

External Audit - Annual Audit Plan 2024/25

1. Introduction

1.1 This report presents the External Auditor’s Annual Audit Plan for 2024/25.

2. Main Report

2.1 Audit Scotland has been appointed as the Partnership’s External Auditor for the period from 2022/23 until 2026/27.

2.2 The Annual Audit Plan for 2024/25 is appended.

3 Recommendations

It is recommended the Performance and Audit Committee:

3.1 review and notes the External Audit Annual Audit Plan;

3.2 refer the External Audit Annual Audit Plan to the Partnership Board meeting of 14th March 2025.

Richard Lloyd-Bithell

Treasurer

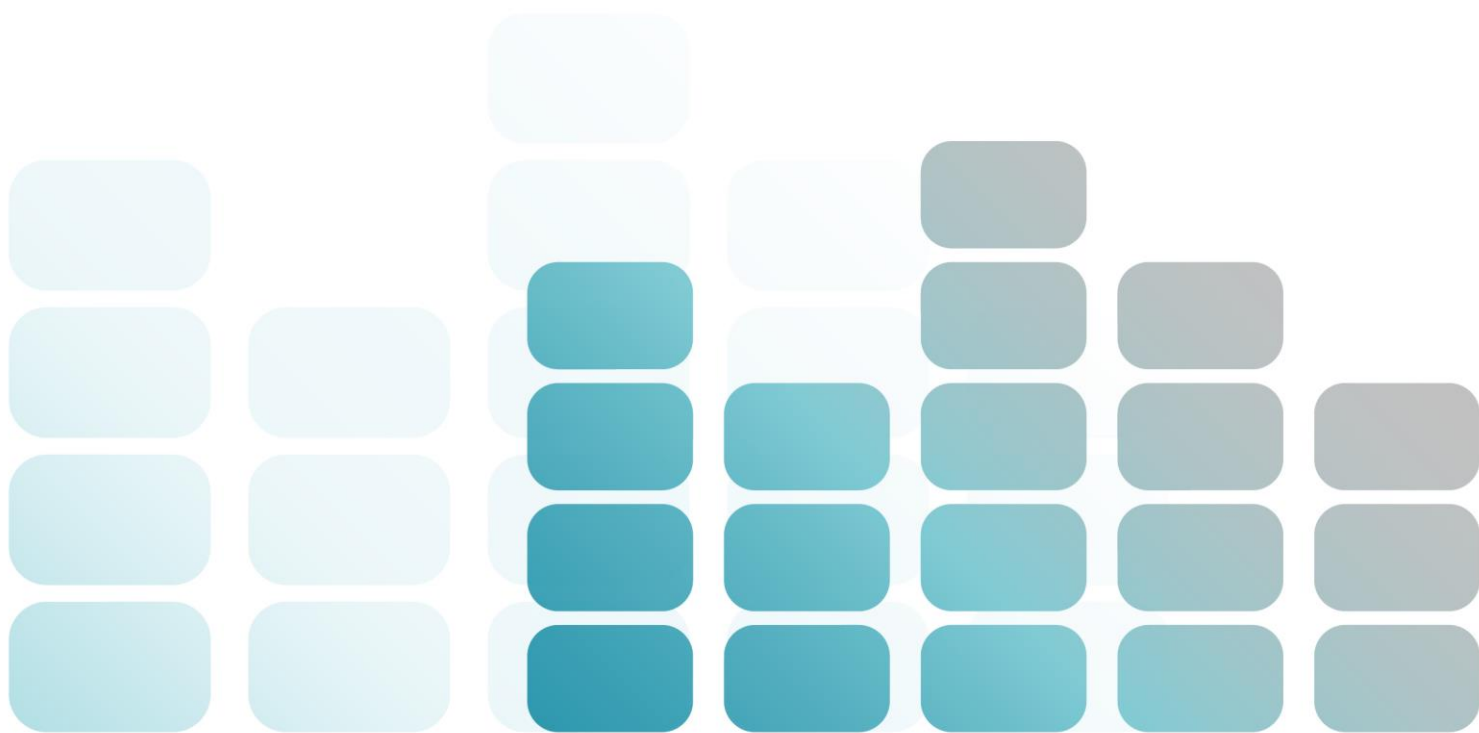
21st February 2025

Appendix Annual Audit Plan 2024/25
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Policy Implications	There are no policy implications arising as a result of this report.
Financial Implications	There are no financial implications arising.
Equalities Implications	There are no equality implications arising as a result of this report.
Climate Change Implications	There are no climate change implications arising as a result of this report.

South East Scotland Transport Partnership

Annual Audit Plan 2024/25



Prepared for South East Scotland Transport Partnership
February 2025

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Accessibility

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Introduction

Purpose of the Annual Audit Plan

1. The purpose of this Annual Audit Plan is to provide an overview of the planned scope and timing of the 2024/25 audit of South East Scotland Transport Partnership's (SEStran) annual accounts. It outlines the audit work planned to meet the audit requirements set out in auditing standards and the Code of Audit Practice, including supplementary guidance.

Appointed auditor and independence

2. Christopher Gardner, of Audit Scotland, has been appointed by the Accounts Commission as external auditor of SEStran for the period from 2022/23 until 2026/27. The 2024/25 financial year is therefore the third of the five-year audit appointment.

3. The audit team is independent of SEStran in accordance with relevant ethical requirements, including the Financial Reporting Council's Ethical Standard. This standard imposes stringent rules to ensure the independence and objectivity of auditors. Audit Scotland has robust arrangements in place to ensure compliance with ethical standards. The arrangements are overseen by the Executive Director of Innovation and Quality, who serves as Audit Scotland's Ethics Partner.

4. The Ethical Standard requires auditors to communicate any relationships that may affect the independence and objectivity of the audit team. There are no such relationships pertaining to the audit of SEStran to communicate.

Audit scope and responsibilities

Scope of the audit

5. The audit is performed in accordance with the Code of Audit Practice, including supplementary guidance, International Standards on Auditing (UK), and relevant legislation. These set out the requirements for the scope of the audit which includes:

- An audit of the financial statements and an opinion on whether they give a true and fair view and are free from material misstatement.
- An opinion on statutory other information published with the financial statements in the annual report and accounts, the Management Commentary, the Annual Governance Statement, and an opinion on the audited part of the Remuneration Report.
- Reporting on SEStran's arrangements for securing Best Value.
- Provision of an Annual Audit Report setting out significant matters identified from the audit of the annual report and accounts and the wider scope areas specified in the Code of Audit Practice.

Responsibilities

6. The Code of Audit Practice sets out the respective responsibilities of SEStran and the auditor. A summary of the key responsibilities is outlined below.

Auditor's responsibilities

7. The responsibilities of auditors in the public sector are established in the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973. These include providing an independent opinion on the financial statements and other information reported within the annual accounts, and concluding on SEStran's arrangements in place for the wider scope areas.

SEStran's responsibilities

8. SEStran has primary responsibility for ensuring proper financial stewardship of public funds, compliance with relevant legislation and establishing effective arrangements for governance, propriety and regularity that enables it to successfully deliver its objectives. The features of proper financial stewardship include:

- Establishing arrangements to ensure the proper conduct of its affairs.

- Preparation of the annual accounts, comprising financial statements and other information that gives a true and fair view.
- Establishing arrangements for the prevention and detection of fraud, error and irregularities, and bribery and corruption.
- Implementing arrangements to ensure its financial position is soundly based.
- Making arrangements to secure Best Value.
- Establishing an internal audit function.

Audit of the annual accounts

Introduction

9. The audit of the annual accounts is driven by materiality and the risks of material misstatement in the financial statements, with greater attention being given to the significant risks of material misstatement. This chapter outlines materiality, the significant risks of material misstatement that have been identified, and the impact these have on the planned audit procedures.

Materiality

10. The concept of materiality is applied by auditors in planning and performing an audit, and in evaluating the effect of any uncorrected misstatements on the financial statements or other information reported in the annual report and accounts.

11. Broadly, the concept of materiality is to determine whether matters identified during the audit could reasonably be expected to influence the decisions of users of the financial statements. Auditors set a monetary threshold when determining materiality, although some issues may be considered material by their nature. Therefore, materiality is ultimately a matter of the auditor's professional judgement.

12. The materiality levels determined for the audit of SEStran are outlined in [Exhibit 1](#).

Exhibit 1

2024/25 Materiality levels for SEStran

Materiality	Audited body
Materiality – based on an assessment of the needs of users of the financial statements and the nature of SEStran's operations, the benchmark used to determine materiality is gross expenditure based on the 2024/25 budget. Materiality has been set at 1.5% of the benchmark.	£98,000

Materiality	Audited body
<p>Performance materiality – this acts as a trigger point. If the aggregate of misstatements identified during the audit exceeds performance materiality, this could indicate that further audit procedures are required. Using professional judgement, performance materiality has been set at 65% of planning materiality.</p>	£64,000
<p>Reporting threshold – all misstatements greater than the reporting threshold will be reported.</p>	£5,000

Source: Audit Scotland

Significant risks of material misstatement to the financial statements

13. The risk assessment process draws on the audit team’s cumulative knowledge of SEStran, including the nature of its operations and its significant transaction streams, the system of internal control, governance arrangements and processes, and developments that could impact on its financial reporting.

14. Based on the risk assessment process, significant risks of material misstatement to the financial statements have been identified and these are summarised in [Exhibit 2, page 8](#). These are the risks which have the greatest impact on the planned audit approach, and the planned audit procedures in response to the risks are outlined in [Exhibit 2](#).

15. The risk assessment process is an iterative and dynamic process. The assessment of risks set out in this Annual Audit Plan and [Exhibit 2](#) may change as more information and evidence is obtained over the course of the audit. Where such changes occur, these will be reported to SEStran and those charged with governance, where relevant.

Exhibit 2

Significant risks of material misstatement to the financial statements

Risk of material misstatement	Planned audit response
<p>1. Fraud caused by management override of controls</p> <p>Management is in a unique position to perpetrate fraud because of management's ability to override controls that otherwise appear to be operating effectively.</p>	<p>The audit team will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluate the design and implementation of controls over journal entry processing. • Test journals entries, focusing on those that are assessed as higher risk, such as those affecting revenue and expenditure recognition around the year-end. • Evaluate significant transactions outside the normal course of business. • Test income and expenditure transactions around the year-end to confirm they are accounted for in the correct financial year. • Test accruals and prepayments to confirm they are accounted for correctly. • Assess the adequacy of controls in place for identifying and disclosing related party relationships and transactions in the financial statements. • Assess changes to the methods and underlying assumptions used to prepare accounting estimates and assess these for evidence of management bias.
<p>2. Risk of material misstatement caused by fraud in expenditure</p> <p>The Code of Audit Practice expands the consideration of fraud under ISA (UK) 240 to include the risk of fraud over expenditure. There is a risk that expenditure may be materially misstated in the 2024/25 financial statements due to the significant extent and nature of SEStran's project and grant-related expenditure streams .</p>	<p>The audit team will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Test expenditure transactions, focusing on the areas of greatest risk, including grant awards. • Review of budget monitoring reports, focusing on significant budget variances. • Review of arrangements in place to prevent and detect fraud.

Risk of material misstatement	Planned audit response
<p>3. Accounting for non-current assets</p> <p>SEStran owns a significant number of non-current assets which are disclosed on the entity's balance sheet. The measurement, valuation and disclosures of these material balances require significant accounting estimates and judgement. Management is reviewing its processes for recording and managing assets, including undertaking a review of policies and procedures.</p>	<p>The audit team will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluate SEStran's arrangements for the valuation and accounting disclosures of non-current assets. • Review the appropriateness of the key data and assumptions used in the 2024/25 valuation process, and challenge these where required. • Test non-current asset entries to confirm the existence of assets and the completeness of the asset register.

Source: Audit Scotland

Key audit matters

16. The Code of Audit Practice requires public sector auditors to communicate key audit matters. Key audit matters are those matters, that in the auditor's professional judgement, are of most significance to the audit of the financial statements and require most attention when performing the audit.

17. In determining key audit matters, auditors consider:

- Areas of higher or significant risk of material misstatement.
- Areas where significant judgement is required, including accounting estimates that are subject to a high degree of estimation uncertainty.
- Significant events or transactions that occurred during the year.

18. The matters determined to be key audit matters will be communicated in the Annual Audit Report. [Exhibit 2](#) outlines the significant risks of material misstatement to the financial statements that have been identified, including those that have greatest impact on the planned audit procedures and require most attention when performing the audit.

Wider scope and Best Value

Introduction

19. Reflecting the fact that public money is involved, the Code of Audit Practice requires that public audit is planned and undertaken from a wider perspective than in the private sector. The wider scope audit set out by the Code of Audit Practice broadens the audit of the annual report and accounts to include consideration of additional aspects or risks in four wider scope areas.

20. Due to the nature and size of SEStran and its limited financial activity, it is considered a less complex body for the wider scope audit. Therefore, the wider scope audit does not consider all four wider scope areas and is instead limited to concluding on the financial sustainability of SEStran.

21. Financial sustainability means looking forward over the medium and longer term in planning the services to be delivered and how they will be delivered effectively. This is assessed by considering SEStran's medium-to longer-term planning for service delivery. The financial sustainability of SEStran will be reported in the Annual Audit Report.

Best Value

22. Under the Code of Audit Practice, the duty on auditors to consider the arrangements an audited body has in place to secure Best Value applies to audited bodies that fall within section 106 of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973, which SEStran does.

23. Consideration of the arrangements SEStran has in place to secure Best Value will be carried out alongside the wider scope audit, and a conclusion on the arrangements SEStran has in place will be reported in the Annual Audit Report.

Significant wider scope and Best Value risks

24. No significant risks in the wider scope areas or Best Value were identified from the risk assessment process.

Reporting arrangements, timetable and audit fee

Audit outputs

25. The outputs from the 2024/25 audit include:

- This Annual Audit Plan.
- An Independent Auditor's Report to SEStran and the Accounts Commission setting out opinions on the annual accounts.
- An Annual Audit Report to SEStran and the Accounts Commission setting out significant matters identified from the audit of the annual report and accounts, conclusions from the wider scope and Best Value audit, and recommendations, where required.

26. The matters to be reported in the outputs will be discussed with SEStran for factual accuracy before they are issued. All outputs from the audit will be published on Audit Scotland's website, apart from the Independent Auditor's Report, which is included in the audited annual report and accounts.

27. Target dates for the audit outputs are set by the Accounts Commission. In setting the target dates for the audit outputs, consideration is given to the target date for approving the annual report and accounts, which is 30 September 2025 for local government bodies.

28. The Independent Auditor's Report and Annual Audit Report are planned to be issued by the target date of 30 September 2025.

Audit timetable

29. Achieving the timetable for production of the annual report and accounts, supported by complete and accurate working papers, is critical to delivery of the audit to agreed target dates. [Exhibit](#) includes a timetable for the audit, which has been agreed with management. Agreed target dates will be kept under review as the audit progresses, and any changes required, and their potential impact, will be discussed with SEStran and reported to those charged with governance, where required.

Exhibit 3

2024/25 audit timetable

Audit activity	SEStran target date	Audit team target date	Relevant committee date
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consideration of unaudited annual report and accounts by those charged with governance 	6 June 2025		6 June 2025
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Submission of unaudited annual report and accounts and all working papers to audit team 	13 June 2025		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Latest date for audit clearance meeting 	29 August 2025	29 August 2025	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Issue of draft Letter of Representation, proposed Independent Auditor's Report, and proposed Annual Audit Report 		29 August 2025	12 September 2025
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Approval by those charged with governance and signing of audited annual report and accounts 	26 September 2025		26 September 2024

Source: Audit Scotland

Audit fee

30. SEStran's audit fee is determined in line with Audit Scotland's fee setting arrangements. The proposed audit fee for the 2024/25 audit is set out in [Exhibit](#).

31. In setting the audit fee, it is assumed that SEStran has effective governance arrangements in place and the complete annual report and accounts will be provided for audit in line with the agreed timetable. The audit fee assumes there will be no significant changes to the planned scope of the audit. Where the audit cannot proceed as planned, for example, due to incomplete or inadequate working papers, the audit fee may need to be increased.

Exhibit 4

Audit fee (including VAT)

Fee component ¹	Fee (£)
External auditor remuneration	25,120
Pooled costs, such as travel and subsistence costs	630
Contribution to the performance audit programme	0
Adjustment for average audit price increase	(12,950)
Total 2024/25 fee	12,800

Source: Audit Scotland

¹ Information on the components that make up the total fee can be found in Audit Scotland's [Audit management and quality guidance](#).

Other matters

Internal audit

32. SEStran is responsible for establishing an internal audit function as part of an effective system of internal control. As part of the audit, the audit team will obtain an understanding of internal audit, including its nature, responsibilities, and activities.

33. While we are not planning to place formal reliance on the work of internal audit in 2024/25, we will review internal audit reports and assess the impact of the findings on our financial statements and wider scope audit responsibilities.

Audit quality

34. Audit Scotland is committed to the consistent delivery of high-quality audit. Audit quality requires ongoing attention and improvement to keep pace with external and internal changes. Details of the arrangements in place for the delivery of high-quality audits is available from the [Audit Scotland website](#).

35. The International Standards on Quality Management (ISQM) applicable to Audit Scotland for 2024/25 audits are:

- ISQM (UK) 1, which deals with an audit organisation's responsibilities to design, implement, and operate a system of quality management (SoQM) for audits. Audit Scotland's SoQM consists of a variety of components, such as: governance arrangements and culture to support audit quality, compliance with ethical requirements, ensuring Audit Scotland is dedicated to high-quality audit through engagement performance and resourcing arrangements, and ensuring there are robust quality monitoring arrangements in place. Audit Scotland carries out an annual evaluation of its SoQM and has concluded it complies with this standard.
- ISQM (UK) 2, which sets out arrangements for conducting engagement quality reviews, which are performed by senior management not involved in an audit, to review significant judgements and conclusions reached by the audit team, and the appropriateness of proposed audit opinions on high-risk audits.

36. To monitor quality at an individual audit level, Audit Scotland carries out internal quality reviews on a sample of audits. Additionally, the Institute

of Chartered Accountants of England and Wales (ICAEW) carries out independent quality reviews on a sample of audits.

37. Actions to address deficiencies identified by internal and external quality reviews are included in a rolling Quality Improvement Action Plan, which is used to support continuous improvement. Progress with implementing planned actions is monitored on a regular basis by Audit Scotland's Quality and Ethics Committee.

38. Audit Scotland may periodically seek the views of SEStran on the quality of audit services provided. The audit team would also welcome feedback at any time.

South East Scotland Transport Partnership

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