

Item:

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## Report to Partnership Meeting of 1 February 2008

### ARISAIG STATION- BLUEPRINT FOR DEVELOPMENT

1. Arisaig on the West Highland Line-Mallaig Extension is associated the world over with Harry Potter, yet has that forlorn, uncared-for air. There is an opportunity for HITRANS at nominal cost to support its development on a trial basis for the benefit of rail services in the area and the local community.
2. HRP has been successful in identifying redundant accommodation and finding new users across the network, including Lairg, Carrbridge, Gleneagles and Invergordon. This has been achieved because of HRP's understanding of the complexities of rail property management.
3. It identified Arisaig four years ago as a station requiring some attention. Waiting facilities were deemed inadequate, and the area was an informal gathering place for local youths. In particular the building was at risk. Discussions took place with Lochaber Housing Association about providing a possible flat for a local, but discovered that the footprint is restricted in its use by the need to retain some sensitive electronic signalling equipment in one half. Over the last year the heritage shelter has been rebuilt (funding: Railway Heritage Trust-RHT, FSR, HRP) and the station building repainted by FSR. Landscaping works have also been carried out.
5. It is proposed that HITRANS takes on the lease of the vacant parts of the building on a year by year basis. The draft agreement is the same as that for the Lairg HRP office and has served well for 6 years. The rent is low, and annually renewable until the franchise end (2011 currently). We are responsible for internal fixtures and fittings, and obviously insure the contents.
6. This will facilitate the establishment of a cycle hire business at Arisaig encouraging active travel in the area. Several meetings have been held with Alan Brownridge who has set up a mobile cycle hire operation Cycles2U in the area. He is very interested in taking over the former goods shed on the westbound platform. Cycle2U's plan to encourage people to cycle between stations but leave the hired bikes for collection by road and return to Arisaig. It is designed to develop local station business whilst not over stretching on-train cycle capacity. Based on the lease arrangements, HITRANS can offer the shed at nominal cost for an agreed period with the blessing of First ScotRail.
7. Opportunities for usage of the remaining 2 rooms and toilet will be investigated. They could be used as an occasional office/meeting room. There are strategic reasons for establishing a base in the west. HRP has been offered £1k by RHT for internal decoration, and this could potentially be passed on to HITRANS.

8. HRP has funds from a legacy to put towards restoration of the signalbox. Again, RHT funding is likely to be forthcoming.

**Recommendation: HITRANS takes on lease for an experimental one year period and identifies further potential uses in order to enhance its transport function.**

**Report by:** Frank Roach  
**Designation:** Partnership Rail Adviser  
**Date:** 22 January 2008