

Item:
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Report to Partnership Meeting 24 April 2026

RESEARCH AND STRATEGY DELIVERY

HITRANSformers

Purpose of Report

To update members on the project to study the transport impacts arising from the increased activity in the renewables sector across the Highlands and Islands, and to identify interventions that may be necessary.

The Study

HITRANS will be looking for a suitably qualified consultant to study the impacts of consented, planned and proposed renewable energy projects on the transport network in the Highlands and Islands, and to make recommendations on solutions to enable Net Zero targets to be fulfilled, and to leave a legacy for future generations.

Study Objectives

1. An overview of consented, developed and proposed energy schemes both on-shore and off-shore, including OHL and subsea. The consultant should make use of existing databases such as the Renewable Energy Planning Database and work already completed by HIE. Grid reinforcement works planned by SSEN should also be included.
2. A quantified estimate of cumulative effects on both the local and strategic transport networks for the energy schemes and grid reinforcement projects, including during construction and operation. This assessment should consider the likely timing of developments, origin and destination of materials required, including aggregates and likely abnormal load routes. It is recognised there is some uncertainty regarding the timing of future developments and assumptions should be based on available evidence and professional judgement. These should be discussed and agreed with the client group.

3. An understanding of capacity, capability, pinch-points and constraints on the local and strategic transport and logistics networks.
4. Quality information for policy makers, planners, infrastructure managers and controllers, and Police Scotland: a one stop shop for data on transport and renewables. This should be deliverable in an electronic graphic format and should be capable of being updated.
5. Identification of investment in infrastructure improvements required to overcome these constraints on road, rail, and ports, harbours and waterways, including indicative costs. Infrastructure improvements should focus on strategic improvements which are unlikely to be funded through planning obligations, so excluding site access requirements etc. The list of infrastructure improvements should be rag rated according to their potential impact on risk to project delivery.
6. Identification of business opportunities for local transport and construction SMEs.
7. A policy framework for the establishment of a collaborative forum leading to co-operative use of networks.
8. An exploration of policy mechanisms to encourage investment in the transport network.
9. A technical note on Great Glen Pumped Storage Hydro logistics will also be required, including the use of the Caledonian Canal.

Partners

To date we have assembled the following funding partners:

Transport Scotland
HIE
HITRANS
Scottish Canals
Road Haulage Association
Rail Freight Group
British Ports Association

We are in further discussion with:

SSEN
Network Rail
Scottish Renewables
Highland Council

To date the budget stands at £90500.

Tender

The study will be tendered in the coming weeks.

Study Management

The study will be overseen by a steering group comprising Transport Scotland, HITRANS, HIE and RHA. A wider stakeholder group will be formed of all funders plus HITRANS' local authority partners (planners and transport network managers). It is proposed that the renewables industry will be represented by Scottish Renewables and SSEN.

RTS Delivery

Impact – Mode shift, integration, economy, Net Zero, transport investment

Policy

Impact – Energy security, decarbonisation, transport efficiency,

Financial

Impact – HITRANS' £25000 is fully funded. Partners have offered £65500. Other sources will be investigated.

Recommendation

1. Members are asked to note the report and approve the £25k funding.

Report by: Frank Roach
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Date: 14 February 2026