

Report to Partnership Meeting 11 September 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 has appointed consultants Pell Frischmann 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

Funding partners:

Transport Scotland

HIE

HITRANS

Scottish Canals

Road Haulage Association

Rail Freight Group

British Ports Association

Highland Council

Progress to Date

Early activity has included work on Pumped Storage Hydro Logistics with roundtable discussions and data gathering with developers and canal and port teams.

RTS Delivery

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

Policy

Impact – Energy security, decarbonisation, transport efficiency,

Financial

Impact – The study is fully funded

Recommendation

1. Members are asked to note the report.

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