

Report to Partnership Meeting 6th February 2026

RESEARCH AND STRATEGY DELIVERY

Research, Development and Delivery Draft Programme for 2026/27

PURPOSE OF REPORT

The purpose of this report is facilitating discussion on what Research, Development and Delivery activities are to be taken forward by HITRANS in 2026/27.

BACKGROUND

The Partnership agreed to include a provisional 2026/27 Programme within the Business Plan for 2025/26 to enable officers to take action without recourse to the Board for further approval if any project spend was cancelled between Partnership Board meetings allowing items approved within the Business Plan period to be brought forward. This report follows on from the programme agreed within the 2025/26 Business Plan and includes information prepared by officers on what projects could form the basis of the programme in 2026/27.

The table below details a provisional programme but there is still scope for further projects to be included and budget allocations to be adjusted.

The Programme will be further developed within the 2026/27 Business Plan. A draft version of the Business Plan will be considered by Members at the Partnership meeting in April 2026.

PROVISIONAL PROGRAMME

The provisional project programme for Research, Development and Delivery in 2026/27 is listed in the table below. As with previous years the programme is projecting an overspend on estimated budget to allow for the contingency of several projects not progressing due to changes in circumstances over the year.

Proposed Research, Development and Delivery Programme 2026/27

Area	Project	2026/27	2027/28
Sustainable Travel (Active Travel and ITS / DDRT)	ATIF Funding subject to competitive bidding	TBC	TBC
	People and Place Programme RTP Funding	2479278	2479278
Aviation	Sustainable Aviation (Future of Flight Challenge / IHCRD/ICNZ)	400000	
External Funding	RURALITIES	100000	100000
	Fort William ITP	100000	
	Renewable Energy Transport Opportunities Study	25000	

	ERDF / INTERREG / SG Bid Project Support	3000	3000
Travel Information / Bus	Bus Partnership Fund / BSIP and CCAM	10,000	10,000
	Regionally Significant Scheme Development	40000	40000
RTS	Climate Adaptation Study	20000	
	EV Infrastructure Fund Shared Service	145000	145000
	EV Fleet and Strategy	5000	5000
Rail	Inverness Station Masterplan	10,000	10,000
	Rail Policy Development	30000	30000
Bus	Total Identified Project Expenditure	3367278	2822278
	Current Estimated Budget (R&D)	350000	350000
	Current Estimated Budget (External - EU, Transport Scotland, UKRI)	3,250,000	3,000,000

RISK REGISTER

RTS Delivery

Impact - Positive

Comment – The Research and Development Programme is the key mechanism by which HITRANS promotes and secures delivery of the Transport Strategy for the Highlands and Islands

Policy

Impact – Positive

Comment – The Research and Development Programme will advance knowledge across a range of policy priorities.

Financial

Impact – Positive

Budget line and value – This item helps set the 2026/27 Research and Strategy Delivery Programme and is an important step towards the preparation of the 2026/27 Business Plan.

Equality

Impact – Positive

Comment – Actions within the programme will have a positive impact on Equalities including Accessibility.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Member are asked to:

1. Note the report.
2. Approve the draft programme as proposed in the table.
3. Consider projects that could be added to the draft programme.
4. Delegate responsibility to the Chair and Director to finalise the Programme for inclusion in the 2026/27 Business Plan which will be tabled at the April Partnership Board Meeting.

Report by: Ranald Robertson
Designation: Partnership Director
Date: 5th January 2026