PROJECTS AND STRATEGY PERFORMANCE REPORT

1   INTRODUCTION

1.1   This report updates the Committee on the future reporting plans in this area, as well as performance of the Partnership's strategy and project workstreams in Quarter 4 to date.

1.2   This project report sits alongside the new project lifecycle management process, that will link directly from the business plan to a project outline document, to a project initiation document and, once this has been approved, into this project progress report. This process will allow us to report to the Committee on progress against project objectives, with the aim of this commencing for all projects from the start of 25/26.

2   PROJECT AND STRATEGY DELIVERY OVERSIGHT SUBGROUP

2.1   At the last meeting of this Committee, it was agreed to set up a Project and Strategy Delivery Oversight Subgroup (PaSDOS). This Subgroup was set up to add to, and not replace, normal scrutiny of project and strategy delivery, which is currently reported to the Performance and Audit Committee and the Partnership Board.

2.2   The remit of Subgroup was agreed as follows:
- A detailed analysis of key project documentation including the Project Outline Document, Project Initiation Document, Project Status Reports, and Project Closure Reports
- A review of progress in the most recent quarter
- Progress against outcomes as agreed in the Business Plan
- Updates on financial projections for the year as agreed in the Annual Budget and spend within the quarter
- Progress against project timelines and milestones as agreed in the Business Plan
- The current programme risk register and issues log

2.3   Membership of PaSDOS was to be made up of at least two Councillor members and two non-Councillor members, and was to be initially by invitation, at the direction of the Committee Chair, in order that members with specific skillsets can be targeted. These skillsets may include audit, accounts, programme or project management, change management, risk management or legal knowledge. The following have been agreed as the Members of the Subgroup:
- Councillor John McMillan
- Councillor Tom Conn
- John Scott
- Simon Hindshaw
- Alastair Couper

2.4   The first meeting of PaSDOS was held on 14th February. At the meeting, the Subgroup reviewed their terms of reference and agreed to revisit these at their next meeting, and appointed Councillor John McMillan as the Subgroup's Chair. They also discussed the information that will be reported to future meetings to ensure they can give adequate scrutiny to project and strategy delivery. A copy of the minutes of the meeting is attached at Appendix 1.

3   FUTURE REPORTING PLANS

3.1   With the creation of the Project and Strategy Oversight Delivery Subgroup (PaSDOS) as noted above, some changes are proposed to the scheduling of future versions of this report, and the amount of time allocated to this report within Committee meetings.

3.2   At present, the Projects and Strategy Performance Report is reported to each P&A Committee, which covers performance within the current quarter. As Committee meetings tend to occur soon after the midpoint of the quarter, and factoring in time to produce reports, only around 6 weeks of each quarter is reported to each Committee. It is therefore proposed that, in line with the scheduling of PaSDOS meetings, this report is amended so that it is a retrospective look at the performance in the previous quarter. As an example, Q4 24/25 would have the following reporting schedule:
- January - March – Q4 delivery window
- Mid April – report prepared on Q4 delivery
- End April – PaSDOS meets to review Q4 delivery
- End May – Projects and Strategy Performance Report and PaSDOS minutes presented to this Committee
- Mid June - Projects and Strategy Performance Report presented to Board

3.3   Some changes to the content of the standard Appendix report will also be made following discussion at the Subgroup on the information that they wish to see. Additionally, from Q1 25/26, progress against objectives and outcomes will be reported in line with the Business Plan.

3.4   Due to the additional scrutiny provided by PaSDOS, it is proposed that the time this Committee dedicates to this report during its meetings is reduced. Instead of covering all projects as part of the presentation to Members, only specific projects will be presented based on the discussions held at PaSDOS. The full report will still be sent to Members, and Members will still be able to ask questions on any area of work within the report. The Partnership Board can be asked to discuss matters arising from the work of the sub-group after review by the P&A Committee.

4   PROJECTS AND STRATEGY PROGRESS

4.1   Given the change to the reporting timescale set out above, this report is presented as an interim report on Q4 progress to date, with no detailed Appendix, with the full Q4 report to be reviewed by PaSDOS in April and presented to the next meeting of this Committee.

4.2   Some key project and strategy work successes over the quarter have been:

- Significant progress has been made on plans for Thistle Assistance, with a survey of users being designed in collaboration with Transport Scotland and Disability Equality Scotland, and a promotional campaign planned for March.
- Real Time Passenger Information screens across the region were able to show an emergency alert for Storm Eowyn following recent development work.
- A memorandum of understanding has been agreed to progress a joint procurement of public EV charging infrastructure across 7 of the SEStran Local Authorities and Dumfries and Galloway. City of Edinburgh Council have approved their role as Lead Authority for this procurement, and are taking forward joint work to agree the detailed tender scope, with the tender due to be published in April.
- While feedback received from the European Union Horizon review board on the FUSION submission for delivering elements of the Freight Strategy was positive, the project was rejected for funding. SEStran is currently working with Napier Transport Research Institute to develop a research proposal that will explore the potential for freight tram in Edinburgh.
- A successful in-person workshop was held with Local Authority representatives to support the development of the RTS Delivery Plan.
- The Newburgh Station final report has been submitted to Transport Scotland and is currently being reviewed, and feedback is awaited. The Winchburgh Station work is progressing with station design and business case development, the steering group meets monthly with SEStran officers participating.

4.3 Several new issues have emerged with the procurement of the GoSEStran app over the quarter to date. These have the potential to have a significant impact on timelines and budget availability. These issues and next steps are currently being assessed and, if required, a report will be provided to the Partnership Board on 14th March.

4.4 As reported to the last Committee Meeting, some underspends are predicted in the Projects Budget which will be requested to be carried over into 25/26. The most substantial of these are include on the Bus Strategy (due to slower than expected progress that is impacting the commission of additional work) and Go E Bike (for a Brompton bike locker near Haymarket Station that is currently being discussed with Network Rail and Scotrail). These and other smaller underspends are currently being managed with a view to minimising any budget carry over request.

4.5 **People and Place**

4.5.1 Key project progress under the 4 themes (plus access to cycles) has been as follows:

- For **access to cycles**, Scottish Borders have delivered 47 bikes and associated equipment to secondary schools. The Bike Station's Wee Bike Library completed surveys that highlighted impact of the project – 30% said they cycle more and use the car less since using the library, and 99% said they'd use the bike library again. FEL's impact through the NHS social prescribing work has received positive feedback, with 24 patients using this service, and one patient reported back: *"FEL in conjunction with the NHS have done a wonderful thing … by providing e-bikes, I have quite literally got*

my legs back." University of Edinburgh's UniCycles scheme remains popular with 62 out of 70 being out on hire in September for longer-time hire. All of the Cycling UK Cycle Access Fund has been allocated, with the focus now moving to monitoring and evaluation.

- With **schools and young people**, the Paths for All officer at Lasswade High School carried out a survey to identify barriers to active travel, receiving 704 responses, and used these to create tailored solutions including consultation with parents around the school run, and gamification of projects for children. The Project Officer at Falkirk High has delivered a range of activities and has received positive feedback from the school: *"The Active Travel Coordinator has been an absolute star with pupils".* FEL's Bike Buddies P7 transition project saw significant progress in Q3 with 104 bikes built and delivered in Clackmannanshire - this programme has helped tackle child poverty by making it easier for disadvantaged young people to get to school, work and activities and reduces transport costs for families, improves physical and mental health and opens up new opportunities. Local Authorities have reported successful Q3 training sessions across the region, including Bike4Ever in Edinburgh and Bikeability in Scottish Borders. This quarter the Living Street's WOW programme logged 278.98k of journeys, and Sustran's I Bike saw 6,411 attendees.

- The activities being delivered through the **workplaces** theme have seen high engagement rates. East Lothian Council hosted a Workplace Travel Forum Event where a range of speakers offering expertise and networking opportunities. City of Edinburgh Council has been working in collaboration with TravelKnowHow to change commuting and business travel of Council employees - their survey received 1,000 responses enabling a high-quality analysis of travel patterns of staff. Clackmannanshire Council has also been updating their Staff Travel Plan to promote their new Council employee bike fleet.

- For **accessibility and inclusion**, many of the projects are receiving positive feedback from post-intervention surveys. The Cycling UK Development Officer has received excellent feedback and has centred around activities with more of a long-term focus in Q3 including regular led rides in East Lothian towns. A well-attended networking and showcase event was hosted by Cycling UK in Dunbar to promote the funding and projects available. For the Scottish Borders Walk-It programme, a pilot study has been added into the project for an indoor walking study in Q3 with the provision of fitness walking classes which are open to all and free of charge. City of Edinburgh Council have had various successful sessions including 4 led rides involving 27 adults and 18 young people, and 73 attendees over the A Wee Pedal programme supporting social prescribing.

- As part of the **capacity and capability building** work, the Sustrans Embedded Officer in Falkirk has been drafting a Behaviour Change Action Plan to support other work being carried out. Internally at SEStran, Q3 has involved continued planning for 25/26 with a Delivery Plan finalised and approved by the SEStran board in December. Urban Foresight were

commissioned in November to complete evaluation of the 24/25 programme with the grant management review being carried into Q4. A reduction in the SEStran PM grant management requirement has meant additional funding can support programme evaluation and project delivery. In late Q3, SEStran appointed Solo Films to support with video case study production with storyboarding with participants planned for January.

4.5.2 Whilst there has been good project progress as noted above, spend to date is lagging further behind projections, and there is a risk of underspend developing, which would need to be returned to Transport Scotland and not invested in the region. Current action being taken to minimise this is as follows:

- Each funded partner is being contacted to ask for an early indication of any underspend to allow this to be reallocated prior to 31st March. To date, this has seen around £105,000 identified, on top of a contingency of £80,000 that was being held at the start of Q4. There does however remain a risk that further underspend may not be identified and/or communicated to SEStran until too late to reallocate.
- Available funding is being allocated to projects that can spend this as it becomes available. The first priority for this is to fund project related to the academic year up until 30th June 2025 in line with Transport Scotland guidance. This has allowed £115,000 of spend to be reallocated, and has the added benefit of ensuing uninterrupted delivery during the spring term in schools.
- Of the remaining £70,000 (which represents about 1% of the overall programme budget), options currently being considered include additional provision around access to bikes and training offers to support delivery in future years.

4.5.3 To ensure transparency over projects being funded and to share details of this amongst all partners and stakeholders to help facilitate collaboration, an online dashboard has been created with the support of Urban Tide. Members are welcome to view and share the map here: https://usmart.io/org/sestran/

5   COMMUNICATIONS AND MARKETING UPDATE

5.1   Communications and marketing achievements in the last quarter include:

- Creation of new SEStran monthly e-newsletter. The current audience for the newsletter is Board and Forum members. The first edition was sent out in December 2024.
- Creation of new SEStran blog. The first blog was published in the January edition of the new newsletter, and can also be found on our website: sestran.gov.uk/blog-our-ambitions-and-intentions-for-the-year-ahead/
- Procurement of a film company to create three People and Place case study films. Filming has just been competed and first rough edits of the films are expected shortly. The films feature the Walk It programme in the Scottish Borders, a foldable bike hire initiative in East Lothian and an adaptive cycle project in Edinburgh.
- Written the first draft of the SEStran 2024/25 Annual Report.

- Provided communications support to the 2025/26 People and Place fund, including creation of three new web pages and promotional social media.
- Procured and briefed a photographer to take photos at a range of currently funded People and Place projects to use across our communications and marketing work.
- Procurement of a media buying agency to market Thistle Assistance. A media schedule is currently being created by the agency, and digital advertising to promote the initiative will take place during March and April.
- Regular posting to LinkedIn is showing a continuous growth in our followers, sand helping us to demonstrate what we do and the impact we have.

6 RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 The Committee is asked to note the contents of this report

Michael Melton
Programme Manager
28th February 2025

Appendix 1: Minutes of the Performance and Strategy Delivery Oversight Subgroup - 14th February 2025

Policy Implications	Outlined project work contributes to the objectives identified within the SEStran Regional Transport Strategy.
Financial Implications	All project work is delivered within confirmed budgets.
Equalities Implications	There are no adverse equalities implications arising from SEStran projects. Several projects actively work to reduce inequalities.
Climate Change Implications	There are no negative climate change implications arising from SEStran projects. Several projects actively work to tackle climate change through the creation of, or support for more sustainable transport options.

PROJECT AND STRATEGY DELIVERY OVERSIGHT SUBGROUP

Virtual Meeting via Microsoft Teams
on Friday 14 February 2025
2.00pm

PRESENT:	Name	Organisation Title
	Councillor McMillan (Chair from item 6)	East Lothian Council
	Councillor Conn	West Lothian Council
	Simon Hindshaw	Non-Councillor Member
	John Scott	Non-Councillor Member

IN ATTENDANCE:	Name	Organisation Title
	Brian Butler (chair up to item 5)	SEStran
	Keith Fisken	SEStran
	Sandra Lavergne	SEStran
	Michael Melton	SEStran
	Rachael Murphy	SEStran

Action by

1. ORDER OF BUSINESS

It was confirmed that there was no change to the order of business. Brian Butler confirmed that he would chair the meeting until the election of a permanent chair at item 5.

2. APOLOGIES

Apologies were submitted on behalf of Alastair Couper (Non-Councillor Member).

3. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

None.

4. PROPOSED TERMS OF REFERENCE

A brief overview of the Terms of Reference was provided to the group.

Discussions focused on how to ensure that the groups remit in the

Terms of Reference (ToR) was suitably refined to make sure the required information was provided to the group and that discussion were as focused as possible. Other elements to be incorporated into the remit included reporting to the Performance and Audit Committee by exception and reviews of RAG statuses.

It was agreed that Michael Melton would redraft the remit section of the ToR for discussion with Cllr John McMillan and then onward circulation to the group for review by email in advance of the next meeting for final approval.

MM

Decision

Approval of the Terms of Reference was deferred until the next meeting of the Subgroup.

5.   **ELECTION OF CHAIR**

John Scott nominated Cllr John McMillan to be chair, which was seconded by Cllr Tom Conn. All were in agreement and Cllr John McMillan was elected chair of the Subgroup.

6.   **FUTURE REPORTING FORMAT AND CONTENT**

A summary of the paper was provided, and then each section was taken in turn to allow time for discussion

Risks and Issues: it was noted that the information here is very text heavy and hard to identify where the group should focus its attention. It was agreed it would be beneficial to review the format and order of the risk register in light of this.

Finance: it was agreed to add in a breakdown of spend to date by quarter

Programme: it was generally agreed that the current format is not ideal, and that some relevant narrative would be helpful.

Overall, it was also agreed to adopt an iterative approach to reporting, with time at the end of the next meeting to review and discuss any changes for the following meeting.

Decision

To note the contents of the report.

7.   **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

Friday 25th April 2025