

Report to Partnership Meeting 6 February 2026

Research and Strategy Delivery

Regional Rail Update

Purpose of Report

To update members on rail matters across the HITRANS area.

Rolling Stock

In November Transport Scotland published Rail Recharged: Scotland's Fleet Transition Strategy. The revised deadline for the removal of all diesel-powered trains in Scotland is 2045, having previously been 2035.

InterCity HSTs are to be replaced by either a transitional younger lower-emission diesel trains cascaded from elsewhere or procurement and introduction of bi-mode electro-diesel trains.

On InterCity electrification is the key, but it may be discontinuous, i.e. there will be neutral sections where power will be supplied from batteries/generators. We have commented in our response to the Climate Change Plan consultation that the criss-crossing of the Highlands and Islands with overhead powerlines and substations and the availability of OHL engineers provides an opportunity to electrify the rail network, providing at the same time enhanced capability for deep sea containers.

The diesel InterCity HSTs are 50 years old and have high fuel consumption. They have been dogged by poor performance since their introduction into the ScotRail fleet. However, there has been a 13% improvement over the last year.

The interim fleet may be ex East Midlands Class 222 Meridian diesels (similar to Voyagers).

On rural routes diesels will remain until at least 2035. 158s and 170s released from Fife/Borders will replace WHL 156s and 153s ('cycle carriages') while

options are developed for independently powered trains (battery or hydrogen). So at least an end in sight for the Polar Express.

ScotRail 158s and 153s have seen improved performance of 12% and 10% respectively over the last year, with 156s flatlining.

Meanwhile, 158s are to undergo internal refurbishment to take them to 2035, which should include additional cycle spaces and improved toilets.

Faslane Station

A recent summit was attended by representatives from Network Rail, Transport Scotland, HMNB Clyde, MOD, SPT, Argyll and Bute Council and HITRANS assisted by colleagues from Systra, Stantec and Atkins.

Network Rail, ScotRail and Transport Scotland have agreed to do some additional internal work on feasibility and capacity, and the forum will reconvene after Easter.

RISK REGISTER

RTS Delivery

Impact – Mode shift, integration, economy, climate change resilience, transport investment

Policy

Impact – Energy security, decarbonisation, transport efficiency,

Financial

Impact – No current financial requirements

Recommendation

1. Members are asked to note the report.

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