



Minute of Meeting held in the Chamber, The  
Town House, Inverness and virtually through MS  
Teams on Friday 26 April 2024 at 9.30am

PRESENT	Mr Uisdean Robertson, Comhairle nan Eilean Siar Member (Chair)
	Ms Amber Dunbar, Moray Council Member (Vice-Chair)
	Mr John Armour, Argyll and Bute Council Member
	Mr David Dawson, Orkney Islands Council Member
	Mr Michael Green, The Highland Council Member
	Mr Robert Andrew, Non-Councillor Member
	Ms Naomi Bremner, Non-Councillor Member
	Ms Shona MacLennan, Non-Councillor Member
APOLOGIES	Mr Ken Gowans, The Highland Council Member
	Mr Andrew Kain, Argyll and Bute Council Member
	Mr Malcolm Macleod, The Highland Council
	Mr Fergus Murray, Argyll and Bute Council
	Ms Carolyn Maxwell, Partnership Treasurer
IN ATTENDANCE	Mr Ranald Robertson, Partnership Director
	Mr Frank Roach, Partnership Manager
	Mr Neil MacRae, Partnership Manager
	Ms Kelly Wiltshire, Moray Council
	Mr David Macleod, Comhairle nan Eilean Siar
	Mrs Linda Cunningham, Comhairle nan Eilean Siar
	Mr Gareth Waterson, Orkney Islands Council
	Ms Laura Cromarty, Orkney Islands Council
	Mr James Buck, Orkney Islands Council
	Ms Tracey Urray, The Highland Council
	Mrs Linda Cunningham, Comhairle nan Eilean Siar
	Mr Nicholas Sobey, HIE
	Mr Grant Campbell, SCDI
	Ms Vikki Trefler, HITRANS
	Ms Clare Harper, HITRANS
	Mr Derek Mackay, Partnership Secretary
	Mr Chris Finlay, HITRANS
	Mr Liam Gallagher, HITRANS
	Mr Robert Wilson, HITRANS
	Mr David Holden, SATE
	Mr Lukas Princ, SATE
	Ms Joni McBride, Audit Scotland
	Ms Patricia Fraser, Audit Scotland

Welcome

The Chair welcomed Ms Shona MacLennan to her first meeting following her appointment as a Non-Councillor Board Member.

Declaration of Interest

Mr Robert Andrew declared that he had retired as Stagecoach Scotland Regional Director in June 2020 and acted as an advisor to Scottish Citylink.

## MINUTES

Minute of Meeting of 2 February 2024 1 The Minute of Meeting of 2 February 2024 was **approved**.

Matters Arising 2 There were no matters arising from the Minute.

## FINANCE

Revenue Budget Monitoring Report – 1 April 2023 to 29 February 2024 3 With reference to 3 of the Minute of the Meeting of 2 February 2024, Ms Carolyn Maxwell, Partnership Treasurer, submitted a Report setting out the revenue monitoring position for the period to 29 February 2024 and the projected year end position.

**It was agreed to approve the revenue monitoring position for the period to 29 February 2024.**

HITRANS Draft External Audit Plan 4 With reference to item 4 of the Minute of the Meeting of 21 April 2023, Ms Patricia Fraser, Audit Scotland, presented a Report detailing the draft Annual HITRANS External Audit Plan for 2023/ 2024. The Report summarised the work plan for the audit and highlighted the main elements of the work, including:

- an audit of the annual accounts, and provision of an Independent Auditor’s Report;
- an audit opinion on statutory other information published within the annual accounts including the Management Commentary, the Governance Statement, and the audited part of the Remuneration Report; and
- consideration of arrangements in relation to wider scope areas: financial management; financial sustainability; vision; leadership and governance; and use of resources to improve outcomes.

**It was agreed to note the Report.**

HITRANS Business Plan for 2024-25 5 With reference to item 5 of the Minute of the Meeting of 21 April 2023, Mr Ranald Robertson, Partnership Director, submitted a Report which sought approval for the HITRANS Business Plan for 2024/25. The Report indicated that the Business Plan set out how it was intended to support delivery of the Strategy during 2024/25 working with constituent Councils and Stakeholders with a view to improving transport services across the Highlands and Islands. The Report stated that, as with previous Business Plans, the programme set outs a two-year Research and Strategy Development Programme in line with the recommendation of the Partnership Board discussion at the February 2024 meeting. The Plan also includes a forecast budget for the following three Financial Years in line with the recommendation of the Annual Audit Report for 2022/23.

**It was agreed to approve the Business Plan for Financial Year 2024/24.**

## RESEARCH AND STRATEGY DELIVERY

Research/Strategy Development Programme for 2023/24 6 With reference to item 6 of the Minute of the Meeting of 2 February 2024, Mr Ranald Robertson, Partnership Director, submitted a Report which provided an update on progress on delivering the Research and Strategy Development programme, and sought approval of amendments to the programme to reflect commitments made and changing priorities and funding opportunities identified since approval of the 2023/24 Business Plan at the meeting of 21 April 2023.

The Report stated that the programme had been amended to reflect changes that had been identified to the circumstances surrounding some projects. The key programme changes were detailed within the Report.

**It was agreed to approve the amendments to the Research and Strategy Development Programme 2023/24 as detailed in the Appendix to the Report.**

Regional Transport  
Strategy Update

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With reference to item 10 of the Minute of the Meeting of 2 February 2024, Mr Neil Macrae, Partnership Manager, submitted a Report providing an update on the development of a new Regional Transport Strategy (RTS). The Report stated that the development of the RTS involved three broad stages:

- Stage 1 – The Case for Change
- Stage 2 – Option Generation and Preliminary Options Appraisal
- Stage 3 – RTS Document

The statutory eight-week public consultation period would run until Friday 14 June. Following the review of the public consultation responses Ministerial approval would be sought for the finalised RTS.

**It was agreed to note the Report.**

Active  
Update

Travel

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With reference to item 8 of the Minute of Meeting of 2 February 2024 Ms Vikki Trefler, Active Travel Officer, submitted a Report providing an update on Active Travel projects in which HITRANS were currently involved. The Report stated that for 2023/24 financial year, HITRANS had received £1,010,000 from Transport Scotland's Regional Active Travel Fund. A summary of spend and projects supported was provided within the Report.

**It was agreed to note the Report.**

SATE  
Report

Project

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With reference to item 11 of the Minute of Meeting of 2 February 2024 Ms Jayne Golding, SATE Manager, submitted a Report providing an update on developments in the Sustainable Aviation Test Environment (SATE) Programme. The Report stated that part-funded by UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) through the Industrial Strategy Challenge Fund, SATE created the UK's first operationally based, low-carbon aviation test centre at HIAL's Kirkwall Airport in the Orkney Islands. Launched as part of UKRI's Future Flight Challenge, which supported the development of greener ways to fly, the first phase started in November 2020 and ended in July 2022. The second phase kicked off from July 2022 and was currently due to end in March 2025 following an approved extension.

The Report indicated that with effect from 5 February 2024, HITRANS replaced HIAL as Lead Partner of SATE, taking over WP1: Project Management. This had involved the transition of all associated SATE staff to HITRANS (SATE Manager, Regional Sustainable Aviation Manager, SATE Business Manager and SATE Project Coordinator), as well as communication activities for the project.

The Report provided a detailed update for each of the technical Work Packages within the SATE.

**It was agreed:**

- (1) to note the Report; and**
- (2) that the Partnership Director would request for a presentation or briefing pack on the SATE project to be made at the Convention of the Highlands and Islands.**

People and Place Programme 10

With reference to item 7 of the Minute of Meeting of 2 February 2024, Mr Neil Macrae, Partnership Manager, submitted a Report providing an update on the People and Place Programme 2025. The Report stated that at the last HITRANS Partnership meeting in February 2024, members were advised of the outcome of Transport Scotland's review of the current model for the delivery of Behaviour Change and Access to Bikes. This review recommended the development of a model that sees direct funding to Regional Transport Partnerships with responsibility to develop further their relationships with Local Authorities to agree the priority behaviour change and access to bikes interventions (referred to as the 'People and Place' programme) required for their respective areas, and to work with delivery partners to secure the support required. The Report highlighted that in the last two months, HITRANS had been working with Transport Scotland officials and local authority partners to refine the initial proposals for 2024/25.

The Report stated that Transport Scotland invited RTPs to submit proposals for the interventions/projects they had identified as priorities with their respective local authorities, setting these out across the themes of Active Schools; Active Workplaces; Accessibility and Inclusion, and; Capacity and Capability Building.

**It was agreed:**

- (1) to note the Report;**
- (2) to approve the final HITRANS People and Place programme for 2024/25 that had been submitted to Transport Scotland;**
- (3) to approve the proposals for resourcing HITRANS People and Place proposal 2024/25 as detailed in the Report; and**
- (4) that Mr Neil Macrae would engage with CalMac in relation to the inability to book Bikes on ferries.**

Health and Transport Action Plan 11

Mr Neil Macrae, Partnership Manager, submitted a Report in respect of the proposal to establish a Health and Transport Action Plan for the HITRANS area. The Report indicated that opportunities and challenges relating to public health and access to healthcare in the region emerged as key themes in updating our Regional Transport Strategy. The Scottish Government is also in the process of developing a transport to health delivery plan to take forward a range of commitments to improve joined up working on transport to health.

The Report stated that the establishment of a new model for behaviour change that sees direct funding to RTPs with responsibility to resource and develop a programme of interventions in partnership with local stakeholders offers another opportunity for HITRANS to work with NHS boards and other delivery partners on the priority public health challenges within their respective areas. The Report highlighted that an initial step would be a workshop to facilitate a Health Impact Assessment of the draft RTS with input from both Public Health Scotland and senior public health representatives from each of the four health boards.

**It was agreed to:**

- (1) note the Report; and**
- (2) support the proposed approach for establishing a Health and Transport Action Plan in the HITRANS area as outlined in the Report, including the commissioning of an initial scoping report to inform the key stakeholders required, a preferred governance structure and resourcing for the implementation of the Plan and its priority areas of work.**

Rail Roundup 12 With reference to item 14 of the Minute of Meeting of 10 November 2023, Mr Frank Roach, Partnership Manager submitted a Report to inform the Board on topical rail matters. The Report provided an update on the following:

- West Highland Charter Trains
- Inverness Station Masterplan
- Station Links
- Altnabreac
- Open Access

**It was agreed to note the Report.**

Bottlenecks! 13 With reference to item 11 of the Minute of Meeting of 15 September 2023, Mr Frank Roach, Partnership Manager, submitted a Report detailing the progress of the Whisky Logistics Study. The Report stated that HITRANS had been asked by the Scotch Whisky Association to update the previous work in the light of increased output, new production sites, and changes to the freight network including ferries. The Report indicated that the Study sought to identify current and future freight needs of the industry, identify any related freight transport issues, and make recommendations for addressing those issues.

The Report highlighted that it would also identify how future transport options could address the climate emergency and help the Scotch Whisky industry deliver its commitment to reach net zero emissions by 2045.

**It was agreed to note the Report.**

Fastline Faslane 14 With reference to item 14 of the Minute of Meeting of 10 November 2023, Mr Frank Roach, Partnership Manager, submitted a Report providing an update on progress with the Fastline Faslane Project. The Report stated that HITRANS was successful in obtaining Local Rail Development Funding to explore transport issues in and around the Faslane Naval Base and consider the case for provision of a rail link. The Report indicated that the client group commissioned Stantec to undertake a Sustainable Transport Options Study in line with the Scottish Governments appraisal guidance (STAG) focused on access options to the area. This was followed by the Options Appraisal study, focussing on: Assisted Travel Scheme, Enhanced Local Bus Services and Rail Option.

**It was agreed to note the Report.**

#### **PARTNERSHIP**

Fair Fares Review 15 With reference to item 19 of the Minute of Meeting of 6 October 2022, Mr Ranald Robertson, Partnership Director, submitted a Report providing a summary of recommendations published in the Fair Fares Review. The Fair Fares Review was a Bute House Agreement Commitment and aimed to deliver on the commitment set out in the First Minister's Policy Prospectus, published in April 2023, to advance towards making the public transport system more accessible, available, and affordable, with the costs of transport more fairly shared across government, business and society. The review outlined the options, recommendations, actions, and next steps required towards achieving the vision for the future of public transport in Scotland.

**It was agreed to:**

**(1) note the Report;**

- (2) **note the relationship to HITRANS response to the Islands Connectivity Plan Consultation and Develop to Deliver Report with a number of the recommended actions from the Fair Fares Review;**
- (3) **consider the recommendations and excluded options for discussion; and**
- (4) **authorise the Partnership Director to make representations to Transport Scotland in respect of the Fair Fares Review, incorporating the comments of the Board and Permanent Advisors and that a draft would be circulated for final comments.**

Develop to Deliver 16  
Report by RTPs

Mr Ranald Robertson, Partnership Director, submitted a Report in respect of the policy document, Develop to Deliver – 2023 Refresh, prepared by Scotland’s seven Regional Transport Partnerships (RTPs) on the opportunities to maximise their role in delivering strategic transport improvements.

**It was agreed to:**

- (1) **note the “Develop to Deliver – 2023 Refresh” document; and**
- (2) **endorse the principles of collaboration, opportunities for regional coordination and the role of Regional Transport Partnerships in enabling liaison between national and local authorities.**

Partnership 17  
Standing Orders

The Partnership Secretary submitted a Report detailing revised Standing Orders for Members consideration. The proposed revisions were detailed in the Report.

**It was agreed to approve the HITRANS Standing Orders as detailed in the Report with the deadline for submitting notice of motions being 14 days.**

#### **CONSULTATION**

CHFS3 Consultation 18  
Response

Mr Ranald Robertson, Partnership Director, submitted a Report detailing the response submitted by HITRANS to Transport Scotland’s Consultation on the third Clyde and Hebrides Ferry Service. The Report indicated that the Consultation was supported by a consultation document that presented questions on the following areas of service and contract delivery:

- Reliability and Resilience
- Capacity and Demand
- Community Voice, Transparency and Accountability
- Carbon Reduction and Environmental Impact
- Onward and Connecting Travel
- Accessibility
- Freight Services
- Monitoring and Review

It was agreed at the February Partnership meeting that officers would prepare the HITRANS response and seek approval electronically from Members giving time for comments and edits to be made before submitting the final response. The response was submitted before the deadline and was enclosed as an Appendix to the report for noting and publication on the HITRANS website.

**It was agreed to note the Report.**

Islands Connectivity Consultation Response 19 Mr Ranald Robertson, Partnership Director, submitted a Report to share the draft response by HITRANS to Transport Scotland's Consultation on the Islands Connectivity Plan. The Report stated that the Islands Connectivity Plan (ICP) was intended by Scottish Government as the replacement for the Ferries Plan which was published in December 2012. The ICP was broader in scope, taking account of aviation, ferries and fixed links, and onward and connecting travel.

The draft HITRANS response to the ICP Consultation was included as an Appendix to the report. The Report indicated that there were a number of areas that overlap with the topics covered through the CHFS 3 consultation. The matters covered in the HITRANS response were:

- Potential Removal of RET Fares for non-Island Residents
- Local Authority Ferries Capital Investment
- Ferry Fares for Under 22s

**It was agreed:**

- (1) to note the Report; and**
- (2) that a final draft response, taking account of the comments of Board Members and Permanent Advisors be prepared by the Partnership Director for submission ahead of the Consultation deadline of 3 May 2024; and**
- (3) the Partnership Director would circulate the draft response for final comment.**

Scottish National Adaptation Plan (2024-2029) 20 Mr Neil Macrae, Partnership Manager submitted a Report to introduce HITRANS response to the public consultation on the draft Scottish National Adaptation Plan (2024-2029) which sets out the Scottish Government's draft plan for adapting to climate change.

The Report stated that the draft Adaptation Plan is structured around five Outcomes, setting out the case for adaptation action for:

- Nature connects
- Communities
- Public services and infrastructure
- Economy, business and industry
- International action.

It was indicated that each of these five outcomes came with its own set of objectives. In total, these 22 objectives defined how the Scottish Government would measure delivery of adaptation action across the Plan with a series of policies relating to each objective.

**It was agreed to note the Report.**

#### **ADDITIONAL ITEM**

Bus Regional Group Taskforce Steering Group 21 With reference to item 10 of the Minute of Meeting of 11 November 2022, Mr Ranald Robertson, Partnership Director, submitted a Report providing an update on the proposed focus of the second meeting of the Bus Taskforce Regional Steering Group. The Report stated that the first meeting of the Highlands and Islands Regional Steering Group took place on Wednesday 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2024 and the agenda was focussed on the purpose of the Bus Taskforce to ensure that the information submitted from the Regional Steering Group could capture the regional perspective to the immediate challenges around Patronage Recovery; Driver Shortages and Community Engagement. Other items

covered included the Community Bus Fund, MOOVE Flexi Digital DRT app and Highland Bus Partnership Fund and Bus Service Improvement Partnership.

The Report indicated that Officers were considering agenda items with a view to hosting the 2024 meeting of the Regional Steering Group in June 2024. Members were invited to propose items that could be covered at the session and were asked to have the agenda finalised by the HITCOG (Highlands and Islands Transport Coordinating Officers Group) and Partnership Advisors.

Potential items that could be covered at the Steering Group included:

- Orkney Bus Partnership year on year patronage growth
- Moray Council's Regional Growth Deal Bus Revolution project
- Highland Council and Comhairle nan Eilean Siar in house bus operations
- GO-HI MaaS programme evaluation and next steps
- Community Bus Fund
- Bus Partnership Fund Pause

**It was agreed:**

- (1) to note the Report;**
- (2) that Members be invited to suggest items of business for the Regional Steering Group; and**
- (3) that with reference to the discussion at the meeting and suggested agenda items the Partnership Director is authorised to finalise the Steering Group agenda.**