

## **Report to Partnership Meeting 23 April 2021**

### **CONSULTATION**

#### **Strategic Transport Projects Review 2 Update**

##### **Purpose of Report**

This report provides Members with an update on the Strategic Transport Projects Review 2 (STPR2).

##### **Background**

The second Strategic Transport Projects Review (STPR2) will inform transport investment in Scotland for the next 20 years.

STPR2 is a Scotland-wide review of the strategic transport network across all transport modes, including walking, wheeling, cycling, bus, rail and car, as well as reviewing wider island and rural connectivity.

STPR2 will help to deliver the vision, priorities and outcomes for transport set out in the National Transport Strategy (NTS2) and will align with other national plans such as the Infrastructure Investment Plan, National Planning Framework (NPF4) and the Climate Change Plan.

STPR2 involves conducting an evidence-based review of the performance of Scotland's strategic transport network across all transport modes to identify interventions required to support the delivery of Scotland's Economic Strategy.

It is reporting in two phases, the first of which was published on in February and makes recommendations on transport interventions for investment in the short term, focussing on COVID-19 pandemic and the Scottish Government plans for a green recovery. Phase 2 will report in Autumn 2021 giving Scottish Ministers a programme of potential transport investment opportunities for the period 2022-2042.

##### **Strategic Transport Projects Review 2 – Consultation**

In February, Transport Scotland published its Phase 1 recommendations, together with an updated national Case for Change and updated Regional Case for Change reports. During this stage options were assessed against the Transport Planning Objectives with projects either carried forward for further appraisal or sifted or scoped out from STPR2.

A workshop involving HITRANS Partnership Board members and advisors was held on 22<sup>nd</sup> March. This provided an opportunity to discuss HITRANS submission so that a formal submission could be made ahead of purdah deadline. A copy of HITRANS final submission is contained in Appendix A to this report.

## Summary of HITRANS response

In responding to the STPR2 consultation, HITRANS highlighted a number of themes;

The feedback evidenced in our response against the themes of phase 1 recommendations and those taken forward to phase 2 show a dominant focus around urban issues and opportunities. HITRANS wants to understand how rural, remote and island areas that will be untouched by the STPR2 phase 1 and phase 2 aspects will be supported in terms of investment and development associated with transport to assist towards the NTS2 strategic framework?

A key factor remains around the way in which the definition of the strategic transport systems has been formulated. The process should include all of Scotland's transport, rather than be limited to Transport Scotland's responsibilities. This does not meet with the intention of NTS2 being a national strategy for all of Scotland's transport infrastructure and networks.

Concluding the NTS2 sponsored review of roles and responsibilities in transport in Scotland is of critical importance to the shaping of the STPR2 process. As rural Scotland and the islands tend to suffer most as a consequence of the present rigid approach to responsibilities, rather than considering a more collaborative stance or element of subsidiarity, it is difficult to recognise how the STPR2 process, as currently presented, will reduce inequalities, take climate action, deliver inclusive economic growth and / or improve our health and wellbeing for the Highlands and Islands region, and therefore in turn the nation as a whole.

The question remains as to where strategic planning will otherwise be progressed with strategic matters that fall beyond the responsibility of Transport Scotland, but which necessitate consideration at a national level.

HITRANS welcome the commitment to publish an Islands Connectivity Plan and for Islands areas it is essential that Government confirms that this plan will have an equal footing and absolute parity with STPR 2 and comprehensively covers the wide ranging connectivity needs and modal challenges of each island. Further, it is unclear how the Islands Impact Assessment for STPR2 has been used to inform the overall appraisal process thus far. The understanding is that the Island Impact Assessment process should help shape and inform appraisal rather than being on the outside of the process as an addendum. Again, it is vital that evidence is supplied to demonstrate transparently how the Island Impact Assessment element has and is being employed throughout the process.

We recognise the merits of a number of the projects to our region that have been listed as 'progressed' through initial sifting to phase 1 or phase 2, it is clear that the loss or absence of a number of other projects that have been sifted out or that do not feature will undermine the opportunity to optimise NTS2 priorities in the Highlands and Islands context, including:

- addressing affordability issues across active travel, behavioural change opportunities, electric vehicles and transport poverty more generally.
- decarbonising the bus network, specifically consideration around an approach for smaller operators, particularly in remote, rural and island communities.
- how Demand Responsive Transport will be supported and developed in the absence of revenue funding through this process, or otherwise identification of targeted revenue support to affect service-changing provision.
- very long term planning for all island transport connections (60+ years). decarbonisation of ferry and air transport beyond the CHFS and NIFS network- the expertise developed by Orkney Ferries on the use of hydrogen should be used to guide

practice along with international best practice on the deployment of battery electric ferries. Decarbonisation of internal air services including on routes within Orkney and Argyll should be included in the options taken forward.

- improving surface access to ports and airports by all modes is of relevance across all of Scotland, access to all ports and airports is vital in terms of lifeline services.
- in terms of mass transit, options for enhanced shared mobility in other parts of Scotland should be featured alongside the projects in the three largest urban centres-these should include meaningful, service-changing, investment in bus, coach and Demand Responsive Transport services.

In summary, HITRANS believes that the STPR2 process should include all of Scotland's transport, rather than being limited to Transport Scotland's transport responsibilities. This latter approach does not flow from the intentions, vision or objectives of the NTS2 being a national strategy for transport for Scotland.

### RTS Delivery

Impact - Positive

Comment – The policies outlined in STPR2 will underpin the prioritisation of the projects within the RTS Delivery Plan

### Policy

Impact - Positive

Comment – STPR2 together with the other key policy documents will provide a detailed and coordinated framework of policies at a national level including the National Transport Strategy 2 and National Planning Framework 4

### Financial

Impact – Positive

Budget line and value – No direct impact but the policies and priorities will provide a focus for future Business Plans

### Equality

Impact – Positive

Comment – Reducing Inequalities is one of the key priorities of the updated National Transport Strategy.

Members are invited to:

1. Note the Report

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**Date:** 14<sup>th</sup> April 2021