



## Environmental Services

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Dear [REDACTED]

### **HITRANS Regional Transport Strategy Refresh - Consultation**

Please find below the response to the RTS Refresh Consultation on behalf of Moray Council. Our response follows the order and format of your online questions but is in letter format for transparency and ease of sharing.

We support the two high level objectives that have been set out. In particular we appreciate the recognition that reducing barriers to participation has an equal importance to directly supporting economic growth. Ensuring that movement is not a barrier for people, goods and services across the HITRANS area will improve equality and serves to underpin wider growth and development across a full range of socio-economic outcomes.

We support the four transport objectives that have been proposed. We would note that without diminishing the importance of safety in relation to travel and transport, it is not clear from the delivery plan that this objective has the same primacy as the journey time reduction, capacity constraints and accessibility/integration objectives. This would indicate a mismatch between the perceived importance of the objectives and the outcomes of the strategy.

You asked us to consider how accurately the strategic themes accurately capture the key issues, challenges and opportunities for the region. Broadly speaking the text setting out the strategic themes is a strong summary. In relation to lifeline transport it may be worth noting that the current cost implications of transport provision can also act as a barrier to movement and access. There may well be a form of transport, but if members of the public cannot afford the provision, or businesses justify the cost, then it makes the link redundant for a percentage of our communities. This then further threatens the sustainability of that transport link.

The list of committed projects which sets out interventions which are, in the main, Scottish Government led are welcome for the region. We feel it is important to note that these reflect a 'backbone' of provision rather than reflecting the principal needs of the region. The whole RTS demonstrates that to deliver the high level objectives requires a greater breadth and depth of intervention. The nature of the HITRANS region is such that it is both highly rural yet very vibrant economically. Whisky production from Speyside alone contributes over £425m to the Exchequer each year. It is disappointing that the importance of the A95 has not yet been recognised by Transport Scotland in relation to route improvements. We note the inclusion of the A96 dualling programme in the list of committed projects and look forward to working with HITRANS to ensure that the benefits of the dualling programme are maximised for all communities and users.

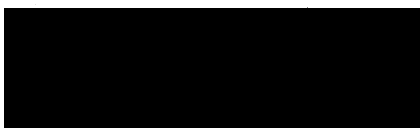
We welcome the recognition that initiatives ranging from road maintenance to mainline railway electrification will contribute to the economic prosperity of the region. It would be good to see additional work and schemes promoted by HITRANS on ports and harbours as a whole, not just in relation to their important function with ferry services. 25% of Scotland's freight tonnage is transported by water, so the ports across the region have an incredibly important role. Despite this, the volume of freight transported by water has dropped by 35% over the last 12 years. Although these figures are dominated by bulk fuel movements, principally through Forth, Clyde and Sullom Voe, we feel that the figures demonstrate that ports and harbours should feature more prominently in the work of HITRANS going forward. The development of Buckie harbour both for general cargo movements and as an offshore renewable energy base has great potential. The early signs are already encouraging in relation to cargo and fish landings. We would welcome support in developing Buckie's role in the economy further.

The way in which the wider HITRANS Board members and advisers work together in partnership should be commended as the nature of the relationships and ways of working are particularly effective in both influencing outcomes and directly delivering projects. The specialist support team directly employed by HITRANS is agile, receptive to all its stakeholders, and focussed on achieving the objectives of the strategy for all constituent members. We feel that continuing this collaborative way of working across the full HITRANS membership should be continued – there is much to be gained from sharing best practice and pooling expertise from the local authority members and advisers, and from the non-council members and advisers too. There is potential to grow the role of the non-council members and advisers in working more closely with the constituent local authorities. Whilst HITRANS should continue to work across all of the identified 'ways of working' (para 3.5.5.6), the greatest benefit comes from developing and delivering schemes within the region, and influencing others on areas where there is a regional interest.

We note that the monitoring arrangements for the strategy have not yet been established. We would be interested to see a baseline position established using the issues identified in the strategic themes and monitoring against a defined target level. These indicators should also demonstrate their link to specific strategy objectives. We do, however, recognise the challenges of effective monitoring of a regional strategy such as this with such a complex set of desired outcomes, many of which are also influenced by other factors outside the remit of the RTS.

As a member authority of HITRANS we appreciate the opportunity to provide our own feedback from the perspective of Moray Council, and look forward to collaborating with HITRANS and all its members in finalising and delivering the refreshed regional transport strategy.

Yours sincerely

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**Nicola Moss**  
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