy information. The financial reporting framework that has been applied in their preparation is applicable law and UK adopted international accounting standards, as interpreted and adapted by the Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2024/25 (the 2024/25 Code).

In my opinion the accompanying financial statements:

- give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the Highlands and Islands Transport Partnership as at 31 March 2025 and of its income and expenditure for the year then ended;
- have been properly prepared in accordance with UK adopted international accounting standards, as interpreted and adapted by the 2024/25 Code; and
- have been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973, The Local Authority Accounts (Scotland) Regulations 2014, and the Local Government in Scotland Act 2003.

Basis for opinion

I conducted my audit in accordance with applicable law and International Standards on Auditing (UK) (ISAs (UK)), as required by the [Code of Audit Practice](#) approved by the Accounts Commission for Scotland. My responsibilities under those standards are further described in the auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements section of my report. I was appointed by the Accounts Commission on 25 August 2025. My period of appointment is three years, covering 2024/25 to 2026/27. I am independent of the Highlands and Islands Transport Partnership in accordance with the ethical requirements that are relevant to my audit of the financial statements in the UK including the Financial Reporting Council's Ethical Standard, and I have fulfilled my other ethical responsibilities in accordance with these requirements. Non-audit services prohibited by the Ethical Standard was not provided to the Highlands and Islands Transport Partnership. I believe that the audit evidence I have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for my opinion.

Conclusions relating to going concern basis of accounting

I have concluded that the use of the going concern basis of accounting in the preparation of the financial statements is appropriate.

Based on the work I have performed, I have not identified any material uncertainties relating to events or conditions that, individually or collectively, may cast significant doubt on the Highlands and Islands Transport Partnership's ability to continue to adopt the going concern basis of accounting for a period of at least twelve months from when the financial statements are authorised for issue.

These conclusions are not intended to, nor do they, provide assurance on the Highlands and Islands Transport Partnership's current or future financial sustainability. However, I report on the Highlands and Islands Transport Partnership arrangements for financial sustainability in a separate Annual Audit Report available from the [Audit Scotland website](#).

Risks of material misstatement

I report in my Annual Audit Report the most significant assessed risks of material misstatement that I identified and my judgements thereon.

Responsibilities of the Treasurer and the Partnership Board for the financial statements

As explained more fully in the Statement of Responsibilities, the Treasurer is responsible for the preparation of financial statements that give a true and fair view in accordance with the financial reporting framework, and for such internal control as Treasurer determines is necessary to enable the preparation of financial statements that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

In preparing the financial statements, the Treasurer is responsible for assessing the Highlands and Islands Transport Partnership's ability to continue as a going concern, disclosing, as applicable, matters related to going concern and using the going concern basis of accounting unless there is an intention to discontinue the Highlands and Islands Transport Partnership's operations.

The Partnership Board is responsible for overseeing the financial reporting process.

Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements

My objectives are to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statements as a whole are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error, and to issue an auditor's report that includes my opinion. Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance, but is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with ISAs (UK) will always detect a material misstatement when it exists. Misstatements can arise from fraud or error and are considered material if, individually or in the aggregate, they could reasonably be expected to influence the decisions of users taken on the basis of these financial statements.

Irregularities, including fraud, are instances of non-compliance with laws and regulations. I design procedures in line with my responsibilities outlined above to detect material misstatements in respect of irregularities, including fraud. Procedures include:

- using my understanding of the local government sector to identify that the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973, The Local Authority Accounts (Scotland) Regulations 2014, and the Local Government in Scotland Act 2003 are significant in the context of the Highlands and Islands Transport Partnership;
- inquiring of the Treasurer as to other laws or regulations that may be expected to have a fundamental effect on the operations of the Highlands and Islands Transport Partnership;
- inquiring of the Treasurer concerning the Highlands and Islands Transport Partnership's policies and procedures regarding compliance with the applicable legal and regulatory framework;
- discussions among my audit team on the susceptibility of the financial statements to material misstatement, including how fraud might occur; and
- considering whether the audit team collectively has the appropriate competence and capabilities to identify or recognise non-compliance with laws and regulations.

The extent to which my procedures are capable of detecting irregularities, including fraud, is affected by the inherent difficulty in detecting irregularities, the effectiveness of the Highlands and Islands Transport Partnership's controls, and the nature, timing and extent of the audit procedures performed.

Irregularities that result from fraud are inherently more difficult to detect than irregularities that result from error as fraud may involve collusion, intentional omissions, misrepresentations, or

the override of internal control. The capability of the audit to detect fraud and other irregularities depends on factors such as the skilfulness of the perpetrator, the frequency and extent of manipulation, the degree of collusion involved, the relative size of individual amounts manipulated, and the seniority of those individuals involved.

A further description of the auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements is located on the Financial Reporting Council's website www.frc.org.uk/auditorsresponsibilities. This description forms part of my auditor's report.

Reporting on other requirements

Opinion prescribed by the Accounts Commission on the audited parts of the Remuneration Report

I have audited the parts of the Remuneration Report described as audited. In my opinion, the audited parts of the Remuneration Report have been properly prepared in accordance with The Local Authority Accounts (Scotland) Regulations 2014.

Other information

The Treasurer is responsible for the other information in the annual accounts. The other information comprises the Management Commentary, Annual Governance Statement, Statement of Responsibilities and the unaudited part of the Remuneration Report.

My responsibility is to read all the other information and, in doing so, consider whether the other information is materially inconsistent with the financial statements or my knowledge obtained in the course of the audit or otherwise appears to be materially misstated. If I identify such material inconsistencies or apparent material misstatements, I am required to determine whether this gives rise to a material misstatement in the financial statements themselves. If, based on the work I have performed, I conclude that there is a material misstatement of this other information, I am required to report that fact. I have nothing to report in this regard.

My opinion on the financial statements does not cover the other information and I do not express any form of assurance conclusion thereon except on the Management Commentary and Annual Governance Statement to the extent explicitly stated in the following opinions prescribed by the Accounts Commission.

Opinions prescribed by the Accounts Commission on the Management Commentary and Annual Governance Statement

In my opinion, based on the work undertaken in the course of the audit:

- the information given in the Management Commentary for the financial year for which the financial statements are prepared is consistent with the financial statements and that report has been prepared in accordance with statutory guidance issued under the Local Government in Scotland Act 2003; and
- the information given in the Annual Governance Statement for the financial year for which the financial statements are prepared is consistent with the financial statements and that report has been prepared in accordance with the Delivering Good Governance in Local Government: Framework (2016).

Matters on which I am required to report by exception

I am required by the Accounts Commission to report to you if, in my opinion:

- adequate accounting records have not been kept; or
- the financial statements and the audited part of the Remuneration Report are not in agreement with the accounting records; or

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- I have not received all the information and explanations I require for my audit.

I have nothing to report in respect of these matters.

Conclusions on wider scope responsibilities

In addition to my responsibilities for the annual accounts, my conclusions on the wider scope responsibilities specified in the Code of Audit Practice, including those in respect of Best Value, are set out in my Annual Audit Report.

Use of my report

This report is made solely to the parties to whom it is addressed in accordance with Part VII of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 and for no other purpose. In accordance with paragraph 108 of the Code of Audit Practice, I do not undertake to have responsibilities to members or officers, in their individual capacities, or to third parties.

Pamela Morrison
Audit Scotland
8 Nelson Mandela Place
Glasgow
G2 1BT

Pamela Morrison

07 November 2025

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Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement

This statement shows the accounting cost in the year of providing services in accordance with generally accepted accounting practices governed by International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS), rather than expenditure permitted by regulations which is funded by requisitions from the constituent authorities. The funding position is shown in both the Expenditure and Funding Analysis and in the Movement in Reserves Statement.

2023/24			2024/25			
Gross Expenditure £000	Gross Income £000	Net Expenditure £000		Gross Expenditure £000	Gross Income £000	Net Expenditure £000
4,275	(4,011)	264	Roads and transport services (note 1)	3,029	(2,631)	398
		264	Cost of services			398
		(5)	Financing and Investment Expenditure – Net interest on defined benefit liability (note 14 & 16)			(8)
		(200)	Requisition from Constituent Authorities (note 12)			(200)
		(435)	Donated Asset Income			-
		(376)	(Surplus)/Deficit on provision of services (note 1)			190
		(160)	Return on plan assets (excluding the amount included in net interest expense) (note 14)			33
		(45)	Actuarial losses/(gains) arising on changes in financial assumptions (note 14)			212
		(581)	Total comprehensive (income) and expenditure			435

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Movement in Reserves Statement

This statement shows the movement in the year on the different reserves held by the Partnership, analysed into 'usable reserves' (i.e. those that can be applied to fund expenditure) and other reserves. The Statement shows how the movements in the year of the Partnership's reserves are broken down between gains and losses incurred in accordance with generally accepted accounting practices and the statutory adjustments required to return to the amounts chargeable to the Constituent Authorities. The net increase/decrease line shows the movement in the year for the various reserves and fund following these adjustments.

2023/24					2024/25			
General Fund £000	Total Usable Reserves £000	Unusable Reserves £000	Total Reserves £000		General Fund £000	Total Usable Reserves £000	Unusable Reserves £000	Total Reserves £000
64	64	39	103	Balance brought forward	71	71	613	684
Movement in reserves								
376	376	205	581	Total Comprehensive Expenditure and income	(190)	(190)	(245)	(435)
66	66	(66)	-	Adjustments between accounting basis and funding basis under regulations (note 6)	251	251	(251)	-
442	442	139	581	Net Increase/(Decrease)	61	61	(496)	(435)
(435)	(435)	435	-	Transfers to/from Other Statutory Reserves	0	0	0	-
7	7	574	581	Increase/(Decrease)	61	61	(496)	(435)
71	71	613	684	Balance at 31 March 2025	132	132	117	249

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Balance Sheet

The Balance Sheet shows the value as at the Balance Sheet date of the assets and liabilities recognised by the Partnership. The net assets of the Partnership (assets less liabilities) are matched by the reserves held by the Partnership. Reserves are reported in two categories. The first category of reserves are usable reserves, i.e. those reserves that the Partnership may use to provide services. The second category of reserves is those that the Partnership is not able to use to provide services. This category of reserves includes reserves that hold unrealised gains and losses (for example the Pension Reserve) and reserves that hold timing differences shown in the Movement in Reserves Statement line 'Adjustments between accounting basis and funding basis under regulations'.

31/03/24 £000		Notes	31/03/25 £000
375	Property Plant and Equipment	7	136
-	RoU Property IFRS16 Assets	16	67
375	Long Term Assets		203
4,255	Short term debtors	17	1,780
4,255	Current assets		1,780
256	Long term investment (net pension asset)	14	0
-	Long term investment (IFRS Lease Liability)		(69)
256	Long term assets		(69)
(2,222)	Cash and cash equivalents and advances from Highland Council	10	(1,517)
(1,980)	Short term creditors	18	(148)
(4,202)	Current liabilities		(1,665)
-	Other long term liabilities	14	-
-	Long term liabilities		-
684	Net assets		249
71	General Fund	8a	132
256	Pensions reserves	8b	0
375	Capital Adjustment Account	8c	134
(18)	Employee statutory adjustment account	8d	(17)
684	Total reserves		249

The unaudited accounts were issued on 30 June 2025 and the audited accounts were authorised for issue on 7 November 2025.



Brian Porter CPFA
Treasurer
07 November 2025

The notes on pages 29 to 53 form part of these financial statements.

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Cash Flow Statement

The Cash Flow Statement shows the changes in cash and cash equivalents of the Partnership during the reporting period. The statement shows how the Partnership generates and uses cash and cash equivalents by classifying cash flows as operating, investing and financing activities. The amount of net cash flows arising from operating activities is a key indicator of the extent to which the operations of the Partnership are funded by way of requisitions or from the recipients of services provided by the Partnership. Investing activities represent the extent to which cash outflows have been made for resources which are intended to contribute to the Partnership's future service delivery. Cash flows arising from financing activities are useful in predicting claims on future cash flows by providers of capital (i.e. borrowing) to the Partnership.

2023/24 £000		Notes	2024/25 £000
376	Net (surplus)/deficit on the provision of services	1	(190)
35	Adjust net (surplus)/deficit on the provision of services for non-cash movements	9	1,042
-	Adjust for items included in the net (surplus)/deficit on the provision of services that are investing and financing activities		(128)
411	Net cash flow from operating activities		724
-	Financing activities		(19)
411	Net Increase (Decrease) in cash and cash equivalents		705
(2,633)	Cash and cash equivalents at the beginning of the year		(2,222)
(2,222)	Cash and cash equivalents at the end of the year	10	(1,517)

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Accounting Policies and notes to the Accounts

1. Expenditure and funding analysis

This statement shows for the Partnership, how annual expenditure is used and funded from resources (government grants, other grants and other income); in comparison with those resources consumed or earned, in accordance with generally accepted accounting practices. Income and expenditure accounted for under generally accepted accounting practices is presented more fully in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement.

Net Expenditure chargeable to the General Fund	2023/24 Adjustments between Funding and Accounting Basis	Net Expenditure in the CIES		Net Expenditure chargeable to the General Fund	2024/25 Adjustments between Funding and Accounting Basis	Net Expenditure in the CIES
£000	£000	£000		£000	£000	£000
858	11	869	Staff costs	1,037	22	1,059
18	60	78	Property costs	20	241	261
33	-	33	Travel and subsistence costs	27	-	27
26	-	26	Administration and meeting costs	42	-	42
1,192	-	1,192	Research and strategy development costs	401	-	401
9	-	9	Publicity costs	18	-	18
2,010	-	2,010	European projects costs	1,147	-	1,147
57	-	57	Support services	74	-	74
(4,011)	-	(4,011)	Income	(2,631)	-	(2,631)
193	71	264	Cost of Services	135	263	399
(635)	(5)	(640)	Other Income and Expenditure	(196)	(12)	(208)
(442)	66	(376)	(Surplus)/Deficit	(61)	251	191
(64)			Opening General Fund Balance at 31 March 2024	(71)		
(442)			(Surplus) / Deficit	(61)		
435			Transfers (from)/to reserves	-		
(71)			Closing General Fund Balance at 31 March 2025	(132)		

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Note to the Expenditure and Funding Analysis

This note provides a reconciliation of the main adjustments to Net Expenditure Chargeable to the General Fund to arrive at the amounts in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement. The relevant transfers between reserves are explained in the Movement in Reserves Statement.

HiTrans acted as an agent for the PAVe project, it had given grant for the project, a proportion of which is passed on to partners. There were no transactions within 2024/25 (2023/24 passed on £0.719m and received £0.719m). Within 2024/25 HiTrans acted as an agent for the SATE project, grant of £0.733m was received and passed on to partners within the year.

Adjustments between Funding and Accounting Basis

2023/24					2024/25			
Net Change for the pensions Adjustments	Employee Annual Leave Accrued Adjustment	Capital Adjustment Account	Total Adjustments	Adjustments from General Fund to arrive at the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure	Net Change for the pensions Adjustments	Employee Annual Leave Accrued Adjustment	Capital Adjustment Account	Total Adjustments
£000	£000	£000	£000		£000	£000	£000	£000
6	5	-	11	Staff costs	23	(1)	-	22
-	-	60	60	Depreciation	-	-	37	37
-	-	-	-	IFRS Lease Repayments	-	-	(19)	(19)
-	-	-	-	Impairment	-	-	351	351
-	-	-	-	CFCR Asset Additions	-	-	(128)	(128)
6	5	60	71	Net Cost of Services	23	(1)	241	263
(5)	-	-	(5)	Other income & expenditure	(12)	-	-	(12)
1	5	60	66	Total Adjustments	11	(1)	241	251

2. Accounting Policies

General principles

The Annual Accounts summarises the transactions of the Partnership for the 2024/25 financial year and its position at the year end of 31 March 2025. The Partnership is required to prepare Annual Accounts by the Local Authority Accounts (Scotland) Regulations 2014 and section 12 of the Local Government in Scotland Act 2003 requires that they be prepared in accordance with proper accounting practices. These practices primarily comprise the Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2024/25 and the Service Reporting Code of Practice 2024/25, supported by International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS).

The accounting convention adopted in the Annual Accounts is principally historic cost, modified by the revaluation of certain categories of non-current assets and financial instruments.

The accounts are prepared on a going concern basis.

Accruals of income and expenditure

Activity is accounted for in the year that it takes place, not simply when cash payments are made or received. In particular:

- Revenue from the sale of goods is recognised when the Partnership transfers the significant risks and rewards of ownership to the purchaser and it is probable that economic benefits or service potential associated with the transaction will flow to the Partnership.
- Revenue from the provision of services is recognised when the Partnership can measure reliably the percentage of completion of the transaction and it is probable that economic benefits or service potential associated with the transaction will flow to the Partnership.
- Supplies are recorded as expenditure when they are consumed – where there is a gap between the date supplies are received and their consumption; they are carried as inventories on the Balance Sheet.
- Expenses in relation to services received (including those rendered by officers of the Partnership) are recorded as expenditure when the services are received, rather than when payments are made.
- Interest payable on borrowings and receivable on investments is accounted for on the basis of the effective interest rate for the relevant financial instruments rather than the cash flows fixed or determined by the contract.
- Where revenue and expenditure have been recognised but cash has not been received or paid, a debtor or creditor for the relevant amount is recorded in the Balance Sheet. Where there is evidence that debts are unlikely to be settled, the balance of debtors is written down and a charge made to revenue for the income that might not be collected.

Cash and cash equivalents

The Highland Council loans fund provides all the day to day banking requirements of the Partnership. The balance of £1.517m (2023/24 £2.222m) represents the negative balance in Partnership funds that temporarily sit with the Highland Council loans fund.

Employee benefits

Benefits payable during employment

Short-term employee benefits (those that fall due wholly within 12 months of the year-end), such as wages and salaries, bonuses, paid annual leave and paid sick leave for current employees, are recognised as an

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expense in the year in which the employees render service to the Partnership. An accrual is made against services in the Surplus or Deficit on the Provision of Services for the cost of holiday entitlements and other forms of leave earned by employees but not taken before the year-end and which employees can carry forward into the next financial year. The accrual is made at the remuneration rates applicable in the following financial year and is required under statute to be reversed out of the General Fund balance by a credit to the Employee Statutory Adjustment Account in the Movement in Reserves Statement.

Post-Employment Benefits

Employees of the Partnership are admitted to the Highland Council Pension Fund which administers the Local Government Pension Scheme. As of 1 April 2015 this is a defined benefit career average revalued earnings (CARE) scheme.

Local Government Pension Scheme

The Local Government Pension Scheme is accounted for as a defined benefits scheme:

- The liabilities of the Highland Council Pension Fund attributable to the Partnership are included in the Balance Sheet on an actuarial basis using the projected unit method which assesses the present value of the future payments that will be made in relation to retirement benefits earned to date, based on assumptions about mortality rates, employee turnover rates, etc, and projected earnings of current employees
- The assets of the Highland Council Pension Fund attributable to the Partnership are included in the Balance Sheet at their fair value:
 - quoted securities – current bid price
 - unquoted securities – professional estimate
 - unitised securities – current bid price
 - property – market value

The change in the net pensions asset is analysed into the following components:

Service cost comprising:

- current service cost – the increase in liabilities as a result of years of service accrued in the year – allocated in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement to the services for which the employees worked
- past service cost – the increase in liabilities as a result of a scheme amendment or curtailment whose effect relates to years of service earned in earlier years – debited to the Surplus/Deficit on the Provision of Services in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement.
- net interest on the defined benefit liability, i.e. net interest expense for the authority – the change during the period in the net defined liability (asset) that arises from the passage of time charged to the Financing and Investment Income and Expenditure line of the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement – this is calculated by applying the discount rate used to measure the net defined benefit obligation at the beginning of the period – taking into account any changes in the net defined benefit liability during the period as a result of contribution and benefit payments.

Re-measurements of the net defined benefit liability (asset) comprising:

- the return on plan assets – excluding amounts included in net interest on the net pensions asset – charged to the Pensions Reserve as Other Comprehensive Income and Expenditure.
- actuarial gains and losses – changes in the net pensions asset that arise because events have not coincided with assumptions made at the last actuarial valuation or because the actuaries have updated their assumptions – charged to Pensions Reserve as Other Comprehensive Income and Expenditure.

Contributions paid to the Highland Council pension fund

- cash paid as employer's contributions to the pension fund in settlement of liabilities; not accounted for as an expense.

In relation to retirement benefits, statutory provisions require the General Fund balance to be charged with the amount payable by the Partnership to the pension fund or directly to pensioners in the year, not the amount calculated according to the relevant accounting standards. In the Movement in Reserves Statement, this means that there are appropriations to and from the Pensions Reserve to remove the notional debits and credits for retirement benefits and replace them with debits for the cash paid to the pension fund and pensioners and any such amounts payable but unpaid at the year-end.

The negative balance that arises on the Pensions Reserve thereby measures the beneficial impact on the General Fund of being required to account for retirement benefits on the basis of cash flows rather than as benefits are earned by employees.

Discretionary Benefits

The Partnership also has restricted powers to make discretionary awards of retirement benefits in the event of early retirements. Any liabilities estimated to arise as a result of an award to any member of staff are accrued in the year of the decision to make the award and accounted for using the same policies as are applied to the Local Government Pension Scheme.

Events after the reporting period

Events after the reporting period are those events, both favourable and unfavourable, that occur between the end of the reporting period and the date when the Annual Accounts is authorised for issue. Two types of events can be identified:

Adjusting events

- those that provide evidence of conditions that existed at the end of the reporting period – the Annual Accounts is adjusted to reflect such events

Non-adjusting events

- those that are indicative of conditions that arose after the reporting period – the Annual Accounts is not adjusted to reflect such events, but where a category of events would have a material effect disclosure is made in the notes of the nature of the events and their estimated financial effect.

Events taking place after the date of authorisation for issue are not reflected in the Annual Accounts.

Government grants and contributions

Whether paid on account, by instalments or in arrears, government grants and third-party contributions and donations are recognised as due to the Partnership when there is reasonable assurance that:

- the Partnership will comply with the conditions attached to the payments, and
- the grants or contributions will be received

Amounts recognised as due to the Partnership are not credited to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement until conditions attaching to the grant or contribution have been satisfied. Conditions are stipulations that specify that the future economic benefits or service potential embodied in the asset acquired using the grant or contribution are required to be consumed by the recipient as specified or future economic benefits or service potential must be returned to the transferor.

Monies advanced as grants and contributions for which conditions have not been satisfied are carried in the Balance Sheet as creditors. When conditions are satisfied, the grant or contribution is credited to the relevant service line (attributable revenue grants/contributions) or Taxation and Non-Specific Grant Income (non-ring-fenced revenue grants and all capital grants) in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement.

Leases

Leases are classified as finance leases where the terms of the lease transfer substantially all the risks and rewards incidental to ownership of the property, plant or equipment from the lessor to the lessee. All other leases are classified as operating leases. The Partnership does not have any finance leases.

Where a lease covers both land and buildings, the land and buildings elements are considered separately for classification.

Arrangements that do not have the legal status of a lease but convey a right to use an asset in return for payment are accounted for under this policy where fulfilment of the arrangement is dependent on the use of specific assets.

The Partnership as Lessee

Operating Leases

Rentals paid under operating leases are charged to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement as an expense of the services benefiting from use of the leased property, plant or equipment. Charges are made on a straight-line basis over the life of the lease; even if this does not match the pattern of payments (e.g. there is a rent-free period at the commencement of the lease).

See Note 16 for accounting policy relating to IFRS16.

Property, plant and equipment

Property, Plant and Equipment is categorised into the following classes:

- Vehicles, Plant and Equipment.

Recognition

- Expenditure on the acquisition, creation or enhancement of Property, Plant and Equipment has been capitalised on an accrual basis;

Depreciation

- Depreciation is provided on all Property, Plant and Equipment;
- The partnership provides depreciation on its Property, Plant and Equipment in the year of acquisition, on a straight line basis over the expected life of the asset.

Measurement

- Property, Plant and Equipment are included in the Balance Sheet at Historical Cost, net of depreciation.

A de minimis level of £20,000 has been applied to all asset categories.

Provisions, Contingent liabilities and Contingent assets

Provisions

Provisions are made where an event has taken place that gives the Partnership a legal or constructive obligation that probably requires settlement by a transfer of economic benefits or service potential, and a reliable estimate can be made of the amount of the obligation. For instance, the Partnership may be involved in a court case that could eventually result in the making of a settlement or the payment of compensation.

Provisions are charged as an expense to the appropriate service line in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement in the year that the Partnership becomes aware of the obligation, and measured at the best estimate at the balance sheet date of the expenditure required to settle the obligation, taking into account relevant risks and uncertainties.

When payments are eventually made, they are charged to the provision carried in the Balance Sheet. Estimated settlements are reviewed at the end of each financial year – where it becomes less than probable

that a transfer of economic benefits will now be required (or a lower settlement than anticipated is made), the provision is reversed and credited back to the relevant service.

Where some or all of the payment required to settle a provision is expected to be recovered from another party (e.g. from an insurance claim), this is only recognised as income for the relevant service if it is virtually certain that reimbursement will be received if the Partnership settles the obligation.

Contingent liabilities

A contingent liability arises where an event has taken place that gives the Partnership a possible obligation whose existence will only be confirmed by the occurrence or otherwise of uncertain future events not wholly within the control of the Partnership. Contingent liabilities also arise in circumstances where a provision would otherwise be made but either it is not probable that an outflow of resources will be required or the amount of the obligation cannot be measured reliably.

Contingent liabilities are not recognised in the Balance Sheet but disclosed in a note to the accounts.

Contingent assets

A contingent asset arises where an event has taken place that gives the Partnership a possible asset whose existence will only be confirmed by the occurrence or otherwise of uncertain future events not wholly within the control of the Partnership.

Contingent assets are not recognised in the Balance Sheet but disclosed in a note to the accounts where it is probable that there will be an inflow of economic benefits or service potential.

Reserves

Legislation permits Regional Transport Partnerships to hold a modest usable reserve and certain reserves are kept to manage the accounting processes for employee benefits and retirement benefits and are classed as unusable resources for the Partnership.

VAT

VAT payable is included as an expense only to the extent that it is not recoverable from Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs. VAT receivable is excluded from income.

3. Accounting standards that have been issued but have not yet been adopted

The following accounting standards and amendments to existing standards will be adopted within the 2025/26 Code effective from 1 April 2025. There is therefore no impact on the 2024/25 financial statements.

- IAS 21 The Effects of Changes in Foreign Exchange Rate (Lack of Exchangeability) issued in August 2023. The amendments to IAS 21 clarify how an entity should assess whether a currency is exchangeable and how it should determine a spot exchange rate when exchangeability is lacking, as well as require the disclosure of information that enables users of financial statements to understand the impact of a currency not being exchangeable.
- IFRS 17 Insurance Contracts issued in May 2017. IFRS 17 replaces IFRS 4 and sets out principles for recognition, measurement, presentation and disclosure of insurance contracts.
- The changes to the measurement of non-investment assets within the 2025/26 Code include adaptations and interpretations of IAS 16 Property, Plant and Equipment and IAS 38 Intangible Assets. These include setting out three revaluation processes for operational property, plant and equipment, requiring indexation for tangible non-investment assets and a requirement to value intangible assets using the historical cost approach.

4. Critical judgements in applying accounting policies

In applying the accounting policies set out in Note 2, the Partnership has had to make certain judgements about complex transactions or those involving uncertainty about future events. There are no critical judgements to disclose.

5. Assumptions made about the future and other major sources of estimation uncertainty

The Annual Accounts contains estimated figures that are based on assumptions made by the Partnership about the future or that are otherwise uncertain. Estimates are made taking into account historical experience, current trends and other relevant factors. However, because balances cannot be determined with certainty, actual results could be materially different from the assumptions and estimates.

The only item in the Board's Balance Sheet at 31 March 2025 for which there is a significant risk of material adjustment in the forthcoming financial year is the pension asset. Estimation of the net liability to pay pensions depends on a number of complex judgements relating to the discount rate used, the rate at which salaries are projected to increase, changes in retirement ages, mortality rates and expected returns on pension fund assets. Actuaries are engaged to provide the Partnership with expert advice about the assumptions to be applied. The impact of changes in the assumptions used on the pension asset has been assessed by the actuaries and is illustrated in Note 14.

6. Movement in Reserves Statement – adjustments between accounting basis and funding basis under regulations

This note details the adjustments that are made to the total comprehensive income and expenditure recognised by the Partnership in the year in accordance with proper accounting practice to the resources that are specified by statutory provisions as being available to the Partnership to meet future capital and revenue expenditure.

General Fund £000	Unusable reserves £000	Total 2023/24 £000		General Fund £000	Unusable reserves £000	Total 2024/25 £000
Adjustments involving the Capital Adjustment Account						
60	(60)	-	Charges for Depreciation of Non-Current Assets	37	(37)	-
-	-	-	Charges for Impairment of Non-Current Assets	351	(351)	-
-	-	-	IFRS16 Lease Repayment	(19)	19	0
-	-	-	Capital expenditure charged against the General Fund	(128)	128	0
Adjustments involving the Pensions Reserve						
127	(127)	-	Reversal of items relating to post-employment benefits debited or credited to the Surplus or Deficit on the Provision of Services in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement (see note 13)	143	(143)	-
(126)	126	-	Employers' pension contributions and direct payments to pensioners payable in the year	(132)	132	-
Adjustments involving the Employee Statutory Adjustment Account						
5	(5)	-	Amount by which officer remuneration charged to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement on an accruals basis is different from remuneration chargeable in the year in accordance with statutory requirements	(1)	1	-
66	(66)	-	Total adjustments	251	(251)	-

7. Property, Plant and Equipment

7.1 Movements on Balance:

Movements in 2024/25

2023/24			2024/25		
Vehicles Plant and Equipment		Total Property Plant and Equipment		Vehicles Plant and Equipment	Total Property Plant and Equipment
£000		£000		£000	£000
			Cost or Valuation		
0		0	At 1 st April 2024	435	435
435		435	Additions	128	128
0		0	Impairment/Revaluation	(351)	(351)
435		435	At 31st March 2025	213	213
			Accumulated Depreciation		
0		0	At 1 st April 2024	(60)	(60)
(60)		(60)	Depreciation Charge	(17)	(17)
(60)		(60)	At 31st March 2025	(77)	(77)
			Net Book Value		
375		375	At 31st March 2025	136	136

7.2 Depreciation

The following useful lives have been used in the calculation of Depreciation

- Vehicles, Plant and Equipment: 10 Years

The Partnership provides depreciation on its Property, Plant and Equipment in the year of acquisition.

7.3 Capital Commitments

As at 31st March 2025, the Partnership had no Capital Commitments

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8. Balance Sheet – Reserves

31/03/24 £000		31/03/25 £000
71	General Fund (a)	132
256	Pensions Reserves (b)	0
375	Capital Adjustment Account (c)	134
(18)	Employee statutory adjustment account (d)	(17)
804		249

(a) Movements in Hitrans usable General Fund reserve is detailed in the Movement in Reserves Statement and Note 6.

(b) Pensions Reserve

The Pensions Reserve absorbs the timing differences arising from the different arrangements for accounting for post-employment benefits and for funding benefits in accordance with statutory provisions. The Partnership accounts for post-employment benefits in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement as the benefits are earned by employees accruing years of service, updating the liabilities recognised to reflect inflation, changing assumptions and investment returns on any resources set aside to meet the costs. However, statutory arrangements require benefits earned to be financed as the Partnership makes employer's contributions to pension funds or pays any pensions for which it is directly responsible. This has resulted in a credit balance on the Pensions Reserve showing a surplus in the benefits earned by past and current employees and the resources the Partnership has set aside to meet them. Therefore, the asset ceiling adjustment has been applied as per IFRIC 14. See Note 14 for further details.

2023/24 £000		2024/25 £000
52	Balance at 1 April	256
160	Return on plan assets (excluding the amount included in the net interest expense)	(33)
185	Actuarial (gains)/losses arising on changes in financial assumptions	498
55	IFRIC 14 Asset Ceiling adjustment	(738)
100	Actuarial (gains)/losses arising on changes in demographic assumptions	5
(295)	Experience adjustments	23
205		(245)
(127)	Reversal of items relating to retirement benefits debited or credited to the surplus or deficit on the provision of services in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement	(143)
126	Employer's pension contributions and direct payments to pensioners payable in the year	132
256	Balance at 31 March	0

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(c) Capital Adjustment Account

The Capital Adjustment Account absorbs timing differences arising from the different arrangements for accounting for the consumption of non-current assets and for financing the acquisition, construction or enhancement of those assets under statutory provisions. The account is debited with the cost of acquisition, construction or enhancement as depreciation, impairment losses and amortisations are charged to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Account.

Note 6 provides details of the source of all the transactions posted to the account, apart from any involving other reserves.

2023/24 £000		2024/25 £000
-	Balance at 1 April 2024	375
(60)	Charges for depreciation on non-current assets	(37)
(60)		338
435	Movement in the donated assets account credited to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement	-
-	Charges for Impairment of Non-Current Assets	(351)
-	IFRS16 Lease Repayment	19
-	Capital expenditure charged against the General Fund	128
375	Balance at 31 March 2025	134

(d) Employee Statutory Adjustment Account

The Employee Statutory Adjustment Account absorbs the differences that would otherwise arise on the general fund balance from accruing for compensated absences earned but not taken in the year. Statutory arrangements require that the impact on the general fund balance is neutralised by transfers to or from the account.

2023/24 £000		2024/25 £000
(13)	Balance at 1 April 2024	(18)
13	Settlement or cancellation of accrual made at the end of the preceding year	18
(18)	Amounts accrued at the end of the current year	(17)
(18)	Balance at 31 March 2025	(17)

9. Cash flow statement – adjustments to surplus/deficit on the provision of services

2023/24 £000		2024/25 £000
	Non-cash items	
1	IAS 19 transactions	11
(435)	Donated Asset	-
60	Depreciation	37
-	Impairment	351
	Items on accruals basis	
(913)	Decrease/(Increase) in debtors	2,475
1,322	(Decrease)/increase in creditors	(1,832)
35	Total adjustments to net (surplus)/deficit on the provision of services for non-cash movements	1,042

10. Cash flow statement – cash and cash equivalents

The balances of cash and cash equivalents comprise:

2023/24 £000		2024/25 £000
(2,222)	Temporary Advances from Highland Council Loans Fund	(1,517)
(2,222)	Total cash and cash equivalents	(1,517)

11. External audit costs

The Partnership has incurred the following costs in relation to the audit of the Annual Accounts, certification of grant claims and statutory inspections and to non-audit services provided by external auditors

2023/24 £000		2024/25 £000
13	Fees payable to Audit Scotland with regard to external audit services carried out by the appointed auditor for the year	13

No non-audit services were provided by the external auditor during the year.

12. Taxation and non-specific grant income

2023/24 £000		2024/25 £000
200	Requisitions from constituent authorities	200

13. Grant income

The Partnership credited the following specific grants to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement

2023/24 £000		2024/25 £000
523	Scottish Government – core funding	497
-	Scottish Government – Scottish Islands Passport	8
331	Scottish Government – Mobility as a Service (MaaS) project	61
999	Scottish Government – Regional Active Travel Fund	13
96	Active Travel Projects	42
24	Scotland's 8 th City – the Smart City – European development of urban centres project	16
78	Green Passenger Transport in Rural Areas (G-PaTRA) – European transport project	-
(10)	Stronger Combined – European transport project	-
-	Mobility Opportunities Valuable to Everybody (MOVE) – European transport project	-
-	Paths for all (CNES)	17
(17)	Planning for Autonomous Vehicles (PAVe) – European transport project	-
968	FASTER	(116)
80	EHUBS	-
25	Hi-Bike	26
-	People and Places	1,871
-	SATE	45
-	EVIF	53
-	Ruralities	79
-	CAV	19
3,097		2,631

14. Defined benefit pension schemes

Participation in pension schemes

As part of the terms and conditions of employment of its officers, the Partnership makes contributions towards the cost of post-employment benefits. Although these benefits will not actually be payable until employees retire, the Partnership has a commitment to make the payments and this needs to be disclosed at the time that employees earn their future entitlement.

The authority participates in one post-employment scheme:

- The Local Government Pension Scheme, administered locally by the Highland Council Pension Fund – This is a funded defined benefit career average revalued earnings (CARE) scheme, meaning that the Board and employees pay contributions into a fund, calculated at a level intended to balance the pension's liabilities with investment assets.

Transactions relating to post-employment benefits

The Partnership recognises the cost of retirement benefits in the reported cost of services when they are earned by employees, rather than when the benefits are eventually paid as pensions. However, the charge that is required to be made against requisitions is based on the cash payable in the year, so the real cost of post-employment/retirement benefits is reversed out of the General Fund via the Movement in Reserves

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Statement. The following transactions have been made in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement and the General Fund Balance via the Movement in Reserves Statement during the year.

2023/24 £000		2024/25 £000
	Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement	
	Cost of services	
132	Current service cost	155
-	Past service cost (including curtailments)	-
<u>132</u>		<u>155</u>
	<i>Financing and investment income and expenditure</i>	
119	Interest cost	133
(124)	Interest income on plan assets	(145)
<u>(5)</u>		<u>(12)</u>
127	Total post-employment benefits charged to the surplus or deficit on the provision of services	143
	Other post-employment benefits charged to the comprehensive income and expenditure statement	
	<i>Re-measurement of the net defined benefit liability comprising:</i>	
160	Return on plan assets (excluding the amount included in the net interest expense)	(33)
185	Actuarial losses/(gains) arising on changes in financial assumptions	498
55	IFRIC 14 Asset Ceiling Adjustment	(738)
100	Actuarial losses/(gains) arising on changes in demographic assumptions	5
(295)	Experience Adjustments	23
<u>205</u>	Total post-employment benefits charged to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement	<u>(245)</u>
	Movement in reserves statement	
(127)	Reversal of net charges made to the surplus or deficit on the provision of services for post-employment benefits in accordance with the code	(143)
	Actual amount charged against the General Fund balance for pensions in the year	
<u>126</u>	Employers' contributions payable to the scheme	<u>132</u>

Pension assets and liabilities recognised in the Balance Sheet

	2023/24 £000	2024/25 £000
Present value of the defined benefit obligation	(2,691)	(2,422)
Fair value of pension fund assets	2,947	3,160
IFRIC 14 Asset Ceiling Adjustment	-	(738)
Net (liability)/asset arising from defined benefit obligation	256	-

IAS19 limits the measurement of a net defined benefit asset to the lower of the surplus in the defined benefit plan and the asset ceiling. The asset ceiling is defined as the present value of any economic benefits available in the form of reductions in future contributions to the plan.

As there is no unconditional right to a refund, the actuaries have calculated whether there are economic benefits in the form of reductions in future contributions, in accordance with IFRIC14.

In 2023/24 the calculation identified that there were no economic benefit reductions to be applied. Therefore, no adjustment to the defined benefit plan asset has been required.

In 2024/25 the economic benefit reductions were calculated as £0.738m. Therefore, an adjustment to the defined benefit plan asset has been required in accordance with IAS19 and IFRIC14.

Information about the defined benefit obligation as at 31 March 2025 – Funded Obligations

	Liability split	
	£000	Percentage (%)
Active members	1,644	67.87
Pensioner members	778	32.13
Total	2,422	100

The durations are weighted averages as at the last formal valuation date.

Assets and liabilities in relation to post-employment benefits

Reconciliation of present value of scheme liabilities (defined benefit obligation)

2023/24 £000		2024/25 £000
2,483	Opening value	2,691
132	Current service cost	155
119	Interest cost	133
69	Actuarial loss/(gain)	(526)
(156)	Estimated Benefits paid net of transfers in	(83)
44	Contributions by scheme participants	52
2,691	Closing value	2,422

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Reconciliation of fair value of the scheme assets

2023/24		2024/25
£000		£000
2,535	Opening value	2,947
124	Expected return on Scheme assets	145
219	Actuarial (loss)/gain	(33)
126	Contributions by employer	132
44	Contributions by Scheme participants	52
(156)	Estimated Benefits paid net of transfer in and including unfunded	(83)
55	IFRIC 14 Asset Ceiling Adjustment	0
2,947	Closing value	3,160

Analysis of Pension Fund's Assets

The Local Government Pension Scheme's assets consist of the following categories, by proportion of the total assets held:

2023/24		2024/25
6%	Cash and cash equivalents	6%
	Equity securities:	
	<i>By Industry type</i>	
10%	Consumer	8%
6%	Manufacturing	4%
0%	Energy and utilities	0%
5%	Financial institutions	3%
4%	Health and Care	2%
4%	Information Technology	3%
0%	Other	0%
	Debt securities:	
	<i>By sector</i>	
0%	Property	0%
6%	Corporate Bonds (investment grade)	15%
2%	UK Government	12%
6%	Other	5%
7%	Private Equity	6%
	Property:	
9%	UK	9%
	Other Investment Funds:	
22%	Equity	16%
1%	Bonds	0%

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0%	Hedge	0%
0%	Commodities	0%
6%	Infrastructure	6%
6%	Other	5%
<u>100%</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>100%</u>

Notes:

- a) All pension fund assets other than private equity and property have quoted prices in active markets
- b) The risks relating to assets in the scheme are also analysed below:

Fair value of pension fund assets		
2023/24		2024/25
£000		£000
	Equity Instruments	
2,222	• Quoted in an active market	2,464
<u>726</u>	• Not quoted in an active market	<u>696</u>
<u>2,948</u>	Subtotal equity instruments	<u>3,160</u>

Basis for estimating assets and liabilities

Liabilities have been assessed on an actuarial basis using the projected unit credit method, an estimate of the pensions that will be payable in future years dependent on assumptions about mortality rates, salary levels, etc. The Local Government Pension Scheme has been assessed by Hymans Robertson LLP, an independent firm of actuaries, estimates for the Highland Council Pension Fund being based on the latest full valuation of the scheme as at 31 March 2020.

The significant assumptions used by the actuary have been:

2023/24		2024/25
	Mortality Assumptions:	
	Longevity at age 65 for current pensioners (years)	
23.4	• Men	23.3
23.9	• Women	23.9
	Longevity at age 65 for future pensioners (years)	
22.9	• Men	22.8
24.9	• Women	24.9
2.75%	Rate of inflation	2.75%
3.55%	Rate of increase in salaries	3.55%
2.95%	Rate of increase in pensions	2.95%
4.85%	Rate for discounting fund liabilities	5.80%

The estimation of the defined benefit obligation is sensitive to the actuarial assumptions set out in the table above. The sensitivity analyses below have been determined based on reasonably possible changes of

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assumptions occurring at the end of the reporting period and assumes for each change that the assumption changes while all the other assumptions remain constant.

Impact on the Defined Benefit Obligation in the Fund		
	Approximate % increase	Approximate monetary amount (£000)
Real Discount Rate (decrease by 0.1%)	2%	49
Member life expectancy (increase by 1 year)	4%	97
Salary Increase Rate (increase by 0.1%)	0%	3
Pension increase Rate (COI) (increase by 0.1%)	2%	47

Impact on the Partnership's Cash Flow

The aims of the fund are to:

- Ensure that sufficient resources are available to meet all liabilities as they fall due
- Enable employer contributions to be kept as nearly constant as possible and at reasonable cost to the taxpayers and employers
- Manage employers liability effectively
- Maximise the returns from investments within reasonable risk parameters

The employer's contributions are set by the Fund actuary at each triennial actuarial valuation (the most recent being as at 31 March 2023 for the 2024/25 Annual Accounts), or at any time as instructed to do so by the Council. The actuaries have estimated that contributions for the year to 31 March 2026 will be approximately £0.132m.

15. Related parties

The Partnership is required to disclose material transactions with related parties – bodies or individuals that have the potential to control or influence the Partnership or to be controlled or influenced by the Partnership. Disclosure of these transactions allows readers to assess the extent to which the Partnership might have been constrained in its ability to operate independently or might have secured the ability to limit another party's ability to bargain freely with the Partnership.

Members of the Board have direct control over the Board's financial and operating policies. There were no transactions with members other than the allowances for travel and subsistence within the scope of their role. Consideration was given to the Senior Employee. There were no transactions with the Senior Employee other than the allowances shown in the Remuneration Report.

Highland Council

The Highland Council provided £0.091m representing 45.5% of the requisition funding for the Partnership and holds 3 of the 8 votes on the Board. The Highland Council also provided £0.010m towards the cost of the Partnership employing a Public Transport Information Officer £0.010 towards the Advanced Air Mobility work at John O'Groats, £0.045m contribution towards the Behaviour change programme, £0.025m shared prosperity fund grant. Hitrans paid £0.050m to the Highland Council for the central support charge, and £0.087m towards a cycle storage,

Moray Council

Moray Council provided £0.047m representing 23.5% of the requisition funding for the Partnership and holds 2 of the 8 votes on the Board. Moray Council also provided £0.008m towards the cost of the Partnership employing a Public Transport Information Officer, and £0.025m contribution towards the Behaviour change programme. HiTrans paid £0.021m to Moray Council for Cycle storage and a bike port.

Argyll and Bute Council

Argyll and Bute Council provided £0.026m representing 13.0% of the requisition funding for the Partnership and holds 1 of the 8 votes on the Board. Argyll and Bute Council also provided £0.008m towards the cost of the Partnership employing a Public Transport Information Officer, £0.019 towards a working fund for EVIF shared service and £0.025m contribution towards the Behaviour change programme. HiTrans paid Argyll and Bute Council £0.015m for bike shelters and cycle racks, and £0.020 towards the bikability storage grant.

Comhairle Nan Eilean Siar

The Comhairle Nan Eilean Siar provided £0.019m representing 9.5% of the requisition funding for the Partnership and holds 1 of the 8 votes on the Board. Comhairle Nan Eilean Siar also provided £0.005m towards the cost of the Partnership employing a Public Transport Information Officer, £0.007m towards Design work procured through SCAPE framework, £0.013m towards the Procurement of Balivanich Active Tavel, £0.011m towards the local authority direct award for 24/25, £0.011m towards a working fund for EVIF shared service, and £0.053m contribution towards the Behaviour change programme. HiTrans paid Comhairle Nan Eilean Siar £0.09m for Legal, HR and admin support, and £0.006m towards bike storage facilities.

Orkney Islands Council

Orkney Islands Council provided £0.017m representing 8.5% of the requisition funding for the Partnership and holds 1 of the 8 votes on the Board. Orkney Islands Council also provided £0.005m towards the cost of the Partnership employing a Public Transport Information Officer, £0.011m towards a working fund for EVIF shared service, and £0.025m contribution towards the Behaviour change programme. HiTrans paid Orkney Island Council £0.001m to help towards enabling families to borrow bicycles, £0.027m towards bike shelters, and £0.044 towards the Kirkwall mobility audit.

Shetland Island Council

Shetland Island Council provided £0.005m towards the feasibility study and Combined Island strategy and expansion plan project, and £0.011m towards a working fund for EVIF shared service.

Scottish Government

Scottish Government exerts significant influence through legislation and grant funding. Scottish Government provided grant funding of £0.497m for the Partnership, and grant funding of £1.672m For the People and Places project.

City of Edinburgh

HiTrans paid City of Edinburgh £0.003m towards the SP Energy Networks.

NHS Highland

HiTrans Paid NHS Highland £0.011m for HiBike expansion works are Raigmore Hospital.

NHS Eileanan Siar Western Isles

HiTrans paid NHS Eileanan Siar Western Isles £0.052m towards the cycle programme.

16. Leases

International Financial Reporting Standard 16 (IFRS 16)

HiTrans adopted IFRS 16 (Leases) with effect from 1 April 2024. The main impact of the requirements of IFRS 16 is that, for arrangements previously accounted for as operating leases (i.e. without recognising the leased vehicles, plant, equipment, property and land as an asset, and future rents as a liability), a right-of-use asset and a lease liability are to be brought on to the balance sheet at 1 April 2024. Leases for items of low value and leases that expire on or before 31 March 2026 are exempt from the new arrangements.

IFRS 16 has been applied retrospectively, but with the cumulative effect recognised at 1 April 2024. This means that right-of-use assets and lease liabilities have been calculated as if IFRS 16 had always applied but recognised in 2024/2025 and not by adjusting prior year figures. The details of the changes in accounting policies are disclosed below.

A. Definition of a lease

Previously, HiTrans determined at contract inception whether an arrangement is or contains a lease under IFRIC 4 and IAS 17. Under IFRS 16, the partnership will assess whether a contract is or contains a lease based on the definition of a lease as explained below:

A contract is, or contains a lease, if the contract conveys the right to control the use of an identified asset for a period of time in exchange for consideration. To assess whether a contract conveys the right to control the use of an identified asset, the partnership assesses whether:

- The contract involves the use of an identified asset – this may be specified explicitly or implicitly and should be physically distinct or represent substantially all the capacity of a physically distinct asset. If the supplier had a substantive substitution right, then the asset is not identified;
- HiTrans has the right to obtain substantially all of the economic benefits and service potential from use of the asset throughout the period of use; and
- HiTrans has the right to direct the use of the asset throughout the period of use. HiTrans has this right when it has the decision-making rights that are most relevant to changing how and for what purpose the asset is used. In rare cases where the decision about how and for what purpose the asset is used is predetermined, HiTrans has the right to direct the use of the asset if either:
 - HiTrans has the right to operate the asset; or
 - HiTrans designed the asset in a way that predetermines how and for what purpose it will be used

On transition to IFRS 16, HiTrans elected to apply the practical expedient to grandfather the assessment of which transactions are leases. It applied IFRS 16 only to contracts that were previously identified as leases. Contracts that were not previously identified as leases under IAS 17 and IFRIC 4 were not reassessed for whether there is a lease. Therefore, the definition of a leases under IFRS 16 was applied only to contracts entered into or changed on or after 1 April 2024.

B. As a lessee

As a lessee, HiTrans previously classified leases as operating or finance leases based on its assessment of whether the lease transferred significantly all of the risks and rewards incidental to ownership of the underlying asset to HiTrans. Under IFRS 16, HiTrans recognises right-of-use assets and lease liabilities for most leases – i.e. these leases are on-balance sheet.

HiTrans decided to apply recognition exemptions to short-term leases and has elected not to recognise right-of-use assets and lease liabilities for short term leases that have a term of 12 months or less and leases of low value assets. HiTrans recognises the lease payments associated with these leases as an expense on a straight-line basis over the lease term.

i. Leases classified as operating leases under IAS 17

At transition, lease liabilities were measured at the present value of the remaining lease payments, discounted at HiTrans incremental borrowing rate as at 1 April 2024. Right of use assets are measured at either

- Their carrying amount as if IFRS 16 had been applied since the commencement date, discounted using HiTrans incremental borrowing rate at the date of initial application or
- An amount equal to the lease liability, adjusted by the amount of any prepaid or accrued lease payments
- For right-of-use assets for peppercorn or nominal lease payments a right-of use asset shall be recognised at fair value on 1 April 2024 with any gain, being the difference between that fair value and the lease liability, recognised as a donated asset as an adjustment to opening balances.

The Council used the following practical expedients when applying IFRS 16 to leases previously classified as operating leases under IAS 17:

- Lease liabilities are measured at the present value of the remaining lease payments at 1 April 2024., discounted by the Council's incremental borrowing rate at that date.
- A single discount has been applied to portfolios of leases with reasonably similar characteristics.
- The weighted average of the incremental borrowing rates used to discount liabilities was 4.92%.
- Right-of use assets are measured at the amount of the lease liability, adjusted for any prepaid or accrued lease payments that were in the balance sheet on 31 March 2024 – any initial direct costs have been excluded.
- All leases were assessed as to whether they were onerous at 31 March 2024, so right-of-use assets have not been subject to an impairment review – carrying amounts have been reduced by any provisions for onerous contracts that were in the 31 March 2024 balance sheet.

Application of the Code's adaptation of IFRS 16 has resulted in the following additions to the balance sheet as at 1 April 2024:

- £0.088m Property, plant and equipment (right-of-use assets)
- £0.069m Non-current creditors (lease liabilities)
- £0.020m Current creditors (lease liabilities)

The newly recognised lease liabilities of £0.088m compare with the operating lease commitments of £0.081m at 31 March 2024 disclosed in the notes to the 31 March 2024 financial statements. There has therefore been a movement of £0.007m. This is explained by the fact that the new lease liabilities exclude amounts for leases of low value items and leases that will expire before 31 March 2025, and the fact that as part of the implementation of IFRS 16 a comprehensive review of leases was completed which identified some additional leases which have now been included in the new IFRS 16 lease liability figure.

ii. *Leases classified as finance leases under IAS 17*

For leases that were classified as finance leases under IAS 17, the carrying amount of the right-of-use asset and the lease liability at 1 April 2024 are determined at the carrying amount of the lease asset and lease liability under IAS 17 immediately before that date.

C. As a lessor

HiTrans is not required to make any adjustment on transition to IFRS 16 for leases in which it acts as a lessor, except for sub-leases, or where HiTrans is party to a lease for nil consideration. Otherwise, HiTrans shall account for leases applying IFRS16 as adopted by the Code from 1 April 2024.

- Under IFRS 16, authorities acting as an intermediate lessor are required to assess the classification of a sub-lease with reference to the right-of-use asset, not the underlying asset.
- Where HiTrans is party to a lease for nil consideration, in which it is acting as lessor and the lease is classified as finance lease, the Code requires it will derecognise the asset being provided to the

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third party and recognise any unguaranteed residual value in accordance with the requirements of IFRS 16.

D. Sale-and-leaseback

HiTrans did not have any Sale and Leaseback transactions as at 1 April 2024

HiTrans as Lessee

Right of Use Assets

The table below shows the change in the value of right-of-use assets held under leases by HiTrans:

	Land and buildings	Vehicles, plant and equipment	Total
	£000	£000	£000
Balance at 1 April 2024	74	14	88
Additions			
Revaluations	-	-	-
Depreciation and Amortisation	(16)	(5)	(21)
Balance at 31 March 2025	58	9	67

Transactions under leases

HiTrans incurred the following expenses and cash flows in relation to leases:

2023/2024 £000		2024/2025 £000
	Comprehensive income and expenditure statement	
-	Interest expense on lease liabilities	4
-	Expense relating to short-term leases	6
	Cash flow statement	
-	Minimum lease payments	29

Maturity analysis of lease liabilities

The lease liabilities are due to be settled over the following time bands (measured at the undiscounted amounts of expected payments):

31/03/2024 £000		31/03/2025 £000
17	Not later than one year	29
64	Later than one year and not later than five years	52
-	Later than five years	-
81	Total undiscounted liabilities	81

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17. Short Term Debtors

2023/24		2024/25
£000		£000
1,603	Central government bodies	962
0	Other local authorities	11
<u>2,652</u>	Other entities and individuals	<u>806</u>
<u>4,254</u>	Total	<u><u>1,779</u></u>

18. Short Term Creditors

2023/24		2024/25
£000		£000
0	Central government bodies	0
0	Other local authorities	10
<u>1,980</u>	Other entities and individuals	<u>138</u>
<u>1,980</u>	Total	<u><u>148</u></u>

19. Financial Instruments Balances

The following categories of financial instruments are carried in the Balance Sheet:

Financial Assets

Current Debtors		Current Debtors
31 March 2024		31 March 2025
£000		£000
<u>4,223</u>	Amortised cost	<u>1,779</u>
<u>4,223</u>	Total Financial Assets	<u>1,779</u>
<u>31</u>	Non-financial assets	<u>0</u>
<u>4,254</u>	Total Assets	<u><u>1,779</u></u>

Non-financial assets held under current debtors consist of prepayments.

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Financial Liabilities

Current			Total	Current			Total
Cash and cash equivalents	Creditors			Cash and cash equivalents	Creditors		
31 March 2024	31 March 2024	31 March 2024		31 March 2025	31 March 2025	31 March 2025	
£000	£000	£000		£000	£000	£000	
2,222	1,980	4,202	Amortised cost	1,517	148	1,665	
2,222	1,980	4,202	Total Financial Liabilities	1,517	148	1,665	
-	-	-	Non-financial liabilities	-	-	-	
2,222	1,980	4,202	Total Liabilities	1,517	148	1,665	

Non-financial liabilities held under current creditors consist of receipts in advance.

Financial Instrument Gains and Losses

The gains and losses recognised in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement in relation to financial instruments are made up as follows:

2023/24 Surplus or Deficit on the Provision of Services £000		2024/25 Surplus or Deficit on the Provision of Services £000
(5)	Interest Expense	0

20. Contingent Liability

There are no contingent liabilities.

21. Events after Reporting Period

The unaudited Annual Accounts were issued by the Treasurer on 30 June 2025. Events taking place after this date are not reflected in the Annual Accounts or notes. Where events taking place before this date provided information about conditions existing at 31 March 2025, the figures in the Annual Accounts and notes to be adjusted in all material respects to reflect the impact of this information.