

Minute of Meeting held in the Chamber, The  
Town House, Inverness on Friday 2 February  
2024 at 9.30am

PRESENT	<p>Mr Uisdean Robertson, Comhairle nan Eilean Siar Member (Chair) Ms Amber Dunbar, Moray Council Member (Vice-Chair) Mr Andrew Kain, Argyll and Bute Council Member Mr David Dawson, Orkney Islands Council Member Mr Robert Andrew, Non-Councillor Member Mrs Naomi Bremner, Non-Councillor Member</p>
APOLOGIES	<p>Mr Ken Gowans, The Highland Council Member Mr Malcolm Macleod, The Highland Council</p>
IN ATTENDANCE	<p>Mr Ranald Robertson, Partnership Director Mr Frank Roach, Partnership Manager Mr Neil MacRae, Partnership Manager Ms Carolyn Maxwell, Partnership Treasurer Ms Kelly Wiltshire, Moray Council Mr James Buck, Orkney Islands Council Ms Nicola Wallace, The Highland Council Mr Fergus Murray, Argyll &amp; Bute Council Mr David Macleod, Comhairle nan Eilean Siar Mrs Linda Cunningham, Comhairle nan Eilean Siar Mr Nicholas Sobey, HIE Mr Grant Campbell, SCDI Mr Derek Mackay, Partnership Secretary Mr Chris Finlay, HITRANS Ms Katy Beasley, HITRANS Mr Matthew Glennon, HITRANS Mr Robert Wilson, HITRANS Ms Jayne Golding, SATE</p>
Declaration of Interest	<p>Mr Robert Andrew declared that he had retired as Stagecoach Scotland Regional Director in June 2020 and acted as an advisor to Scottish Citylink.</p>

#### **MINUTES**

Minute of Meeting of 10 November 2023	1	Minute of Meeting of 10 November 2023 was <b>approved</b> .
---------------------------------------	---	---

- Matters Arising 2 Mr Ranald Robertson provided the following updates:
- 6 (2) One eBike Technician had been appointed and confirmation of acceptance of offer was awaited in respect of the other post.
- 7 (2) The case for capital investment to support resilience on local authority operated lifeline ferries had been published.
- 9 (3) The media statement in support of the dualling of the A96 and the Elgin and Keith By-Passes had been issued.
- 13 (2) Mr Robert Wilson had been appointed to the post of Public Transport Information Officer.

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

### **FINANCE**

- Revenue Budget Monitoring Report 1 April to 31 December 2023 3 With reference to item 3 of the Minute of Meeting of 10 November 2023, Ms Carolyn Moir, Partnership Treasurer, submitted a Report setting out the revenue monitoring position for the period to 31 December 2023 and the projected year end position.

**It was agreed to approve the revenue monitoring position for the period to 31 December 2023 as detailed in the Report.**

- Revenue Budget Proposal 2024/2025 4 Ms Carolyn Maxwell, Partnership Treasurer submitted a Report detailing the Revenue Budget Proposal 2024/25. Appendix 1 to the Report detailed the budget that was being recommended for approval for the next financial year covering the Partnership's running costs and research and strategy development programme costs, and the income from Partner Councils, the Scottish Government, and other external agencies to cover those costs.

**It was agreed to approve the Revenue Budget 2024/25 as detailed in the Report.**

### **RESEARCH AND STRATEGY DELIVERY**

- Research/Strategy Development Programme for 2023/24 5 With reference to item 5 of the Minute of Meeting of 10 November 2023, Mr Ranald Robertson, Partnership Director, submitted a Report providing 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 2023/24 Business Plan at the Partnership Meeting on 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.**

Research  
Development and  
Delivery Draft  
Programme for  
2024/25

6

Mr Ranald Robertson, Partnership Director, submitted a Report on Research, Development and Delivery activities to be taken forward by HITRANS in 2024/25. The Report stated that the Board had agreed to include a provisional Programme with the Business Plan for 2023/24 to enable officers to progress without recourse to the Board for further approval if any project spend was cancelled between meetings, allowing items approved within the Business Plan Period to be brought forward.

The Report included information prepared by officers on projects which could form the basis of the programme in 2024/25. A detailed provisional programme was provided in the Report and, as with previous years, the programme was projecting an overspend on estimated budget to allow for the contingency of several projects not progressing due to change of circumstances.

**It was agreed 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; and**
- (4) delegate responsibility to the Chair and Director to finalise the Programme for inclusion in the 2024/25 Business Plan which would be tabled at the April Partnership Board Meeting.**

Behaviour Change  
and Access to Bikes  
Delivery  
Programme for  
2024/25

7

Mr Neil Macrae, Partnership Manager, submitted a Report providing an overview of Transport Scotland's review of the delivery model for Active Travel Behaviour Change and HITRANS draft regional proposal following the recommendation for direct funding of Regional Transport Partnerships, with responsibility to develop their relationships with Local Authorities to agree priority behaviour change and access to bikes interventions required for their respective areas.

An overview of governance and evaluation, timescales, scope, and funding for Active Travel Behaviour Change 2024/25 was provided in the Report. The Report detailed the proposals for 2024/25 outlining the key elements of the emerging regional proposal. A further detailed breakdown of the draft proposal was shared with the Partnership Board at the meeting.

**It was agreed:**

- (1) to note the Report, welcoming the proposed new delivery model for Active Travel Behaviour Change funding;**
- (2) to approve the establishment of a regional steering group (consisting of representation from HITRANS, each partner Local Authority and other partners as appropriate) with responsibility to oversee the implementation and monitoring of the 2024/25 Behaviour Change programme for the HITRANS area and develop proposals for future years;**
- (3) to approve that HITRANS Chair and Partnership Director submit a final proposal on behalf of HITRANS following feedback from Transport Scotland on its draft submission;**
- (4) that Officers would provide progress reports at future Partnership Meeting; and**
- (5) the Partnership Director would ask NHS to appoint an Advisor / Observer to the Board.**

Active Travel 8  
Update

With reference to item 6 of the Minute of 10 November 2023 Ms Vikki Trelfer, 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 been granted an additional £45k for Mobility Hubs, and £10k as Resource Support to develop proposals for the Behaviour Change and Access to Bikes funding in 2024-25, bringing the total budget to £1,010,00 from Transport Scotland's Regional Active Travel Fund. The Report detailed the active travel funding available to Regional Transport Partnerships from Transport Scotland for 2024/25.

**It was agreed to note the Report and approve the funding requests to Transport Scotland for 2024/25.**

CHFS 3 9

Mr Ranald Robertson, Partnership Director, submitted a Report providing an update on the proposal by Ministers to make a direct award for the third Clyde and Hebrides Ferry Service Contract (CHFS 3) and the live Consultation on the proposal. The Report stated that the current contract would expire on 30 September 2024 and an exploration of a direct award, via a Teckal exemption in accordance with the Public Contract (Scotland) Regulations 2015, to CalMac Ferries Ltd was the Scottish Ministers' preferred direction for the new contract.

The CHFS consultation document was provided as an Appendix to the Report and stakeholders would have an opportunity to contribute their views to the development of the new contract. Transport Scotland officials had commenced a series of stakeholder events, with further engagement sessions being planned. Officers would engage with Board Members to support them in drafting the HITRANS response.

**It was agreed to:**

- (1) note the Report; and**
- (2) approve the proposal that officers draft the Consultation response and seek approval from Board Members by email.**

Regional Transport 10  
Strategy Update

With reference to item 9 of the Minute of Meeting of 10 November 2023 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

A copy of the draft Regional Transport Strategy was circulated to Members and Advisors to review in advance of the Meeting and following any final comments on the draft RTS officers would look to commence the 8-week statutory public consultation later in February. Officers were also considering opportunities for further key stakeholder engagement on the RTS, including seeking a sponsor for an event at Holyrood as discussed at the previous partnership meeting.

**It was agreed:**

- (1) to note the Report;**
- (2) to review the draft Regional Transport Strategy and provide any final comments by the end of February 2024 ahead of the statutory public consultation; and**

- (3) that HITRANS officers would share a copy of the final draft of the Regional Transport Strategy and online version of the statutory public consultation with Board Members ahead of commencing the 8-week statutory process.**

SATE Project 11 With reference to item 17 of the Minute of Meeting of 15 September 2024 Ms Jayne Golding, SATE Manager, submitted a Report providing an update on HITRANS involvement in the Innovate UK Sustainable Aviation Test Environment (SATE) Project and on the proposal for HITRANS to become Lead Partner following approval from the Highlands and Islands Airport (HIAL) Board. The Report stated that with effect from 5 February 2024, HITRANS would replace HIAL as Lead Partner of SATE and the current term-contracted staffing resource (SATE Manager, SATE Project Coordinator and SATE Business Manager) would transfer to HITRANS. HIAL remained committed to the SATE programme and would continue to be a key and integral consortium member.

The Report further stated that HITRANS received 100% funding based on the organisation classification within the UKRI programme. To cover costs associated with the Lead Partner move, HITRANS would receive an additional £363,692 grant, resulting in a total budget of £545,220.

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

National Transport Strategy Update – 3<sup>rd</sup> Delivery Plan 12 Mr Neil Macrae, Partnership Manager, submitted a Report providing an overview of the third Delivery Plan for the National Transport Strategy, particularly those measures that related directly to HITRANS area. The Delivery Plan sets out an extensive range of actions the Scottish Government is taking to help deliver the priorities and outcomes of the National Transport Strategy. The Report made recommendations on proposed workstreams for members to consider progressing within HITRANS 2024/25 Business Plan.

**It was agreed:**

- (1) to note the Report;**
- (2) to consider the scope of work to better understand the challenges faced by transport authorities within our area in adapting to climate change and network resilience; and**
- (3) to approve the inclusion of a funding allocation within the draft HITRANS 2024/25 Business Plan to undertake work outlined in Recommendation No.2.**

Regional Update Rail 13 With reference to item 14 of the Minute of Meeting of 10 November 2023 Mr Frank Roach, Partnership Manager, HITRANS, submitted a Report which provided a Report on rail matters across the area. Progress updates in relation to various infrastructure, services, policy and freight projects were given.

**It was agreed to:**

- (1) note the Report; and**
- (2) the Partnership Manager and Argyll and Bute Council would undertake further engagement with the Ministry of Defence in relation to the Faslane Rail Project.**

MaaS Project Status Update and Better Points Programme 14 Mr Ranald Robertson, Partnership Director, submitted a Report which provided an update on the HITRANS (Mobility as a service) MaaS Project – GO-HI and the recent work on a sustainable travel rewards programme within the GO-HI programme. It was stated in the Report that GO-HI was a regional, multi-modal journey planning system which used real-life data which offered account based payment available to all users for all participating mobility options and the funding obtained was intended for an initial six month live project but through internal virement of budget and additional funding from the Stronger Combined North Sea Region Project it had been possible to launch the platform for a 24 month period at the end of which time it was hoped that the platform would become sustainable based on use.

The Report also stated that in addition to the platform, the partnership with the INTERREG North Sea Region project ‘Stronger Combined’ was also enabling the introduction of the Inverness eBike Dock System and MaaS programme marketing and a combination of Stronger Combined and Smarter Choices Smarter Places funding had enabled the appointment of a project officer to deliver the work.

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

Bus Partnership Fund Update 15 Neil MacRae, Partnership Manager, submitted a Report which provided an update on Bus Partnership Fund projects within the HITRANS area. The Report indicated that Transport Scotland had decided to pause the Bus Partnership Fund in 2024/25.

The Report stated that work on several ambitious projects that were looking to progress bus priority interventions on some of the most congested transport corridors in Inverness and Forth William were still at the appraisal stage and the announcement that the Bus Partnership Fund had been paused for 2024/25 meant that there was currently no funding to complete the design and delivery of these projects. As a result, the Highland Bus Partnership have written collectively to both welcome the BPF funding for the improvements that had been delivered to date but also to highlight the deep concern that the pause in funding for the Bus Partnership Fund in 2024/25 would have a negative impact on several projects which were at crucial junctures and the momentum gained on these projects could be lost.

**It was agreed to:**

- (1) note the Report;**
- (2) support the concerns raised by the Highland Bus Partnership, with regard to future funding of the projects supported by the Bus Partnership Fund, as set out in the letter attached at Appendix B to the Report;**
- (3) approve the proposal to establish a new post to support the maintenance of at stop information and infrastructure based on the proposal outlined in the Report; and**
- (4) make representations to Transport Scotland highlighting the concerns about the impact of the pause in the Bus Partnership Fund and seek assurance on proposals for public transport support going forward.**

## EUROPEAN PROJECTS

EU Funding Consolidated Update 16 With reference to item 15 of the Minute of the Meeting of 10 November 2023, Mr Ranald Robertson, Partnership Director, submitted a Report providing an update on HITRANS involvement in European funded projects. This included programmes Interreg North Sea Region, Interreg VA Cross Border, Interreg Northwest Europe, and Horizon Europe.

HITRANS is currently involved in three active European projects, as well as providing support to the Low Carbon Travel and Transport (LCTT) projects. The Appendix includes details on all projects including status, timelines, description of main activities, Gantt Chart, and a consolidated budgets table. As of August 2023, HITRANS total budget for European projects is £3,347,744.82.

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

FASTER Project 17 With reference to item 16 of the Minute of the Meeting of 10 November 2023, Mr Matthew Glennon, Project Manager – FASTER, submitted a Report providing an update in respect of the FASTER project funded through the INTERREG VA Programme, supported by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF).

The Report stated that the Faster Project officially ended on 31 December 2023, but that the Project had been allowed a six-month period to fully complete outstanding installations.

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

## PARTNERSHIP

Scottish Affairs Committee Report – Cost of Living Impact on Rural Communities in Scotland 18 Mr Ranald Robertson, Partnership Director, submitted a Report which detailed the key transport findings of the House of Commons Scottish Affairs Committee in their report on ‘Cost of Living: Impact on Rural Communities in Scotland’. The Report detailed the two recommendations in relation to Transport.

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