



Minute of Meeting held in the Council Chamber,
Comhairle nan Eilean Siar, Stornoway and
virtually through MS Teams on Friday 20
September 2024 at 9.00am

PRESENT	Mr Uisdean Robertson, Comhairle nan Eilean Siar (Chair)
	Ms Amber Dunbar, Moray Council (Vice-Chair)
	Mr Andrew Kain, Argyll and Bute Council
	Mr Kristopher Leask, Orkney Islands Council
	Mr Michael Green, The Highland Council
	Mr Robert Andrew, Non-Councillor Member
	Ms Naomi Bremner, Non-Councillor Member
	Ms Shona Macleennan, Non-Councillor Member
APOLOGIES	Mr Ken Gowans, The Highland Council Member
	Mr John Armour, Argyll and Bute Council Member
	Mr Grant Campbell, SCDI
	Mr Malcolm Macleod, The Highland Council
	Mr Gordon Blair, Argyll and Bute Council
IN ATTENDANCE	Mr Ranald Robertson, Partnership Director
	Mr Frank Roach, Partnership Manager
	Mr Neil MacRae, Partnership Manager
	Ms Carolyn Maxwell, Partnership Treasurer
	Ms Nicola Moss, Moray Council
	Mr Fergus Murray, Argyll and Bute Council
	Mr Gareth Waterson, Orkney Islands Council
	Ms Julie Cromarty, The Highland Council
	Mr David Macleod, Comhairle nan Eilean Siar
	Mrs Linda Cunningham, Comhairle nan Eilean Siar
	Mr Nicholas Sobey, HIE
	Ms Rebecca Wallace, SATE Project Officer
	Ms Vikki Trefler, HITRANS
	Ms Gemma Robinson, HITRANS
	Ms Kate Beasley, HITRANS
	Mr Robert Wilson, HITRANS
	Mr Derek Mackay, Partnership Secretary
	Mr Lukas Princ, SATE
	Ms Joni McBride, Audit Scotland
	Ms Patricia Fraser, Audit Scotland

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 26 April 2024 1 The Minute of Meeting of 26 April 2024 was **approved**.
- Matters Arising 2 Mr Ranald Robertson provided the following updates:
- 10 (4) Officers had arranged to meet with Cal Mac to discuss the issues surrounding the booking of bikes on the Oban to Castlebay route. The Chairman would pass correspondence on the issue to officers.
- 15 (4) HITRANS had responded to Transport Scotland in respect of the Fair Fares Review as part of a collective response from Regional Transport Partnerships. The response would be circulated to Board Members.

It was agreed to note the updates.

FINANCE

- HITRANS Audited Accounts 2023-24 Annual Accounts 2023-24 3 Ms Patricia Fraser, Audit Scotland, provided a verbal update in relation to the Annual Audited Accounts 2023-24. It was stated that the audit work was substantially complete. The Audit had identified two major adjustments. The final Report would be circulated to Board members. Mr Ranald Robertson thanked Ms Patricia Fraser and Ms Joni McBride for their work in compiling the Annual Audit Report.

Mrs Carolyn Maxwell reported that the Annual Accounts 2023-24 had been updated to take account of the adjustments identified in the Annual Audit.

It was agreed to:

- (1) note the update on the Annual Audit Report 2023-24; and**
- (2) approve the Annual Accounts 2023-24 for signing.**

RESEARCH AND STRATEGY DELIVERY

- Research/ Strategy Development Programme for 2024/25 4 With reference to item 6 of the Minute of Meeting of 26 April 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, changing priorities and funding opportunities identified since approval of the 2024/25 Business Plan at the meeting of 26 April 2024.

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 note the amendments to the Research and Strategy Development Programme 2024/25 as detailed in the Appendix to the Report.

- Regional Transport Strategy Update 5 With reference to item 7 of the Minute of Meeting of 26 April 2024, Mr Neil Macrae, Partnership Manager submitted a Report providing an update on the development of a new Regional Transport Strategy (RTS) and sought approval of the Strategy prior to submission to the Scottish Government for their approval.

The Report stated that the development of the RTS had involved three broad stages:

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

The Report further stated that the statutory eight-week consultation period on the draft RTS concluded on 14 June 2024. An RTS Consultation Note was provided in Appendix B to the Report summarising the consultation, including responses to all written comments provided, together with a note on where the Draft RTS had been amended to reflect comment.

Appendix A to the Report detailed the final Regional Transport Strategy incorporating all the changes from the pre-consultation draft following the statutory public consultation, including those captured within the Consultation Note.

It was agreed to:

- (1) note the Report;**
- (2) approve the amended text for the final HITRANS Regional Transport Strategy, as contained in Appendix A to the Report;**
- (3) instruct officers to finalise the production of the Strategy into a final format, including images, infographics, case studies and maps;**
- (4) authorise the Partnership Director, Chair and Vice Chair to approve the final version of the Strategy, taking account of any comments and amendments sought by the Board; and**
- (5) instruct officers to submit the Strategy to the Cabinet Secretary for Transport, as soon as practicable.**

Fastline Faslane

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With reference to item 14 of the Minute of Meeting of 26 April 2024, Mr Frank Roach, Partnership Manager submitted a Report providing an update on progress with the 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. The Study had now been completed and sent to Transport Scotland for their consideration.

The Report provided an overview of the conclusions of the Study and a summary of the next steps should the decision be made to proceed with any of the options arising from the Study. It was indicated that the Faslane base had begun a major expansion which would increase the demand for transport links.

It was agreed to note the Report.

Electric Vehicle
Infrastructure
Shared Service

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With reference to item 8 of the Minute of Meeting of 10 November 2023, Ms Gemma Robinson, EVIF Project Manager submitted a Report providing an update on regional activity by a project management shared service under the Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Fund (EVIF). Comhairle nan Eilean Siar, Orkney Islands Council and Shetland Islands Council were developing a combined Islands EV Infrastructure Strategy. Moray Council had joined with Highland Council, Aberdeenshire and Aberdeen City Council in their EV

Strategy which aimed to generate long term revenue for further investment and utilise a hub and spoke approach to ensure charging in remote and rural areas was deployed as an essential spoke to the more commercially viable hubs.

It was agreed to note the Report.

Bottlenecks 8 With reference to item 13 of the Minute of Meeting of 26 April 2024, Mr Frank Roach, Partnership Manager submitted a Report detailing progress of the whisky logistics study. The Study highlighted locations in the Highlands and Islands network which accommodated the greatest number of whisky industry generated trips and identified several key constraints on the network. The Report identified schemes and measures to provide a resilient transport network which is able to support the industries continued growth.

It was agreed to note the Report.

Scottish Government Aviation Statement and Key Priorities 9 Mr David Holden, Regional Sustainable Aviation Manager and Ms Jayne Golding, SATE Manager submitted a Joint Report on the Scottish Government's Aviation Statement and invite input and comment on the Statement itself and the HITRANS response.

It was agreed to:

- (1) note the Report; and**
- (2) authorise the Partnership Director and Chair to finalise the response taking account of the comments made at the meeting.**

Active Update Travel 10 With reference to item 8 of the Minute of Meeting of 26 April 2024, Ms Vikki Trelfer, Active Travel Officer submitted a Report providing an update on Active Travel projects in which HITRANS were currently involved. The Report provided an update on the People and Place Programme, Active Travel Infrastructure Fund and Oban Transport Hub. Members expressed concerns at the recent change in the distribution methodology for Tier 1 Active Travel Funding which has significantly reduced the funding received by rural authorities with the longest transport networks.

It was agreed;

- (1) to note the Report; and**
- (2) that HITRANS write to COSLA requesting that the formula for distributing Tier 1 Active Travel Funding revert to the fairer methodology used prior to 2024/25 with the retention of the baseline allocation for the Island authorities.**

HITRANS Strategy Rail 11 Mr Frank Roach, Partnership Manager submitted a Report in respect of the proposal to create a HITRANS Rail Strategy. The Report indicated that the Strategy would identify shortcomings in the Highlands and Islands network and identify areas for development so that the railway would play its role in the move to Net Zero. Key to this would be decarbonised rolling stock and efficient freight on rail. The Report highlighted that this would involve work with colleagues at Nestrans, Tactran and SPT where there were overlapping interests.

It was agreed to approve the commencement of the work to create a HITRANS Rail Strategy.

Public Transport Information Shared Service Project Update 12 Mr Robert Wilson, Travel Information and MaaS Officer and Mr Neil Macrae, Partnership Manager submitted a Joint Report providing an update on the shared service model for co-ordinating the provision of public transport information across the HITRANS area that was being delivered by HITRANS on behalf of the partner Councils.

The Report stated that through discussion at the Highland Bus Service Improvement Partnership Steering Group the need was identified for enhanced support to maintain the provision of public transport information and infrastructure on behalf of the Highland Bus Service Improvement Partnership (BSIP) within Inverness and Fort William. The conclusion of deliberations at the Steering Group was that a Public Transport Infrastructure and Information Project Support Officer be employed by HITRANS with the role to be funded by Highland Council and Bus Operators. The Job Description for this new role was detailed at Appendix 1 to the Report.

It was agreed to:

- (1) note the Report; and**
- (2) approve the proposal to recruit a Public Transport Infrastructure Support Officer with HITRANS contribution being line management and in kind costs.**

Health and Transport Action Plan 13 With reference to item 11 of the Minute of Meeting of 26 April 2024, Mr Neil Macrae, Partnership Manager, submitted a Report in respect of progress made 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 the Regional Transport Strategy. The Scottish Government was 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 provided a copy of the draft Highlands and Islands Health and Transport Action Plan Scoping Review in Appendix A to the Report. The Scoping Review considered the complex interactions between transport and health outcomes.

It was agreed:

- (1) to note the Report;**
- (2) to consider the recommendations set out in Section 4 of the draft Health and Transport Scoping Review contained in Appendix A to the Report;**
- (3) that the HITRANS Chair writes to the Cabinet Secretaries for Health and Transport to share a copy of the final HTAP Scoping Report and to seek their support and input to advance its recommendations; and**
- (4) to approve the draft Health and Transport Action Plan Scoping Review**

SATE Project Meeting Update 14 With reference to item 9 of the Minute of Meeting of 26 April 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 commenced in July 2022 and was currently due to end in March 2025 following an approved extension.

The Report provided an update on:

- Demonstration Flights and Technology Update
 - Windracers
 - ARC AeroSystems
 - Hybrid Air Vehicles (HAV)
- Airport Infrastructure and Operational Systems
 - Cranfield Aerospace Solutions
- Development of a Dedicated Test Environment Airspace
- Events
- Awards
- Future Funding

It was agreed to note the Report.

Scottish Islands Passport 15 With reference to item 11 of the Minute of Meeting of 10 November 2023, Ms Katy Beasley, Scottish Islands Passport Project Manager submitted a Report providing an update on the Scottish Islands Passport Project. The Report provided a detailed update on:

- Travelogues, digital travel stamps and physical stamps
- Digital app and Website
- Engagement and working with Partners
- Marketing
- Funding and Resource

It was agreed to note the Report.

Fort William Integrated Transport Plan 16 Mr Neil Macrae, Partnership Manager submitted a Report providing an update on progress to undertake an Integrated Transport Plan for Fort William and to seek approval for HITRANS funding support for its development. The Report stated that improving the resilience and reliability of the transport network in and around Fort William had been a long-standing priority within HITRANS Regional Transport Strategy. The Report indicated that it was anticipated that the next stage of appraisal required to identify a long-term solution would be a substantial commission and it was important to demonstrate the commitment of local partners to addressing the problem. It was proposed that HITRANS contribute up to 25% of the funding towards the ITP up to a value of £100,000 over the next three financial years based on an estimated start date of January 2025.

It was agreed to:

- (1) note the Report;**
- (2) approve that HITRANS supports the undertaking of the Integrated Transport Plan by chairing the Client Delivery Group and leads on the procurement and project management of the commission; and**
- (3) approve that HITRANS contributes 25% of the funding up to a value of £100,000 towards the undertaking of the Integrated Transport Plan for Fort William over the next three financial years.**

Commercialising CAV in the Highlands and Islands 17 Mr Ranald Robertson, Partnership Director, submitted a Report providing an update on developments in the Commercialising CAV Services in the Highlands and Islands project that was being funded by Innovate UK. The Report stated that the CAV service held promise for increasing access through on-demand low-cost transport. This could alleviate some transportation challenges caused by the sparse population and challenging terrain of the Highlands and Islands and contribute towards net zero by reducing reliance on carbon-emitting public transport and private cars. The Report highlighted that the study

would assess the feasibility of a demand-responsive, autonomous transport service in Scotland's Highlands and Islands that effectively matches the demand for health transportation, reduces CO2 emissions, maximises public and commercial value, and reduces passenger travel time. This would then inform thinking on the potential to roll out the technology more widely as it matures with the long-term goal being to understand its potential in more rural areas where public transport service provision is currently more limited.

The Report provided a project update which detailed that August 2024 saw the trials of the Aurrigo Auto Shuttle and Auto Pod take place representing a significant milestone in the delivery of the project.

It was agreed to note the Report.

PARTNERSHIP

Programme of Meetings 2025 18

Mr Ranald Robertson, Partnership Director, submitted a Report detailing proposed dates for Partnership Board and Permanent Advisors meetings in 2025.

It was agreed that HITRANS Partnership and Advisors meeting in 2025 on the following dates and locations, subject to confirmation that there were no clashes with partner Councils meetings:

Date	Partnership Meeting	Advisors Meeting	Location
16 January 2025		Morning	Virtual
7 February 2025	Partnership Board Meeting		Virtual/ Inverness
27 March 2025		Morning	Virtual
25 April 2025	Partnership Board Meeting		Virtual/ Inverness
21 August 2025		Morning	Virtual
11 & 12 September 2025	Evening Meeting followed by Full Partnership Meeting on Friday Morning		Orkney
23 October 2025		Morning	Virtual
6 & 7 November 2025	Evening Meeting followed by Full Partnership Meeting on Friday Morning		Moray

Programme for Government 2024 19

Mr Ranald Robertson, Partnership Director, submitted a Report providing a summary of the key elements of the Programme for Government (PfG) relevant to the delivery of the Regional Transport Strategy and work of HITRANS in the forthcoming year. The Report stated that the 2024-25 PfG was titled 'Serving Scotland'. This would deliver on the four main priorities of eradicating child poverty, growing our economy, tackling the climate emergency and improving public services

The Report indicated that the PfG noted that this year comes against the backdrop of an extremely challenging financial situation which Scotland, like other nations, was facing. It was highlighted that despite that challenge, the Scottish Government was optimistic about improving people's lives, with eradicating child poverty as the single greatest priority for the Scottish Government.

It was agreed to note the Report.