



Report to Partnership Meeting of 5 June 2009

STRATEGY DEVELOPMENT AND DELIVERY

Research/Strategy Development Programme for 2009/10

SUMMARY

The Report informs the Partnership on progress on the Functions and Air Services reviews, and seeks approval from the Partnership for a study to identify the needs for transport investment in the Highlands and Islands to support the development and delivery of renewable off shore wind energy around Scotland's shores.

DETAIL

The Partnership at its meeting of 3 April agreed the HITRANS Business Plan for 2009/10 which includes a Programme for Research/Strategy Development for 2009/10 in support of development, implementation and delivery of the HITRANS Transport Strategy.

Two key Reviews are included in the Programme and are currently progressing well.

The Review of Delivery of Transport Services in the Highlands and Islands has commenced with Atkins being appointed to undertake the commission. They have commenced the round of consultations with key Stakeholders and have arranged a Regional Transport Roundtable event for 17 June at Eden Court Inverness to facilitate further engagement in the review, to which the Partnership Members will be invited. A copy of the presentation made to the Client Group on 22 May will be distributed separately to Board Members for their background information. The overall review will be completed by late July and the findings reported to the Partnership Meeting in September.

The Review of Air Services has also commenced, with Mott MacDonald being appointed to undertake the commission. This is a joint study being undertaken in Partnership with ZetTrans and arrangements have been made to hold stakeholder engagement events in Shetland, Orkney, Stornoway, Oban, and in Inverness in August. The study will be completed in late September and presented to the Partnership at its meeting in December.

Off-shore Wind Development – Necessary Transport Interventions

The Regional Transport Strategy aims to enhance the region's viability by improving interconnectivity for the whole region, a key aim being to promote and enable sustainable economic growth. Some of the key sectors in which the Highlands and Islands can add significant value to the country's economic future are in renewable energy, tourism, food and drink, and forestry. Recent announcements and actions by both UK and Scottish Government have identified the extent to which Scotland has a leading role to play in the delivery of off-shore wind energy production with major infrastructure investment requirements in the next 10 years. The UK is the leading location world wide for implementation of this form of renewable energy which is available using proven technology. Scottish waters uniquely offer some 25% of

Europe's potential off shore wind energy capacity and government is encouraging developers to realise the opportunities thus created in this sector. The technologies developed in extracting oil from the North Sea are common with those needed to develop off-shore wind, and thus Scotland is in a strong position to support this sector of the renewable industry in terms of its location and experience, its facilities, and the skills needed to provide this energy to the European market.

As with oil developments in the 1970s, to realise optimum delivery of support to this sector transport networks have to be available that provide unrestricted and efficient access to key locations around the country. The needs of the renewable energy sector will be different in nature to that for oil, the support structures will for instance be smaller but far greater in number, and there is value in establishing in discussion with the industry what their needs are and in particular what transport infrastructure and service improvements will be required to meet their needs, and most importantly, establish when these will be required.

The timeframe within which necessary transport investment will be required is likely to be very tight if this region is to provide optimum support to the industry. It is therefore proposed at this time to undertake a short study to identify what work is required within the Highlands and Islands to support Government by identifying the potential industry needs and the timeframe within which intervention is required to optimise delivery of this energy resource.

The cost of such a Study is estimated to be £25,000 and it is proposed to fund this from within the Research and Strategy Development Budget by postponing work on Development of the Regional Traffic Model to 2010/11 and slipping some £10,000 of expenditure on Sustainable travel initiatives/ projects into 2010/11, given the time criticality of the Off-Shore Wind Energy Study

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Partnership is asked to

1. Note progress on the two key Reviews
2. Approve the amendment to the Research/Strategy Development Programme to include a Study into Off-Shore Wind Energy Development – Necessary Transport Interventions

Report by: Dave Duthie
Designation: Partnership Director
Date: 25 May 2009