



News from HITRANS

3 February 2009

TRANSPORT IS KEY TO THE FUTURE OF THE ECONOMY AND ENVIRONMENT IN HIGHLANDS AND ISLANDS – says *HITRANS*

The Highlands and Islands Transport Partnership (HITRANS) has taken a major step towards defining its role in ensuring the economic growth of the Highlands and Islands while protecting the area’s environment. Following a round table meeting at Westminster with Highlands and Islands MPs, HITRANS Chairman Duncan MacIntyre said, “Because of our geography we travel more per head in the Highlands and Islands than in other parts of the UK.

“If we wish to develop a sustainable economy while minimising the impact we have on the environment, one of the biggest elements of our carbon footprint we can manage and reduce is in the transport sector.

“Our knowledge and experience at HITRANS can help advise the Scottish and National Governments on the economic and environmental impact of future developments in transport. This is particularly vital in having the Highlands and Islands fully involved in implementing the Government’s Strategic Transport Projects Review.”

HITRANS started the debate on the problems of introducing bio-fuels into the Highlands and Islands last December after a feasibility study suggested that the region potentially could face significant increased costs for fuel and put a major question mark over the viability of rural petrol stations and the existing fuel distribution system.

That issue was raised again when Councillor MacIntyre and HITRANS Partnership Director Dave Duthie arranged a meeting with all Highlands and Islands MPs, and had detailed discussions with Charles Kennedy, Alan Reid, Danny Alexander and Alistair Carmichael.

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Commenting after the meeting, Duncan MacIntyre said, “Our liaison work on strategic transport issues will continue with MPs, MSPs and MEPs and we will encourage a commitment by the governments to collaborate with councils and regional transport

partnerships in delivering real improvements in transport services in a sustainable way. We see this approach as the only way to ensure best delivery of services in the Highlands and Islands and we intend, through partnership, to develop a bank of projects to tackle the national transport constraints identified in the Strategic Transport Projects Review.”

Also on the agenda were talks on securing regional air links to the London hub from Inverness and other remote regions of the UK; the impact on Scotland of the potential changes to rail services on the East Coast Main Line from London; and possible developments in European legislation on allowable travelling times for animals which if changed could have a major impact on farming and crofting in the region.

END

NOTES

- For a copy of the Experian/Catalist report – ‘Road Fuel Supply in the Highlands and Islands’ please contact HITRANS.
- For information on the Scottish Transport Projects Review go to <http://www.transportscotland.gov.uk/stpr>



PHOTO CAPTION – (left to right) HITRANS project director Dave Duthie, Charles Kennedy MP, HITRANS chair Duncan MacIntyre and Alan Reid MP, at Westminster