GO SEStran
South East of Scotland Transport Partnership

SESTRAN PARTNERSHIP BOARD MEETING

Dean of Guild Room, City Chambers, Edinburgh, EH1 1YJ
Or via Microsoft Teams
10:00am Friday 26 September 2025

09:30   TEA/COFFEE
10:00   PARTNERSHIP BOARD
11:30   BREAK
11:45   PARTNERSHIP BOARD
13:00   LUNCH

AGENDA

1.   ORDER OF BUSINESS
2.   APOLOGIES
3.   DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

AGENDA A – POINTS FOR DECISION

A10. **DATE OF NEXT MEETING:**
The date of the next meeting is **10:00am on Friday 5 December 2025. In person at Dean of Guild Room, Edinburgh City Chambers and online via Microsoft Teams**

AGENDA B – POINTS FOR NOTING

Gavin King
Secretary to SESTRAN
Head of Democracy, Governance and Resilience
Legal and Assurance Division
The City of Edinburgh Council
Waverley Court 2.1
Edinburgh
EH8 8BG

19 September 2025

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Agendas and papers for all SEStran meetings can be accessed on www.sestran.gov.uk

Partnership Board Agenda Briefing Note – 26 September 25

Item	Paper	Board Action
A2(a)	**Annual Audit Report and Annual Audited Accounts 2024-25** Iain Shaw will present the report which: • Notes the annual Audit Report to members of the Board • Recommends the authorisation of the annual accounts for signature	<u>For Noting</u> <u>Approval</u>
A2 (b)	**Finance Officers Report** Presented by Iain Shaw. It is recommended that the Partnership: notes the forecast underspend on the Core revenue budget of £3,000 approves the allocation of £20,000 from the General Fund Reserve for the proposed ICT technology refresh in 2025/26 approves the allocation of £119,000 from the General Fund Reserve for the following projects: • Data Strategy £50,000 • Multi Modal Interchanges £51,000 • SEStran conference £18,000 approves the re-alignment of the 2025/26 Projects budget to reflect planned activity.	<u>For Noting</u> <u>Approval</u>
A3	**Partnership Director's Update** Brian Butler will provide an update on the below subjects covered in the report. The Partnership Board is asked to note the contents of this report.	<u>For Noting</u>
A4	**Project SEStransit** Brian Butler will provide an update on the subjects covered in the report as follows:	<u>For Noting</u>

	SEStran is working with partner authorities, the Edinburgh and South East Scotland City Region team (CRD), Transport Scotland and Network Rail to develop a Strategic Business Case (SBC) for an integrated regional transport network. The SBC is a synthesis of the Regional Transport Strategy Delivery Plan (RTSDP) and a refreshed Recommendation 12 from Transport Scotland's 2nd Strategic Transport Projects Review. Members are asked to note the contents of the report.	
A5	**Regional Bus Strategy – Public Consultation** The purpose of this report is to update the Board on the progress and initial findings of the public consultation of the Regional Bus Strategy. Presented by Rachael Murphy, members are asked to note the contents of the report.	<u>For Noting</u>
A6	**Non-Councillor Members Appointments** This report sets out the process for the recruitment and appointment of the NCMs for the new term beginning April 2026. Angela Chambers will present.	<u>For Noting</u>
A7	**Thistle Assistance update** Sandra Lavergne will provide an update on the work carried out to date on Thistle Assistance as well as the 25/26 project plans. The Partnership Board is asked to note the contents of this report.	<u>For Noting</u>
A8	**South East Scotland Transport Summit** The purpose of this report is to update the Board on the progress of the South East Scotland Transport Summit. Report presented by Rachael Murphy	<u>For Noting</u>
A9	**People and Place M & E Report** The purpose of this paper is to provide the Board with a brief update on progress with monitoring and evaluation (M&E) for the People and Place Programme following the	<u>For Noting</u>

	presentation to the last Board meeting, and to present a copy of the final 2024/25 evaluation report Presented by Michael Melton	
A10	**Date of the next meeting** Friday 5th December 2025	

SEStran Partnership Board Minutes

10.00am, Friday, 20 June 2025

Dunedin Room, City Chambers, Edinburgh, and Microsoft Teams

Present	Name	Organisation Title
	Cllr Sally Pattle (Chair)	West Lothian Council
	Cllr Neil Cuthbert	City of Edinburgh Council
	Cllr Neil Gardiner	City of Edinburgh Council
	Cllr Stephen Jenkinson	City of Edinburgh Council
	Cllr Kayleigh Kinross-O'Neill	City of Edinburgh Council
	Cllr Paul Garner	Falkirk Council
	Cllr Derek Glen	Fife Council
	Cllr Ian Cameron	Fife Council
	Cllr Tom Conn	West Lothian Council
	Simon Hindshaw	Non-Councillor Member
	Callum Hay	Non-Councillor Member
	Doreen Steele	Non-Councillor Member
	Alistair Couper	Non-Councillor Member
	Linda Bamford	Non-Councillor Member
	John Scott	Non-Councillor Member

In Attendance	Name	Organisation Title
	Andrew Rose (Clerk)	City of Edinburgh Council
	Iain Shaw	City of Edinburgh Council
	Jamie Robertson	City of Edinburgh Council
	Peter Forsyth	East Lothian Council
	Ian King	East Lothian Council
	Brian Butler	SEStran
	Alisdair Brown	SEStran
	Jess Carey	SEStran
	Cheryl Fergie	SEStran
	Andrew Ferguson	SEStran
	Sarah Junick	SEStran
	Sandra Lavergne	SEStran
	Michael Melton	SEStran
	Rachael Murphy	SEStran
	Rebecca Smith	SEStran

Also in Attendance	Name	Organisation Title
	Claire Colquhoun	Urban Foresight
	Oliver Harte	Urban Foresight
	Julia Allard	Urban Foresight

Apologies for Absence	Name	Organisation Title
	Cllr Sanne Dijkstra-Downie (Vice Chair)	City of Edinburgh Council
	Cllr Russell Imrie (Vice Chair)	Midlothian Council
	Cllr John McMillan (Vice Chair)	East Lothian Council
	Cllr Scott Harrison	Clackmannanshire Council
	Cllr Margaret Anslow	Falkirk Council
	Cllr James Leslie	Fife Council
	Cllr Jenny Lineham	Scottish Borders Council
	Cllr Jane Cox	Scottish Borders Council
	Paul White	Non-Councillor Member

1. Order of Business

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and indicated that the order of business would be as listed in the circulated agenda.

The Chair indicated that Kate Sherry and Geoff Duke, former non-councillor Members of the Board, had stood down and thanked them for all of their support during their time as Board members.

The Chair also welcomed newly appointed councillor members to the Board.

2. Apologies for Absence

The Clerk read out the apologies which had been received, as detailed above.

3. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

4. Presentation

Claire Colquhoun, Oliver Harte and Julia Allard from Urban Foresight provided a presentation to the Board on monitoring and evaluation findings of the SEStran People and Place Programme, following which the representatives of Urban Foresight, along with SEStran officers, answered questions from the Board.

Decision

That the presentation by Urban Foresight, and the responses to questions asked by the Board, be noted.

A1.   Minutes

Decision

1) That the minute of the SEStran Partnership Board of 15 March 2025 be approved as a correct record.

2) That the minute of the special SEStran Partnership Board of 23 April 2025 be approved as a correct record.

A2.   Unaudited Annual Accounts 2024/25, Treasury Management Report 2024/25

The Board considered a report by the Treasurer presenting both the unaudited Annual Accounts for 2024/25 in accordance with the Local Authority Accounts (Scotland) Regulations 2014, and the Treasury Management report for 2024/25, and asking the Board to note that, following audit, the Annual Accounts, along with the Auditor's report, would be presented to the Performance and Audit Committee and the Partnership Board in due course.

Decision

1) That the unaudited Annual Accounts for 2024/25 be noted.
2) That the annual Treasury Management report for 2024/25 be noted.
3) That it be noted that the audited Annual Accounts, incorporating the Auditor's report, will be presented to the Performance and Audit Committee and the Partnership Board in due course.

(Reference – report by the Treasurer, submitted.)

A3.   Internal Audit Report 2024/25

The Board considered a report by the Chief Internal Auditor, City of Edinburgh Council, reminding the Board that the City of Edinburgh Council Internal Audit team performs one audit annually to provide assurance over the controls established to mitigate SEStran's specific key risks and thereby providing an update on the outcomes of the 2024/25 internal audit of the People and Place funding proposals, progress with the completion of actions agreed as part of the previous audits, and requesting input on potential areas for inclusion in the planned 2025/26 audit.

The Programme Manager indicated to the Board those recommendations which had arisen out of the audit which it had been decided would not be progressed and outlined the reasons why.

Decision

1) That the outcomes of the 2024/25 internal audit of the SEStran People and Place Funding Proposals, including Internal Audit findings and recommendations and agreed management actions and implementation dates be noted.

2) That the progress with completion of management actions from previous audits be noted.

(Reference – Report by the Chief Internal Auditor, City of Edinburgh Council, submitted)

A4.   Partnership Director's Update

The Board considered a report by the Partnership Director which provided updates on a number of areas and subjects which were not covered in other items of business on the agenda for this meeting but which were considered to be of interest to the Board.

Decision

That the report by the Partnership Director be noted.

(Reference – Report by the Partnership Director, submitted)

A5.   Governance Scheme Update

The Board considered a report by the Partnership Director seeking approval for amendments to the Governance Scheme documents, as attached at Appendix 1 to the report.

Decision

That the amendments to Standing Orders, List of Officers Powers, Approved Financial Rules and Grant Standing Orders be approved.

 (Reference – Report by the Partnership Director, submitted)

A6. Transport to Health Literature Review

The Board considered a report by the Strategy Manager presenting the literature review of Transport to Health, with the review providing an overview of the evidence and policy context relating to Transport to Health in the SEStran region, and which will precede a SEStran Transport to Health Strategy.

Decision

1) That the findings of the review be noted.
2) That Board members share Transport to Health efforts with their networks.
3) That SEStran continue the work into a Transport to Health Strategy in the coming years.

(Reference – report by the Strategy Manager, submitted.)

A7. Communications and Marketing Update

The Board considered a report by the Communications and Marketing Officer providing an update on the SEStran's communications and marketing work which had taken place over the previous eight months, together with an overview of the recent Thistle Assurance Marketing campaign and People and Place case study videos.

Decision

1) That the communications and marketing activity that has taken place be noted.
2) That the availability of the newsletter and social media channels be noted and that Board members be requested to share these where appropriate.

(Reference – report by the Communications and Marketing Officer, submitted.)

A8. Appointments to Performance and Audit Committee

The Board considered a report by the SEStran Consultant seeking approval to appoint the nominated Clackmannanshire Council representative to the Performance and Audit Committee and to provide an update on Non-Councillor Board membership.

Decision

1) That the appointment of Councillor Harrison to the Performance and Audit Committee be approved.
2) That the gratitude of the Board be placed on record to both Kate Sherry and Geoff Duke for all their contributions to the Board and to wish them success with future roles.
3) That it be noted that the recruitment of non-councillor members will begin in September 2025 in order to align with the end of the current terms in March 2026.

(Reference – report by the SEStran Consultant, submitted.)

B1. Consultation Responses

The Board considered a report by the SEStran Consultant providing an update on SEStran's response to consultations between March and June 2025, with particular focus on the Just Transition Plan.

Decision

That the content of the report, and the Appendix to the report, be noted.

(Reference – Report by the SEStran Consultant, submitted)

B2. Risk Management Framework

The Board received a report from the Business Manager providing the quarterly update on SEStran's Strategic Risk Register.

Decision

That the content of the report be noted.

(Reference – Report by the Business Manager, submitted)

B3. Projects and Strategy Performance

The Board received a report from the Programme Manager providing commentary on performance in Quarter 4 of 2024/25 and indicating that a version of this report was previously presented to the Project and Strategy Delivery Oversight Subgroup (PaSDOS) on 24 April 2025 and to the Performance and Audit Committee of 6 June 2025. The report also provided an update on future reporting plans in the area of strategy and project workstreams.

Decision

That the content of the report be noted.

(Reference – Report by the Programme Manager, submitted)

B4. Summary of Awards to People and Place 2025 Programme

The Board received a report from the Programme Manager reporting variations to the 2024/25 SEStran People and Place grant awards, together with new grant awards issued for 2025/26.

Decision

That the contents of the report, and the variations to the 2024/25 SEStran People and Place grant awards, as detailed at Appendix 1 to the report, and the new 2025/26 SEStran People and Place grant awards, be noted.

(Reference – Report by the Programme Manager, submitted)

PERFORMANCE & AUDIT COMMITTEE

Dean of Guild Court Room, City Chambers
on Friday 12 September 2025
1.00pm

PRESENT:	Name	Organisation Title
	Councillor Imrie	Midlothian Council
	Councillor Linehan	Scottish Borders Council
	Councillor Jenkinson	The City of Edinburgh Council
	Callum Hay	Non-Councillor Member
	Doreen Steele	Non-Councillor Member
	John Scott	Non-Councillor Member
	Simon Hindshaw	Non-Councillor Member

IN ATTENDANCE:	Name	Organisation Title
	Brian Butler	SEStran
	Cheryl Fergie	SEStran
	Callum Finlayson Cranshaw	Audit Scotland
	Christopher Gardner	Audit Scotland
	Daniel Baigrie (Clerk)	The City of Edinburgh Council
	Michael Melton	SEStran
	Iain Shaw	The City of Edinburgh Council

Action by

A1. **ORDER OF BUSINESS**

It was confirmed that there was no change to the order of business.

A2. **APOLOGIES**

Apologies were submitted on behalf of Councillor Glen, Fife Council.

A3. **DECLARATION OF INTERESTS**

None.

A4. **MINUTES**

1) To approve the minute of the Performance and Audit

Committee of Friday 6 June 2025 as a correct record; and

2) To note that at the meeting on 6 June 2025, there had been discussion regarding HR Policies and that these were on the agenda for the meeting on 12 September 2025.

3) To note the minute of the Project and Strategy Delivery Oversight Subgroup of Thursday 14 August 2025.

A5. **EXTERNAL AUDITOR'S ANNUAL REPORT**

The Independent Auditor's Annual Report summarises the findings arising from the Partnership's 2024/25 external audit. The unaudited Annual Accounts were noted by the Partnership at its meeting on 20 June 2025 and submitted to the appointed external auditor – Audit Scotland. The 2024/25 Annual Audit Report was appended along with the Letter of Representations. In the auditor's opinion, the annual accounts were free from material misstatement. Audit Scotland reported one significant finding from the audit relating to the derecognition of assets.

Decision

To note the Proposed Annual Audit Report.

(Reference – report by the Treasurer, submitted)

A6. **AUDITED ANNUAL ACCOUNTS**

The report presented the Audited Annual Accounts for the year ended 31st March 2025. The Proposed Independent Auditor's Report states the financial statement; gave a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the Partnership as at 31 March 2025 and of its income and expenditure for the year then ended; have been properly prepared in accordance with UK adopted international accounting standards, as interpreted and adapted by the 2024/25 Code; and; have been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973, The Local Authority Accounts (Scotland) Regulations 2014, and the Local Government in Scotland Act 2003.

Decision

To note the audited annual accounts and the Auditor's opinion in the audit certificate.

(Reference – report by the Treasurer, submitted)

A7.   **COUNCIL REQUISITIONS**

The Partnership Director provided a verbal update regarding Council Requisitions. It was noted that a report regarding this would come to a future meeting and create an opportunity for this to be scrutinised further. The following key information was shared:

- Transport Scotland Grant and Council Requisitions have not increased for 12+ years

- Council Requisitions reduced by 10% in that period

- TS grant reduced by 5% in 2024/25

- Inflation over 40% in that period

- Impact on SEStran's ability to deliver the Regional Transport Strategy in future years

Decision

1)   To note the verbal update provided.

2)   To note a report regarding Council Requisitions would come to a future meeting.

A8.   **FINANCIAL PLANNING PROCEDURES**

The Partnership Director provided a verbal update regarding the Financial Planning Procedures. In 2023/24 there had been an Internal Audit recommendation to devise a Financial Planning Procedure and associated scenario planning, efficiency savings and lessons learned. In 2024/25 there had been an External Audit recommendation to extend financial planning horizon to cover the medium term (3 to 5 years).

Decision

1)   To note the verbal update provided.

2)   To note a report regarding Financial Planning Procedures would come to a future meeting.

A9.   **HR POLICIES REPORT**

The purpose of this report was to present the Committee with a copy of the proposed Sexual Harassment policy and provide an update on the wider annual HR policy review

Decision

1) To approve the Sexual Harassment Policy for implementation

2) To approve the amendments made to the Flexible Working Policy for implementation;

3) To approve the amendments made to the Family Leave Policy for implementation

4) To approve the amendments made to the Recruitment Policy for implementation

5) To note that the Anti-Bribery Policy and Procedures will be subject to a review and any amendments will be brought to this committee for approval.

6) To note that officers would review the tone of the wording in the Family Leave Policy and report back any changes

7) To amend policies, where necessary, to ensure that they mention staff training to support the implementation of these policies where needed and report back any changes.

(Reference – report by the Business Manager, submitted)

A10.   RISK MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK

The purpose of this report was to provide the Performance and Audit Committee with a quarterly update on SEStran's strategic risk register. The Performance and Audit Committee, at its meeting in November 2021 approved the SEStran Risk Management Framework Policy This policy supports the management of the overall risk process within the organisation, including its governance arrangements.

Decision

1) To note that a final version of the Risk Register will be referred to the Partnership Board for noting;

2) To bring a more detailed report to a future meeting around the 'Potential Change to Transport Governance' risk

(Reference – report by the Business Manager, submitted)

A11.   CONTRACTS REGISTER

This report presented the Partnership's contract register to the Committee for review in line with a commitment to transparency in procurement. As per the Contract Standing Orders, the Partnership Director would arrange for all contracts accepted with an estimated value exceeding £50,000 (or such lower amount as agreed with the Partnership Director) to be publicly displayed on the Partnership's externally facing website.

Decision

To note the Contract Register, as circulated.

(Reference – report by the Programme Manager, submitted)

A12.   **RISK MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK**

This report, as previously presented to the Project and Strategy Oversight Subgroup (PaSDOS) updated the Committee on the performance of the Partnership's strategy and project workstreams in Quarter 1 of 25/26.

Decision

To note the contents of the report.

(Reference – report by the Programme Manager, submitted)

2024/25 Annual Audit Report and Audited Annual Accounts 2024/25

1.   Introduction

1.1   This report presents the:

1.1.1   The 2024/25 Annual Audit Report by Audit Scotland and

1.1.2   the Audited Annual Accounts for the year ended 31st March 2025.

2.   Main Report

2.1   The unaudited Annual Accounts were noted by the Partnership at its meeting on 20th June 2025.

2.2   The Partnership's appointed External Auditor, Audit Scotland, has completed the annual audit. The Annual Audit Report is presented at Appendix 1.

2.3   The Audited Annual Accounts for the year ended 31st March 2025 are presented at Appendix 2.

2.4   The Annual Audit Report states the accompanying financial statements:

•   give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the Partnership as at 31 March 2025 and of its income and expenditure for the year then ended;

•   have been properly prepared in accordance with UK adopted international accounting standards, as interpreted and adapted by the 2024/25 Code; and;

•   have been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973, The Local Authority Accounts (Scotland) Regulations 2014, and the Local Government in Scotland Act 2003.

2.5   The Audit Opinion is included in the Independent Auditor's report at pages 51 to 53 of the Audited Annual Accounts.

2.6   The Performance and Audit Committee reviewed the External Auditor's report and the Audited Accounts at its' meeting on 12th September 2025.

3   Recommendations
It is recommended that the Partnership Board:

3.1   note the Annual Audit Report to members of South East of Scotland Transport Partnership and the Controller of Audit;

3.2   authorise the Audited Annual Accounts for signature.

Richard Lloyd-Bithell
Treasurer
19th September 2025

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Appendix   1 - Annual Audit Report to members of South East of Scotland
                  Transport Partnership and the Controller of Audit

                  2 - Audited Annual Accounts 2024/25

Contact   iain.shaw@edinburgh.gov.uk

Policy Implications	There are no policy implications arising as a result of this report.
Financial Implications	There are no financial implications arising following issue of an unqualified Audit certificate.
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

Proposed 2024/25 Annual Audit Report

AUDIT SCOTLAND

Prepared for SEStran and the Controller of Audit
September 2025

Contents

Accessibility

You can find out more and read this report using assistive technology on our website www.audit.scot/accessibility.

Key messages

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Audit of the annual accounts

1   All audit opinions stated that the annual accounts were free from material misstatement.

2   We have reported one significant finding from the audit relating to the disclosure of assets. All audit adjustments required to correct the financial statements were processed by the partnership.

Financial Sustainability

3   SEStran has appropriate arrangements in place for securing financial sustainability, but should consider improving its medium-term plans by extending these to future years.

Introduction

Purpose of the Annual Audit Report

1. The purpose of this Annual Audit Report is to report the significant matters identified from the 2024/25 audit of South East Scotland Transport Partnership's annual accounts and the wider scope areas specified in the Code of Audit Practice (2021).

2. The Annual Audit Report is addressed to South East Scotland Transport Partnership, hereafter referred to as 'SEStran' or 'the partnership' and the Controller of Audit, and will be published on Audit Scotland's website in due course.

Appointed auditor and independence

3. Christopher Gardner, of Audit Scotland, has been appointed as external auditor of the body for the period from 2022/23 until 2026/27. As reported in the Annual Audit Plan, the appointed auditor and the audit team are independent of the body in accordance with relevant ethical requirements, including the Financial Reporting Council's Ethical Standard. There have been no developments since the issue of the Annual Audit Plan that impact on the continued independence of the engagement lead or the rest of the audit team from the body, including no provision of non-audit services.

Acknowledgements

4. We would like to thank the body and its staff, particularly those involved in preparation of the annual accounts, for their cooperation and assistance during the audit. We look forward to working together constructively over the remainder of the five-year audit appointment.

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 (ISA) (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 accounts, namely the Management Commentary and Annual Governance Statement.

- An opinion on the audited part of the Remuneration Report.

- Concluding on the financial sustainability of the body.

- Reporting on the body's arrangements for securing Best Value.

- Provision of this Annual Audit Report.

Responsibilities and reporting

6. The Code of Audit Practice sets out the respective responsibilities of the body 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 the body's arrangements in place for the wider scope areas and Best Value.

8. The matters reported in the Annual Audit Report are only those that have been identified by the audit team during normal audit work and may not be all that exist. Communicating these does not absolve the body from its responsibilities outlined below.

9. The Annual Audit Report includes an agreed action plan at Appendix 1 setting out specific recommendations to address matters identified and includes details of the responsible officer and dates for implementation.

The body's responsibilities

10. The body 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 annual accounts, comprising financial statements that give a true and fair view and other specified information.

- 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.

National and performance audit reporting

11. The Auditor General for Scotland and the Accounts Commission regularly publish national and performance audit reports. These cover a range of matters, many of which may be of interest to the partnership's board. Details of national and performance audit reports published over the last year can be seen in Appendix 3.

Audit of the annual accounts

Main judgements

All audit opinions stated that the annual accounts were free from material misstatement.

We have reported one significant finding from the audit relating to the disclosure of assets. All audit adjustments required to correct the financial statements were processed by the partnership.

Audit opinions on the annual accounts

12. The body's annual accounts were approved by the partnership board on 26 September 2025 and certified by the appointed auditor on the same day. The Independent Auditor's Report is included in the body's annual accounts, and this reports that, in the appointed auditor's opinion, these were free from material misstatement.

Audit timetable

13. The unaudited annual accounts and all working papers were received on 13 June 2025 in accordance with the agreed audit timetable.

Audit Fee

14. The audit fee for the 2024/25 audit was reported in the Annual Audit Plan and was set at £12,800. There have been no developments that impact on planned audit work required, therefore the audit fee reported in the Annual Audit Plan remains unchanged.

Materiality

15. 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 accounts.

16. Broadly, the concept of materiality is to determine whether misstatements identified during the audit could reasonably be expected to influence the decisions of users of the annual report and accounts. 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.

17. Materiality levels for the body were determined at the risk assessment phase of the audit and were reported in the Annual Audit Plan, which also reported the judgements made in determining materiality levels. These were reassessed on receipt of the unaudited annual accounts. Materiality levels were updated and these can be seen in Exhibit 1.

Exhibit 1
2024/25 Materiality levels for SEStran

Materiality	Amount
Materiality – set at 1.5% of gross expenditure	£94,000
Performance materiality – set at 65% of materiality. As outlined in the Annual Audit Plan, this acts as a trigger point. If the aggregate of misstatements identified during the audit exceeds performance materiality, this could indicate further audit procedures are required.	£61,000
Reporting threshold – set at 5% of materiality.	£5,000

Source: Audit Scotland

Significant findings and key audit matters

18. ISA (UK) requires auditors to communicate significant findings from the audit to those charged as governance, which for the body is the partnership board.

19. The Code of Audit Practice also requires public sector auditors to communicate key audit matters. These are the 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.

20. 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.

21. The significant findings and key audit matters to report are outlined in Exhibit 2.

Exhibit 2
Significant findings and key audit matters

Significant findings and key audit matters	Outcome
Derecognition of non-current assets In response to our audit recommendation last year, SEStran management completed a review of the organisation's physical assets ("non-current assets") and in March 2025 the partnership board approved a new asset management strategy. This included reviewing the accounting policies, improving the asset register to provide a more direct link to the accounts, ensuring items were tagged, and a physical inspection of assets to assess their condition and existence. The review resulted in the derecognition of a total of 320 assets with a gross book value of £0.476 million which were either obsolete, damaged or previously disposed of. This included such items as older ticket machines and computer equipment. The initial draft of the accounts presented to audit did not contain a disclosure derecognising these assets. Furthermore we found there was a lack of documentation relating to disposal of assets.	It is positive that the partnership has made steps to ensure its records are accurate. As the derecognised assets had reached the end of their useful life and had already been fully depreciated, this had no effect on the balance sheet as their accounting value was effectively nil. However, all disposals of non-current assets, regardless of value, should be subject to oversight and approval. SEStran has a responsibility to ensure that its assets are disposed of in a transparent and sustainable way. The partnership should improve its processes and documentation around the disposal of assets. In addition, given the complex accounting requirements around non-current assets, management should ensure sufficient co-ordination and advice is sought from its finance partners. **Recommendation 1**

Source: Audit Scotland

22. . In addition to our finding in Exhibit 2 above, we identified two further issues. These were:

- **Awarding of grants -** At the start of the year, SEStran held two panel meetings to approve project awards, one for local authorities and one for other organisations. Our review of expenditure relating to People and Place grants noted that panel meetings for local authorities were not minuted or documented. We found all approvals were made in line with standing orders, however we recommend that all decision panel meetings are documented and recorded.

- **Bank reconciliation -** The partnership operates a bank account primarily for the receipt of funding, while routine financial transactions are administered through the City of Edinburgh's financial ledger system. A reconciliation process takes place at regular intervals to

ensure ledger transactions correctly reflect bank activity. The control environment would be enhanced by incorporating a summary sheet that documents the individual responsible for performing the reconciliation and the date it was completed. Additionally, including a formal statement of reconciliation would provide a clear record of compliance and strengthen the audit trail. This measure ensures that the partnership's accounting records are consistent with the bank's records and supports the timely identification of unauthorised transactions, duplicate payments, or potential misappropriations.

Qualitative aspects of accounting practices

23. ISA (UK) 260 also requires auditors to communicate their view about qualitative aspects of the body's accounting practices, including accounting policies, accounting estimates, and disclosures in the financial statements.

Accounting policies

24. The appropriateness of accounting policies adopted by the body was assessed as part of the audit. These were considered to be appropriate to the circumstances of the body, and there were no significant departures from the accounting policies set out in the Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting 24/25.

Accounting estimates

25. Accounting estimates are used in number of areas in the body's financial statements, including the valuation of land and buildings assets and the valuation of the pension liability. Audit work considered the process management of the body has in place around making accounting estimates, including the assumptions and data used in making the estimates, and the use of any management experts. Audit work concluded:

- There were no issues with the selection or application of methods, assumptions, and data used to make the accounting estimates, and these were considered to be reasonable.

- There was no evidence of management bias in making the accounting estimates.

Audit adjustments

26. Management of the body processed audit adjustments for all misstatements identified greater than the reporting threshold. As a result, there are no corrected misstatements to report. It is the auditor's responsibility to request that all misstatements greater than the reporting threshold are corrected, even if they are not material.

Significant risks of material misstatement identified in the Annual Audit Plan

27. Audit work has been performed in response to the significant risks of material misstatement identified in the Annual Audit Plan. The outcome of audit work performed is summarised in Exhibit , (page 12).

Exhibit 3
Significant risks of material misstatement to the financial statements

Risk of material misstatement	Planned audit response	Outcome of audit work
Fraud caused by management override of controls Management is in a unique position to perpetrate fraud because of management's ability to override controls that otherwise appear to be operating effectively.	The audit team will: • Evaluate the design and implementation of controls over journal entry processing. • Make inquiries of individuals involved in the financial reporting process about inappropriate or unusual activity relating to the processing of journal entries. • 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. • 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.	Audit work performed found: • The design of controls over journal processing were appropriate and these were implemented as intended. • No inappropriate or unusual activity relating to the processing of journal entries was identified from discussions with individuals involved in financial reporting. • No significant issues were identified from testing of journal entries. • No significant issues were identified from transactions outside the normal course of business. • The controls in place for identifying and disclosing related party relationships and transactions were adequate. • No significant issues were identified with changes to methods and underlying assumptions used to prepare accounting estimates and there was no evidence of management bias. **Conclusion**: no evidence of fraud caused by management override of controls.

Risk of material misstatement	Planned audit response	Outcome of audit work
2. Risk of material misstatement caused by fraud in expenditure 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 .	The audit team will: • 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.	• Our testing of expenditure did not identify any instances of fraud. • We reviewed budget monitoring reports that are presented at each committee meeting. We concluded that financial management reporting is accurate and appropriate. **Conclusion:** We did not identify any instances of fraud.
3. Accounting for non-current assets 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.	The audit team will: • 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.	• We evaluated the arrangements for the valuation and disclosure of non-current assets. Our findings and conclusions are contained in Exhibit 2.

Source: Audit Scotland

Prior year recommendations

28. The body has made good progress in implementing the agreed prior year audit recommendations, refer Appendix 1.

Financial Sustainability and Best Value audit

Conclusion

SEStran has appropriate arrangements in place for securing financial sustainability, but should consider improving its medium-term plans by extending these to future years.

Audit approach to wider scope and Best Value

Wider scope

29. The Annual Audit Plan reported the body was considered to be a less complex body for the wider scope audit. Therefore, the wider scope audit does not cover all four wider scope areas and is instead limited to concluding on the financial sustainability of the body.

Best Value

30. 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 the body does.

31. Consideration of the arrangements the body has in place to secure Best Value have been carried out alongside the wider scope audit.

Conclusions on Financial Sustainability

32. The audit work performed on the arrangements the body has in place for securing financial sustainability found that these were effective and appropriate. This judgement is evidenced by the partnership:

- making appropriate arrangements to develop medium-term financial plans.

- having effective arrangements in place for identifying risks to financial sustainability over the medium and longer-term, and understanding medium and longer-term demand pressures that could impact on available resources.

33. The partnership receives most of its funding from the Scottish Government via Transport Scotland, and requisitions from constituent council members. It approved its initial 2024/25 budget in March 2024, setting out total revenue expenditure of £1.226 million (2023/24: 1.738 million). Subsequently, SEStran was awarded an additional £5.326 million of funding from Transport Scotland for its People and Place Programme, representing a significant increase in the partnership's activity and overall expenditure. The funding is intended to enable the delivery of projects which would increase rates of active travel (walking, wheeling and cycling). This consisted of an additional £1.9 million of revenue, and £3.412 million capital expenditure.

34. The partnership has reported a net underspend in its core revenue budget of £0.086 million in 2024/25. The core budget relates to the day-to day running costs of the partnership, such as staff and premises costs. On its projects budget, it incurred costs of £5.197 million, reporting an overall underspend of £0.264 million.

35. Of the actual underspend on projects, the majority (£0.207m) is due to slippage amongst four projects: Regional Bus Strategy (£0.122m), GoSEStran (£0.039m), Go eBike (£0.026m), and Sustainable Travel Awareness (£0.025m). Management reported in June that work was ongoing to ensure the full and realistic allocation of project budgets for 2025/26 with a view to eliminating the underspend. A projects and strategy performance report is produced quarterly and is scrutinised by the board's performance and audit committee.

Funding for People and Place has increased in 2025/26

36. The budget for 2025/26 was agreed in March 2025, setting out total revenue expenditure of £7.426 million. Of this, £6.369 million of funding will be provided for the People and Place Programme, an increase of 20% (£1.043 million) from the previous year.

37. The partnership recognises a risk around future financial sustainability. Assumptions in its financial plan include future pay awards, inflation and reductions in grant funding. The partnership mitigates these risks through budget monitoring, recruitment control and seeking external funding opportunities that align with their purpose. The partnership has an agreed reserves policy which includes a minimum unallocated General Fund reserve based on 5% of the core revenue budget.

Financial planning should consider a longer timeframe

38. SEStran has an indicative financial plan for the year 2026/27 which is based on indicative projects activity, provides for estimated costs and build in scenario planning. Although we have not identified a specific risk to financial sustainability, it is important that the partnership has appropriate financial planning in place to ensure it can achieve its priorities and improve resilience. This is particularly important as the partnership's budget and activity increases.

39. The partnership could improve its financial planning by considering medium-term projections beyond the following financial year, linked to business plan and strategic priorities. As SEStran's financial function is delivered through the City of Edinburgh, further strengthening this strategic link with its finance department may improve coordination, improve financial oversight and support more integrated planning and decision-making.

Recommendation 2

The partnership should improve its financial planning by considering medium-term projections beyond the following financial year, and link this to its business plan and strategic priorities.

Arrangements for achieving Best Value

40. Ministerial guidance to Accountable Officers for public bodies and the Scottish Public Finance Manual (SPFM) sets out the accountable officer's duty to ensure that arrangements are in place to secure best value. The guidance sets out the key characteristics of best value and states that compliance with the duty of best value requires public bodies to take a systematic approach to self-evaluation and continuous improvement.

41. Procurement decisions are important to securing best value, and the partnership's governance scheme sets out processes which aim to contribute to the achievement of best value in procuring goods and services. The partnership's risk register also recognises the risk of not being able to achieve best value.

42. SEStran's previous three-year business plan format did consider delivery of best value responsibilities as part of the partnership's 2021-24 business plan strategic 'governance' objective. It will be important for the partnership to consider and demonstrate how it assesses compliance against the Scottish Government's Best Value themes.

Appendix 1

Action plan 2024/25

2024/25 recommendations

Matter giving rise to recommendation	Recommendation	Agreed action, officer and timing
1. Derecognition of non-current assets SEStran has undertaken a review of its non-current asset register and overall asset strategy. Our audit identified further improvements could be made to provide a robust audit trail for all disposals of non-current assets.	The partnership should improve its processes and documentation around the disposal of assets. In addition, given the complex accounting requirements around non-current assets, management should ensure sufficient co-ordination and advice is sought from its finance partners.	**Accepted** The Asset Management Policy will be amended to include a requirement for recommendations for the derecognition of specific assets to be approved by the Partnership Director before they can be removed from the asset register. **Partnership Director** December 2025
2. Financial planning it is important that the partnership has appropriate financial planning in place to ensure it can achieve its priorities and improve resilience. This is particularly important as the partnership's budget and activity increases.	The partnership should improve its financial planning by considering medium-term projections beyond the following financial year, and link this to its business plan and strategic priorities.	**Accepted** The financial planning horizon will be extended from 2 years to a longer period. The exact details will be agreed internally and submitted to the Partnership Board for approval as part of a new Financial Planning procedure. **Finance** / **Partnership Director** December 2025

Follow-up of prior year recommendations

Matter giving rise to recommendation	Recommendation, agreed action, officer and timing	Update
1. Accounting for non-current assets Our review of the asset register and corresponding entries in the 2023/24 unaudited accounts found a number of material errors. There is a risk that accounting records for non-current assets are not accurate or adequately maintained.	SEStran should undertake a full review of its asset management procedures, ensuring that the asset register fully reflects the assets in use. The partnership should: • Review and update the accounting policy for non-current assets in line with Code requirements. • Improve the asset register to provide a direct link to the disclosures in the accounts. • Ensure that that physical items are appropriately tagged to create a direct link between the register and the asset. • Ensure that impairment reviews are carried out on a regular basis, including physical inspection of assets. • Review the useful life of all assets annually to assess if a change in estimate is required. **Agreed action:** SEStran will devise an Asset Management Strategy and submit it for approval at the Partnership's Board in March 2025. The strategy, which will address all of the points raised by the auditors, will be fully implemented immediately following approval. However, many of the actions emerging as part of the strategy will be implemented prior to the financial year end. **Responsible officer:** Partnership Director **Target date:** Strategy approved by end March 2025 and fully implemented by June 2025	**Implemented** The partnership has made significant positive steps to ensure its records are accurate. We have made further recommendations in our 2024/25 audit report relating to the derecognition and disposal of assets.

Matter giving rise to recommendation	Recommendation, agreed action, officer and timing	Update
2. Improvements to the audit process We experienced a delay to the completion of our audit due to late receipt of documentation. We identified that finance staff are under pressure due to competing priorities.	We recommend that management ensures there is sufficient capacity in finance to support timely responses to audit requests. The partnership and the finance team responsible for compiling the annual accounts, based at City of Edinburgh Council, should work closely together to ensure that the substance of transactions, particularly those involving capital expenditure and assets, is accurately reflected in the accounts. **Agreed action:** Confirmation on 12 April 2024 of a delay in commencement of the external audit was a contributory factor to the capacity issues experienced during the course of the external audit, with work plans and resource availability already fixed by this date. In light of the issues experienced on the 2023/24 external audit, a review of resource availability will be undertaken in advance of the 2024/25 external audit. **Responsible officer:** Partnership Director/ Treasurer **Target date:** 31 March 2025	**Implemented** SEStran officers and finance team were available for audit queries and evidence was provided promptly. It is important the partnership and the finance team, based at City of Edinburgh Council, continues to work closely together to ensure that the substance of transactions, particularly those involving capital expenditure and assets, is accurately reflected in the accounts.

Appendix 2

Supporting national and performance audit reports

Report name	Date published
Local government budgets 2024/25	15 May 2024
Scotland's colleges 2024	19 September 2024
Integration Joint Boards: Finance and performance 2024	25 July 2024
The National Fraud Initiative in Scotland 2024	15 August 2024
Transformation in councils	1 October 2024
Alcohol and drug services	31 October 2024
Fiscal sustainability and reform in Scotland	21 November 2024
Public service reform in Scotland: how do we turn rhetoric into reality?	26 November 2024
NHS in Scotland 2024: Finance and performance	3 December 2024
Auditing climate change	7 January 2025
Local government in Scotland: Financial bulletin 2023/24	28 January 2025
Transparency, transformation and the sustainability of council services	28 January 2025
Sustainable transport	30 January 2025
A review of Housing Benefit overpayments 2018/19 to 2021/22: A thematic study	20 February 2025
Additional support for learning	27 February 2025
Integration Joint Boards: Finance bulletin 2023/24	6 March 2025
Integration Joint Boards finances continue to be precarious	6 March 2025
General practise: Progress since the 2018 General Medical Services contract	27 March 2025
Council Tax rises in Scotland	28 March 2025

South East Scotland Transport Partnership

Proposed 2024/25 Annual Audit Report

AS.5.0

The South East of Scotland Transport Partnership (SESTRAN)

Audited
Annual Accounts

2024/2025

The South East of Scotland Transport Partnership (SESTRAN)

C O N T E N T S

The South East of Scotland Transport Partnership (SESTRAN)

Management Commentary

1. Basis of Accounts
The Partnership prepares its Annual Accounts in accordance with the Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom. The Code of Practice is based on International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS).

2. Statutory Background
The South East of Scotland Transport Partnership (SESTRAN) was established on 1st December 2005 under the Regional Transport Partnerships (Establishment, Constitution and Membership) (Scotland) Order 2005.

The Partnership's main source of funding is an annual revenue grant from Transport Scotland. Under Section 3 of the Transport (Scotland) Act 2005, the net expenses of SEStran, after allowing for the government grant and any other income, are met by its constituent councils. The constituent councils are City of Edinburgh, Clackmannanshire, East Lothian, Falkirk, Fife, Midlothian, Scottish Borders and West Lothian.

In accordance with Section 122 of the Transport (Scotland) Act 2019, the Partnership has established a General Fund reserve.

3. Corporate Strategy
Regional Transport Partnerships (RTPs) have a statutory remit which includes developing a Regional Transport Strategy (RTS) in partnership with member local authorities and other stakeholders, monitoring and reporting on progress of the strategy's implementation.

The current RTS - SEStran 2035 - was approved by Scottish Ministers in March 2023 and replaces the Regional Transport Strategy 2015 - 2025 Refresh published in July 2015. It addresses the transport problems and issues being experienced in the SEStran region.

The SEStran region covers 8,400km2, which is just over 10% of Scotland's landmass. It has 11,672 km of roads and over 870,000 cars. It is hugely diverse and includes areas which fall into every one of the Scottish Government's six-fold urban-rural classification. The total population of the SEStran area was estimated as 1,619,460 in 2024 (National Records of Scotland mid-year population estimate 2024). The majority of the population is concentrated in the centre of the SEStran area with large, sparsely populated rural areas to the north, south, and east particularly the remote rural areas in north and east Fife, Scottish Borders and East Lothian. The greatest concentration of population is within the City of Edinburgh, which accounts for approximately 32% of the total SEStran region population.

The new RTS sits within a policy hierarchy which spans the national, regional and local levels. In particular, the RTS has been developed within the policy framework provided by the National Transport Strategy 2 which was published in February 2020, and set out four strategic priorities, as well as defining a Sustainable Travel Hierarchy. These four priorities and hierarchy have been used to guide the development of this RTS.

The Partnership's Vision Statement is "a South-East of Scotland, fully integrated transport system that will be efficient, connected and safe; create inclusive, prosperous and sustainable places to live, work and visit; be affordable and accessible to all, enabling people to be healthier; and delivering the region's contribution to net zero emissions targets."

The 4 key strategy objectives outlined in the RTS are:
- Transitioning to a sustainable, post-carbon, transport system
- Facilitating healthier travel options
- Transforming public transport connectivity and access across the region
- Supporting safe, sustainable and efficient movement of people and freight across the region.

Work to deliver the RTS takes various forms including:
- Collaborating with local authority partners to ensure that their Local Transport Strategies, Development Plans and related strategies or policies, all align with the RTS
- Leading on the development of strategies to help partners to tackle transport issues which can be more effectively addressed at a regional level
- Influencing senior stakeholders such as Scottish and UK governments, Transport Scotland, local authority partners, community planning partnerships, other RTPs, NHS, transport operators, and transport users' groups
- Building test cases for, and piloting, innovative solutions to transport problems, particularly where this would not be feasible for individual local authorities
- Seeking innovative funding mechanisms to support the delivery of priority projects
- Supporting on-the-ground delivery of regional projects by working with partners, consultants etc to develop detailed project plans and, where relevant, funding delivery of these plans.

The South East of Scotland Transport Partnership (SESTRAN)

Management Commentary *(continued)*

4. Risks and Uncertainties

The principal risks and uncertainties faced by the Partnership have traditionally fallen into two main categories - financial and transport governance. However, the increasing prevalence of cyber attacks means that cyber security has also been identified as a major risk to the organisation.

Financial Risks

Traditionally, the Partnership has had 4 main sources of funding:

- Annual grant funding from Transport Scotland
- Requisition from each of the eight local authority partners
- Funding for specific projects or activities e.g. Active Travel
- Funding from the European Union for collaborative projects with partners in other EU states.

The annual grant from Transport Scotland remained at the same level for over a decade, but it was reduced by 5% for 2024/25 in line with reductions across the Scottish Government. This reduced level of funding has continued into 2025/26. There is a real risk that there will be further reductions to this grant, which is designed to cover the Partnership's core costs, in 2026/27 and beyond.

SEStran is in regular contact with Transport Scotland to ensure that the scope and impact of the Partnership's work is recognised, valued and that the Scottish Government is aware of the additional benefits the Partnership would deliver if funding is increased.

Council requisitions have reduced by 10% over the last decade. Transport Scotland has encouraged RTPs to increase the requisitions and it is planned to seek an increase of 10% for the 2026/27 financial year. With council budgets already under significant pressure, this increase is likely to meet with significant resistance. In advance of proposing a budget for 2026/27, the Partnership will prepare a case to demonstrate the significant multiplier effect on council requisitions i.e. that, for each council's contribution, each council receives benefits well in excess of the contribution.

Funding for specific projects has accounted for as much as 50% of the Partnership's overall income in recent years. As it not usually announced until part-way through each financial year, it does not form part of the budget process. Due to Scottish Government financial constraints, with the exception of the People and Places Programme, there was no funding for specific projects in 2024/25 and there is unlikely to be much, if any, in 2025/26.

European Union funding ceased entirely during 2023/24, primarily due to the exit of the UK from the EU. There is a more positive outlook though, as UK organisations are eligible to bid for EU Horizon funding. SEStran will work in partnership with other UK and EU organisations to pursue Horizon funding.

The biggest change by far to RTP's funding has resulted from Transport Scotland's Active Travel Transformation Programme. This has resulted in RTPs becoming responsible for the disbursement of all government-funded active travel behaviour change projects within their region since April 2024. Now the 'People and Place Programme', this role was previously undertaken by the third sector.

In 2025/26, the Partnership will receive an additional £6.3m of grant funding for People and Place. Most will be passed through to local authorities or active travel delivery partners whose projects qualify for funding under the new grant standing orders (SOs) and funding processes which have been approved by the Partnership. These SOs and processes were the subject of the 2024/25 Internal Audit, and are being updated to incorporate further improvements to controls.

For 2025/26, certain tightly defined 'sustainable travel' activities are eligible for this 'active travel' funding. These include Real Time Passenger Information systems and signage, Demand Responsive Transport and Mobility Hubs. In addition, the scheme now incorporates funds which were previously directly awarded to community organisations to sustain them through the transition.

The Partnership is also proactively seeking additional sources of funding - particularly from a number of funds aimed at innovation and digital innovation, and had some success, in collaboration with partners, who received c.£0.189m through the Department for Transport's Rural Transport Accelerator to help support one of the Partnership's priority programmes.

Over the past 2 or 3 years, costs have been subject to the highest level of inflation for a generation. Although the situation is improving, there is a real risk that staff salaries and pensions could increase beyond budgeted levels. The Partnership mitigates this risk by:

- Making prudent planning assumptions
- Monitoring income and expenditure on a monthly basis and adjusting expenditure to mitigate against overspend
- Holding an appropriate cash reserve to be used in the event that an overspend cannot be prevented by other controls.

The South East of Scotland Transport Partnership (SESTRAN)

Management Commentary *(continued)*

4. Risks and Uncertainties (*continued*)
Financial Risks

The Partnership's long-term financial sustainability was assessed by the City of Edinburgh Council's Internal Audit team in 2023/24. Apart from recommended changes to financial and budgeting processes, the audit report was very positive. A Financial Planning procedure has been developed to address the issues identified during the audit. The plan includes the implementation of measures such as scenario planning and sensitivity exercises as part of the budgeting process.

Transport Governance

Transport governance refers to the respective roles and responsibilities of Transport Scotland, the 7 Regional Transport Partnerships, 32 local authorities and selected other partners.

Over recent years, there has been much discussion about the need to review transport governance. Successive independent reports have proposed that Transport Scotland should devolve much of its workload to other organisations which, due to better understanding of regional or local requirements, may be better placed to prioritise and deliver projects in their region or local authority area.

This is both a risk and an opportunity to the Partnership. The recent transfer of People and Place responsibilities indicates that Transport Scotland supports a regional approach to the governance of at least some transport functions and that it has a high degree of confidence in RTPs. SEStran is aiming to build on this by actively engaging with Transport Scotland about other matters where it believes it can make a significant positive impact.

In addition, Transport Scotland is planning to review transport governance, resources permitting, in the near future. The joint RTPs, COSLA and SCOTS are likely to form part of a working group reporting to the Cabinet Secretary for Transport.

Although the SEStran and Edinburgh and South East Scotland City Region (CRD) regions are not entirely contiguous (Clackmannanshire and Falkirk are not in the CRD region), as a result of the Concordat agreed by SEStran and the CRD team in 2023, the two organisations work very closely together and the CRD has adopted the RTS as the masterplan for transport in the city region.

The CRD is in discussions with both the Scottish and UK Governments about the next steps for its region. The CRD team is keen to be given more responsibility and powers to ensure that transport infrastructure meets the needs of the region in future years. SEStran fed into and agreed the contents of a letter from the CRD to both governments.

Cyber Security

Public sector entities have increasingly become prime targets for cyber-attacks and data breaches, which can compromise sensitive information and disrupt services.

SEStran has contracted an Information Technology (IT) service company to provide support for all aspects of its IT service including cyber security.

This includes provision of technological defences against such attacks, and staff training to ensure that staff are fully informed about attacks using social engineering or common messaging systems such as email or SMS. phishing, vishing etc. SEStran is subject to an annual Cyber Essentials Plus audit and is fully accredited.

The Partnership also receives daily threat updates and weekly vulnerability emails from the Scottish/National Cyber Security Centre, and a monthly in-person visit by an IT Consultant/Engineer as part of the IT service contract.

5. Results for the Year

The net revenue budget of the Partnership in 2024/25 was £0.972m, funded by an anticipated Scottish Government grant of £0.782m and Council Contributions of £0.190m. Following Partnership Board approval of the 2024/25 revenue budget on 15th March 2024, the Scottish Government advised a grant reduction of £39,000. In summary:

- The Partnership had a Core budget underspend of £125,000. £39,000 of this underspend was required to manage the reduction in Scottish Government grant funding received in 2024/25, resulting in a net Core budget underspend of £86,000.

- After inclusion of carry forward of £0.187m from the 2023/24 Projects budget underspend, the Partnership had a Projects budget underspend of £264,000 in 2024/25. A further £0.084m of Projects expenditure is carried forward to 2025/26 to meet future lease commitments for an electronic bicycle scheme.

The South East of Scotland Transport Partnership (SESTRAN)

Management Commentary *(continued)*

5. Results for the Year (*continued*)
A summary of the 2024/25 financial results is shown in the table below.

	Revised Budget £'000	Earmarked Reserves from 23/24 £'000	Total Available Funding £'000	Outturn £'000	Variance from Total Funding £'000
Core Budget	862	0	862	820	(86)
Core Budget - Interest Received	0	0	0	(44)	
Revenue Projects - Expenditure	6,023	241	6,264	5,191	(264)
Revenue Projects - Income	(5,952)	(54)	(6,006)	(5,197)	
Revenue Projects - Electronic Bicycle Lease	0	106	106	22	(84)
Total Expenditure before Government Grant and Council Contributions	**933**	**293**	**1,226**	**792**	**(434)**
Government Grant	(743)	0	(743)	(743)	0
Constituent Council Requisitions	(190)	0	(190)	(190)	0
Total Government Grant and Council Contributions 2024/25	**(933)**	**0**	**(933)**	**(933)**	**0**

Core budget
The Core budget provides for the day-to-day running costs of the Partnership and includes employee costs, premises costs and supplies and services. The principal favourable variances on the Core budget arose due to:
- £45,000 of software hosting costs (Novus FX) being recharged to the Projects budget
- £41,000 of employee costs being recharged to the Projects budget
- £44,000 of interest received on revenue balances reflecting the additional cash balances that the Partnership benefited from through the People and Place Programme.

£39,000 of the Core budget underspend was required to manage the reduction in Scottish Government grant funding received in 2024/25, resulting in a net Core budget underspend of £86,000.

Projects budget
The Partnership incurred expenditure of £5.191m on revenue projects and received external grants and contributions of £5.197m. After inclusion of carry forward of £0.187m from the 2023/24 Projects budget underspend, the Partnership had a Projects budget underspend of £264,000 in 2024/25.

A further £0.084m of Projects expenditure is carried forward to 2025/26 to meet future lease commitments for an electronic bicycle scheme.

The principal favourable variances on the Projects revenue budget arose on the following projects:
- £122,000 - Bus Strategy Development
- £34,000 - Mobility as a Service
- £26,000 - GO e-Bike
- £25,000 - Sustainable Travel.

In accordance with the provisions of the Transport Scotland (2019) Act, the Partnership has agreed a Reserves Policy and established an unallocated reserve. At 1st April 2024, the Partnership had an unallocated General Fund Reserve of £135,000. At 31st March 2025, this increased to £221,000. Slippage on project delivery from 2024/25 to 2025/26 will be managed by establishment of an earmarked balance per the Partnership's Reserves Policy.

Treasury Management
The Partnership has adopted the CIPFA Code of Practice on Treasury Management in the Public Sector. The Partnership maintains its bank account as part of the City of Edinburgh Council's group of bank accounts. Any cash balance is effectively lent to the Council and is offset by expenditure undertaken by the City of Edinburgh Council on behalf of the Partnership. Interest is given on month end net indebtedness between the Council and the Partnership. For 2024/25, interest of £44,197 was calculated in accordance with the (withdrawn) Local Authority (Scotland) Accounts Advisory Committee's Guidance Note 2 on Interest on Revenue Balances. The role of Treasury Management in the management of financial risks is referenced in Note 25.

The South East of Scotland Transport Partnership (SESTRAN)

Management Commentary *(continued)*

5. Results for the Year (*continued*)

Non Financial Results

During 2024/25, the Partnership progressed work on a number of exciting projects and on the development of strategies essential to facilitate delivery of the RTS.

People and Place

In 2024/25, Transport Scotland set out their new regional approach to funding active travel behaviour change across Scotland, passing funding to each of Scotland's seven RTPs. The programme supports activity that gives people the knowledge, skills and confidence to choose to walk, wheel and cycle more often.

Following this, the Partnership developed the People and Place Plan and through this distributed £5.3m of funding to 18 delivery partners, including the region's eight local authorities.

Schools and young people

This theme focuses in and around schools, and on projects that deliver holistic solutions to create an environment where active travel choices are not only an option, but the most desirable way for young people and families to travel.

The Partnership funded:

- Two regional projects to work intensively with schools to support young people to choose active travel more often
- The WOW project, allowing 49 schools across the region to encourage more children to walk to school
- Six local authorities to deliver a range of cycle storage improvements in their primary and secondary schools
- Six local authorities to provide access to bikes for young people
- Fife Council to purchase 13 adaptive cycles for young people
- A bike library for children to loan bikes for free in Edinburgh.

Accessibility and inclusion

This theme is for projects that create opportunities for everyone to make the choice to travel actively.

The Partnership funded:

- Seven projects to audit street / areas with high pedestrian, wheeling and cycling potential and remove barriers where needed
- The creation of an active travel hub in East Lothian
- Two organisations to deliver walking and cycling activities for their local communities to encourage participation in active travel
- An access to cycles project across the region to support cycle repairs, bike recycling and purchase of new cycles.

Workplaces

The workplace theme is for projects which are focussed in and around places of work (including further and higher education), that make active travel choices a realistic solution for commuting.

The Partnership funded:

- TravelKnowHow Scotland to support employers in the region enable employees to travel by more sustainable modes

- NHS Fife to improve cycle storage facilities and to set-up an e-bike hire scheme for staff
- Midlothian Council's project to encourage staff to walk more with a series of lunchtime led walks and council wide step count challenges
- East Lothian Council to install additional cycle storage facilities for staff.

Capacity and capability building

This theme is for projects that build the knowledge base and delivery capacity and capability of the sector itself (including SEStran, local authorities, the third sector and beyond).

The Partnership funded:

- A strategy officer to work with Falkirk Council to develop a comprehensive behaviour change strategy for active travel
- A shared learning workshop for all local authorities in our region
- The creation of a public dashboard to share information on funding distribution and project delivery.

The South East of Scotland Transport Partnership (SESTRAN)

Management Commentary *(continued)*

5. Non Financial Results *(continued)*

People and Place (*continued* **)**

Capacity and capability building (continued)

The Partnership also:

- Organised a visit for the Cabinet Secretary for Transport to funded projects in Edinburgh
- Worked with partners to create a future delivery plan for People and Place
- Commissioned an evaluation of the 2024/25 People and Place programme delivery.

Go e-Bike

Go e-Bike enables people to access e-bikes and bike share initiatives through a variety of ways, including e-bike trials, bike share initiatives and bike training and bike maintenance training.

e-bike trials

During 2024/25 e-bike trials took place at East Lothian Council, St John's Hospital and Persimmon Homes in West Lothian, and at Skills Development Scotland in Edinburgh. The trials are supported in partnership with West Lothian Bike Library and gives access to a fleet of e-bikes for staff to use for four weeks.

Bike share

During the year, the Partnership began trialling Brompton bike lockers in two locations. The lockers provide access to Brompton's folding bikes, which can be hired for up to 60 days at a time. The bike lockers are at Sheriffhall park and ride in Edinburgh and Queen Margaret University in East Lothian.

Bike training and maintenance

The Partnership provided cycle ride leader training to staff at the Social Bite Village in Edinburgh to support the use of the e-bike fleet with both staff and residents. The Partnership also delivered bike maintenance and cargo bike training to Porty Community Energy to support volunteers with the e-bikes available to loan.

Go SEStran

Go SEStran was a pilot regional journey planning app. It has been designed to prioritise sustainable travel. This approach is often referred to as Mobility as a Service (MaaS). The Partnership received funding from Paths for All to run a pilot to assess the viability of MaaS in the South-East of Scotland and have been working with Tactran, a neighbouring Regional Transport Partnership, who are developing similar pilots in their region.

The Partnership's focus during 2024/25 was to investigate opportunities for the app to offer more to users, including signposting to more payment methods, integrating more features and targeting specific user groups. Alongside this, the Partnership has been developing VoyagAR, an app focused on providing digital support to users. This includes augmented reality providing visuals during the journey, and chat support for carers, friends and family.

Unfortunately, due to uncertain future funding and low user numbers, a decision to end the pilot was taken at the March 2025 meeting of the Partnership Board.

Electric vehicle charging infrastructure

To help support the move to electric vehicles (EVs), the Partnership has been working with seven of the eight local authorities in the region (East Lothian Council is working independently) and Dumfries and Galloway (the SWestrans region) to develop documentation and explore opportunities to regionally procure public EV charging infrastructure. The aim is to create efficiencies by creating a bigger market for suppliers in the final tender process, and to support a joined-up network for the public.

The beginning of the year saw the Partnership putting into place the formal governance structure needed to run the project, along with the procurement of a consultant to develop documentation and support local authorities. The Partnership worked with Transport Scotland to identify the grant available to each local authority and understand the available budget.

The second half of the year was focused on agreeing a lead local authority (City of Edinburgh) and running regular steering group and working group meetings to determine the best route forward.

Real-time passenger information

Reliable real time passenger information is vital if the Partnership is to encourage people to move towards more sustainable travel methods rather than use their car. The Partnership has worked with local authorities and operators in the region to provide real time, and accurate, information for bus users. The screens can also be used to advertise local campaigns and information.

The South East of Scotland Transport Partnership (SESTRAN)

Management Commentary *(continued)*

5. Non Financial Results *(continued)*

Real-time passenger information (*continued*)

A focus for the year has been the integration of live information from Lothian Buses to the network of screens across the region. The Partnership has worked with Journeo to provide training for local authorities so new staff members can report faults, track the status of screens, add imagery and adverts to screens, and track performance.

The Partnership was pleased to be able to use the screens in advance of Storm Eowyn in January 2025 to inform public that no bus or tram services would be running during the region's red weather warning – thus preventing people from unnecessarily exposing themselves to the storm.

Thistle Assistance

Thistle Assistance is an initiative to help people with disabilities to feel safer and more comfortable when using public transport. The free Thistle Assistance card and app are recognised by many public transport operators across Scotland, and the initiative allows people, in an easy and subtle way, to request the extra support they would like. The Partnership manages and operate Thistle Assistance for the whole of Scotland, and on behalf of the other RTPs.

The focus for Thistle Assistance has been to understand how the Thistle Assistance card and app are currently being used and where improvements may be needed. To do this, the Partnership worked with Disability Equality Scotland and distributed a questionnaire to their members. The Partnership also promoted the questionnaire more widely across our own channels. The results of this work will enable the Partnership to improve Thistle Assistance going forward.

The Partnership has also been focusing on marketing Thistle Assistance, working with a media buying agency to advertise to target audiences across a range of digital channels. This has resulted in an unprecedented level of demand for cards, and the work is currently being evaluated to determine whether the benefits to users justify the costs involved.

Transport to Healthcare (TtH)

Getting to and from an appointment at a hospital, at the local doctor's surgery or other healthcare setting can be difficult for many people. The Partnership is working with healthcare partners across the region to better understand the issues and find ways to tackle them. By connecting key stakeholders, the Partnership hopes to enable positive and educational conversations, leading to more joined-up and strategic thinking on this complex subject.

During the first half of the year, the Partnership's focus was on developing relationships with the Partnership's four health boards (Fife, Lothian, Forth Valley and Borders), NHS Assure and the Scottish Ambulance Service. Following this, the Partnership set up a transport to health project group and began meeting regularly to share best practices and discuss current challenges.

During the second half of the year, the Partnership began working with Public Health Scotland to grow engagement and knowledge of the key relationship between transport and health. The Partnership presented work at the Public Health Scotland conference in November 2024 and held a joint stakeholder event in February 2025. This event brought together transport, planning and public health colleagues from across the region to address shared ambitions to improve health, take climate action and reduce inequalities.

Regional Transport Strategy Delivery Plan

The Regional Transport Strategy Delivery Plan provides a mechanism to assess and prioritise regional projects required over the next ten years to realise the ambitions of the Regional Transport Strategy, supporting the economic and net-zero goals of the Regional Prosperity Framework. The Regional Transport Strategy Delivery Plan supports the delivery of a transport network that:

- Takes climate action
- Addresses inequalities and accessibility
- Improves health and wellbeing
- Supports sustainable and inclusive economic growth
- Improves safety and resilience.

The Regional Transport Strategy Delivery Plan complements Strategic Transport Projects Review 2 (STPR2), highlighting projects within and outside the plan that contribute to the Partnership's vision for transport in South East Scotland.

Over the course of the year, the Partnership has been working closely with colleagues from both the Edinburgh and South East of Scotland City Region Deal and local authorities to develop a matrix of regional projects, agree scoring and weighting that brings parity across our eight authorities. Those priorities are now plotted with Power BI and GIS mapping to demonstrate how rich the region is with opportunities.

The South East of Scotland Transport Partnership (SESTRAN)

Management Commentary *(continued)*

5. Non Financial Results *(continued)*

Regional Bus Strategy

The Partnership wants a world-class bus service for the SEStran region. Pre-covid, almost half of residents in the region used a bus at least once a month. The impact of covid saw this reduce drastically, but data shows that bus patronage is building. 2024/25 saw the beginning of the process to shape a bus strategy for the region.

The Partnership has commissioned consultants to develop a regional bus strategy to:

- Explore the current state of the bus network in the SEStran region and develop a problem statement
- Identify gaps caused by the withdrawal of services or by the development of new housing schemes, destinations, etc
- Consider the potential of the bus provisions of the Roads (Scotland) Act 2019 to improve the situation. These include bus service improvement partnerships, municipally owned bus services, bus franchising, and data sharing
- Propose a set of recommendations to address the problem statement.

At the beginning of the year, the Partnership procured consultants Stantec and Systra and engaged the Partnership's local authorities and bus operators in the bus strategy development process. With ongoing engagement from the local authorities, bus operators, Partnership Board and a group from our Integrated Mobility Forum, the Partnership has worked through a Case for Change and consulted on draft strategy policies and actions.

Freight

As set out in the Regional Transport Strategy, the Partnership will support, where appropriate, the development of new or enhanced rail freight services in the SEStran region. The Partnership is currently exploring an innovative idea to incorporate freight on trams in Edinburgh. The Partnership is also looking at how the SEStran region can support improved road freight services with better driver facilities and using non-traditional fuel for HGVs and LGVs as there is a transition to a post carbon transport system.

During the year, the Partnership worked to achieve funding for two proposals:

- Access to goods proposal in partnership with the University of the West of Scotland
- Edinburgh Tram for Freight proposal - part of the wider Freight and Urban System Integration for Optimised Networks (otherwise known as FUSION), which aims to cut average travel delays by 30%, reduce transport energy consumption, and lower greenhouse gas emissions through simulations and pilot programmes.

Unfortunately, due to a very competitive funding market, the Partnership has not yet been successful in securing funds, but will continue to explore opportunities to improve freight transport in our region.

The Partnership is also working with the Forth Green Freeport partners on enhanced freight links between Rosyth and Alloa.

Rail

The rail network has an important role to play in helping people travel sustainably around the South-East of Scotland. The Partnership's work includes exploring how improvements to the rail network can help people travel in a more sustainable way. This can include more direct through-services between locations, reducing the need for interchange on existing routes, and increased frequencies on particular routes or at key times of the day.

The main focus of the Partnership's rail work during 2024/25 has been supporting the Newburgh community in Fife in the quest to get the railway station in the town reinstated, and working with the community in Winchburgh, through their monthly steering group, on the case for a station in the town following substantial house building and development.

Newburgh

During the year, and in response to comments from Transport Scotland, the Partnership completed work to enhance the existing STAG appraisal, including a stakeholder workshop. This has now been submitted to Transport Scotland for review.

Winchburgh

The Winchburgh work is progressing with both the development of the business case and the design of the new station. The Partnership is a member of the steering group, which meets monthly.

6. Future Developments

The Partnership's Business Plan for 2025/26 builds further on the work undertaken in 2024/25 and introduces new projects and approaches to drive forward delivery of the RTS.

Regional Bus Strategy

Work will continue throughout 2025/26, with an Options Appraisal and public consultation exercise, ahead of the complete strategy being published, subject to Board approval, in September 2025. This will be followed by a route map demonstrating how to organise and realise the strategy's suggested actions.

The South East of Scotland Transport Partnership (SESTRAN)

Management Commentary *(continued)*

6. Future Developments *(continued)*

RTS Delivery Plan

Building on the prior year's success, the Partnership will take a decision about the best way to illustrate RTS priorities; whether that be as a prioritised list a multi-year route map of interventions. In either case, the effort will form the basis for funding conversations with stakeholders including the Scottish Government and Transport Scotland.

The Partnership expects to procure external consulting report to undertake this task.

People and Place Plan

To deliver People and Place in 2025/26 and onwards, the Partnership has developed a Delivery Plan that establishes the regional priorities for change, how funding will be prioritised, and how the Partnership will work with local authorities and delivery partners to provide a holistic approach to support broader transport outcomes. SEStran will continue to work with partners to review progress annually, learn lessons from robust monitoring and evaluation, and make changes as required.

In 2025/26, SEStran's People and Place delivery will build on work in 2024/25, as well as incorporating changes to the programme such as including sustainable transport alongside active travel. The programme will:

• Increase the proportion of active and sustainable journeys in the region
• Increase awareness of the benefits of active and sustainable travel to encourage future behaviour change
• Increase the use of active and sustainable travel modes among underrepresented groups in the region who might face additional barriers
• Collaborate with local authorities and third-sector partners to strengthen capacity and capability in active and sustainable travel.

Its focus will be on travel for functional journeys through changed travel habits for leisure may also be supported where this can be demonstrated to contribute to regional health and/or economic development objectives.

The People and Place budget will be split across five funding areas, with the majority of the budget allocated to the Regional Priority Intervention Fund, alongside funding for Local Authorities and community groups.

Travel to Healthcare Strategy

As detailed earlier, lack of travel options is cited as one of the main reasons for people missing healthcare appointments, and this is likely to be worse in rural areas with higher levels of transport poverty. The Mobility and Access Commission produced a series of recommendations to address this in the Transport to Health and Social Care report in 2019.

Since then the Scottish Government's Primary Care team has produced an action plan to tackle this issue, but the plan lacks detail, misses opportunities to capitalise on existing assets, and progress has been, at best, very slow.

Therefore SEStran will establish a programme to develop a TtH strategy in the region. The programme will now build on the network that has been established to build a case for change, outline options appraisal, detailed options appraisal, and final business case.

It is anticipated that an implementation plan will then be developed and mobilised, but as this is beyond the scope of the initial programme, it will be subject to further approval, and is likely to take place between late 2026 and 2028.

Rail Strategy and Freight Strategy

Given the importance of passenger rail to achieve modal shift to more a more sustainable means of travelling by encouraging people to use trains instead of cars for both utility and leisure journeys, it is vital that the SEStran region has a carefully thought out Rail Strategy that supports the enormous scale of development and population growth in the region.

Additionally, freight transport accounts for a significant proportion of the region's carbon emissions. It is important that the Partnership is able to gather data on freight movements into, within and out of the region, and to examine the potential to move it from road to rail, or to move it from HGVs or vans to more sustainable forms of transport such as cargo bikes or trams.

These strategies will form part of a holistic approach to delivering a number of key pillars in the RTS. The emerging strategies on bus, rail, active travel, interchanges / mobility hubs, and freight will be developed in such a way that they form a comprehensive sustainable travel strategy for the region.

The South East of Scotland Transport Partnership (SESTRAN)

Management Commentary *(continued)*

7. Certification

It is considered appropriate to adopt a going concern basis for the preparation of the Annual Accounts, given ongoing Regional Transport Partnership grant funding provided by Scottish Ministers under Section 70 of the Transport (Scotland) Act 2001 and constituent councils obligation to meet the net expenses of the Partnership under Section 3 of the Transport (Scotland) Act 2005.

Chair of Partnership Board: SALLY PATTLE   _____ Date signed:

Partnership Director: BRIAN BUTLER   _____ Date signed:

Treasurer: RICHARD LLOYD-BITHELL, CPFA   _____ Date signed:

The South East of Scotland Transport Partnership (SESTRAN)

STATEMENT OF RESPONSIBILITIES FOR THE ANNUAL ACCOUNTS

The Partnership's Responsibilities

The Partnership is required:

- to make arrangements for the proper administration of its financial affairs and to secure that the proper officer has the responsibility for the administration of those affairs. In this Partnership, that officer is the Treasurer;

- to manage its affairs to secure economic, efficient and effective use of its resources and safeguard its assets;
- to ensure the Annual Accounts are prepared in accordance with legislation (The Local Authority Accounts (Scotland) Regulations 2014) and so far as is compatible with that legislation, in accordance with proper accounting practices (section 12 of the Local Government in Scotland Act 2003);
- to approve the Annual Accounts.

I confirm that the annual accounts were approved for signature by the South East of Scotland Transport Partnership at its Board meeting on 26th September 2025.

Chair of Partnership
Board: SALLY PATTLE   Date signed:

The Treasurer's Responsibilities

The Treasurer is responsible for the preparation of the Partnership's Annual Accounts in accordance with proper practices as required by legislation and as set out in the CIPFA / LASAAC Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom ('the Code').

In preparing the Annual Accounts, the Treasurer has:

- selected suitable accounting policies and then applied them consistently;
- made judgements and estimates that were reasonable and prudent;
- complied with legislation;
- complied with the Local Authority Accounting Code (in so far as it is compatible with legislation).

The Treasurer has also:

- kept adequate accounting records which were up to date;
- taken reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.

I certify that the Annual Accounts give a true and fair view of the financial position of the Partnership at the reporting date and the transactions of the Partnership for the year ended 31st March 2025.

Treasurer: RICHARD LLOYD-BITHELL, CPFA   Date signed:

The South East of Scotland Transport Partnership (SESTRAN)

ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT 2024/25

1. Scope of Responsibility

The Partnership's Vision Statement is for a South-East of Scotland, fully integrated transport system that will be efficient, connected and safe; create inclusive, prosperous and sustainable places to live, work and visit; be affordable and accessible to all, enabling people to be healthier; and delivering the region's contribution to net zero emissions targets.

The Partnership is responsible for ensuring that its business is conducted in accordance with the law and appropriate standards, that public money is safeguarded and properly accounted for and used economically, efficiently, effectively and ethically. The Partnership also has a duty to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the way its functions are carried out.

In discharging these overall responsibilities Elected Members and Senior Officers are responsible for implementing proper arrangements for the governance of the Partnership's affairs and facilitating the effective exercise of its functions, including arrangements for the management of risk.

The Partnership has approved and adopted a Local Code of Corporate Governance which is consistent with appropriate corporate governance principles and reflects the requirements of the "Delivering Good Governance in Local Government: Framework (2016)".

This Statement explains how the Partnership delivers good governance and reviews the effectiveness of these arrangements. It also includes a statement on internal financial control in accordance with proper practice.

The Partnership's financial management arrangements conform to the governance requirements of the CIPFA Statement on the Role of the Chief Financial Officer in Local Government (2016).

2. The Partnership's Governance Framework

The governance framework comprises the systems and processes, and culture and values, by which the Partnership is directed and controlled, and its activities through which it accounts to, engages with and influences the community. It enables the Partnership to monitor the achievement of its strategic objectives and to consider whether those objectives have led to the delivery of appropriate, cost-effective services.

The framework reflects the arrangements in place to meet the six supporting principles of effective corporate governance:

- Focusing on the purpose of the Partnership and on outcomes for the community, and creating and implementing a vision for the local area;

- Members and officers working together to achieve a common purpose with clearly defined functions and roles;

- Promoting values for the Partnership and demonstrating the values of good governance through upholding high standards of conduct and behaviour;

- Taking informed and transparent decisions which are subject to effective scrutiny and managing risk;

- Developing the capacity and capability of members and officers to be effective;

- Engaging with local people and other stakeholders to ensure robust public accountability.

A significant part of the governance framework is the system of internal control which is based on an ongoing process designed to identify and manage the risks to the achievement of the Partnership's policies, aims and objectives. These are defined in the Partnership's Business Plan, which is updated annually. This enables the Partnership to manage its key risks efficiently, effectively, economically and ethically.

The Partnership aims for compliance with Public Sector Equality Duties, including Scottish Specific Duties.

Within the overall control arrangements the system of internal financial control is intended to ensure that assets are safeguarded, transactions are authorised and properly recorded, and material errors or irregularities are either prevented or would be detected within a timely period. It is based on a framework of regular management information, financial regulations, administrative procedures and management supervision.

The South East of Scotland Transport Partnership (SESTRAN)

ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT 2024/25 *(continued)*

2. The Partnership's Governance Framework *(continued)*

While the system of internal control is designed to manage risk at a reasonable level it cannot eliminate all risk of failure to achieve policies, aims and objectives and can therefore only provide reasonable, and not absolute, assurance of effectiveness.

3. Determining the Partnership's purpose, its vision for the local area and intended outcomes for the Community

The Partnership's Vision Statement is for a South-East of Scotland, fully integrated transport system that will be efficient, connected and safe; create inclusive, prosperous and sustainable places to live, work and visit; be affordable and accessible to all, enabling people to be healthier; and delivering the region's contribution to net zero emissions targets.

The Business Plan outlines the priorities for the coming year, and the Annual Report is published as soon after the end of a financial year as possible, and looks back at the project and strategy work undertaken in that year. Where applicable, key statistics and outcomes are provided in the Annual Report.

4. Review of Effectiveness

The Partnership has put in place arrangements, detailed in the Local Code, for monitoring each element of the framework and providing evidence of compliance. A Principal Officer within the Partnership has been nominated to review the effectiveness of the Local Code.

The review of the effectiveness of its governance framework, including the system of internal financial control is informed by:

- the work of Internal Audit on the adequacy and effectiveness of the Partnership's control environment, governance and risk management frameworks;

- the Partnership Director's Certificate of Assurance on internal control;

- the operation and monitoring of controls by Partnership managers;

- the External Auditors in their Annual Audit Letter and other reports; and

- other inspection agencies comments and reports.

Through the year Elected Members and Officers have responsibility for the development and maintenance of the governance environment. These review mechanisms include:

- **The Partnership Board,** which provides strategic leadership, determines policy aims and objectives and takes executive decisions not delegated to officers. It provides political accountability for the Partnership's performance;

- **The Performance and Audit Committee,** which demonstrates the Partnership's commitment to the principles of good governance, undertaking the core functions of an audit committee as identified in Audit Committees: Practice Guidance for Local Authorities and Policy (CIPFA);

- **The Internal Audit Service** of the City of Edinburgh Council provides an independent and objective assurance service to the Partnership, by completing one review in each financial year that is focused on the adequacy and effectiveness of controls established to manage a key risk of the Partnership. The Partnership seeks to ensure that Internal Audit arrangements conform with the governance requirements of the CIPFA Statement on the Role of the Head of Internal Audit.

- **The External Auditor's Annual Audit Report** is considered by the Partnership Board and the Performance and Audit Committee, along with the output from other external audits and inspections;

- **The risk management system** requires that risks are regularly reviewed by the Performance and Audit Committee and Board. This ensures that actions are taken to effectively manage the Partnership's highest risks;

The South East of Scotland Transport Partnership (SESTRAN)

ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT 2024/25 *(continued)*

4. **Review of Effectiveness** *(continued)*
   - **The Partnership Secretary** is responsible to the Partnership for ensuring that agreed procedures are followed. The Partnership has a contractual arrangement with an external Legal Services provider to ensure all applicable statutes and regulations are complied with.

   - The Partnership operates Anti-Bribery, Anti-Fraud and Corruption policies in accordance with the CIPFA Code of Practice on Managing the Risk of Fraud and Corruption.

   - **CIPFA Financial Management Code**
   A requirement of the Annual Governance Statement is to disclose compliance with the CIPFA Financial Management (FM) Code and identify any outstanding areas for improvement or change. The Code is designed to support good practice and assist local government organisations in demonstrating their financial sustainability and resilience, by setting out expected standards of financial management.
   The Partnership has undertaken an evaluation of compliance with the Financial Management Code.
   The Partnership's financial management arrangements are assessed as being compliant with the FM Code.

5. **Procurement Procedures**
   During 2023/24, the Partnership's legal advisers were engaged to review the Partnership's procurement procedures. All the Partnership's Standing Orders were reviewed and strengthened in 2023/24 and 2024/25, including Contract and Grant Standing Orders. Procurement procedures will be subject to ongoing review, with any revisions to procedures and processes requiring Board approval.

6. **Internal Audit Opinion**
   The City of Edinburgh Council Internal Audit Service undertakes one annual review each year to provide assurance over the controls established by the Partnership to mitigate specific key risks. During 2024/25, the Internal Audit Service undertook a review of the internal processes and controls surrounding the development and management of the People and Place Plan grant funding. The objective was to assess the adequacy and effectiveness of the existing control environment and to identify areas for improvement to support sound decision-making and governance. The review provided reasonable assurance that SEStran has a generally sound framework of governance, risk management and control in place to support the administration of People and Place Plan grant funding. While some areas for improvement were identified, particularly related to the design and operational effectiveness of certain key processes, these are not considered to significantly undermine the overall control environment. Addressing them would provide an opportunity to further transparency, financial stewardship, and regulatory compliance.

   Due to the 2024/25 review being focussed on the key controls in place surrounding the development and management of the People and Place Plan grant funding, an internal audit annual opinion is not given on the Partnership's overall governance arrangements. As the Partnership uses the financial systems of City of Edinburgh Council, assurance is placed on work undertaken by Internal Audit on the City of Edinburgh Council's financial systems.

7. **Certification**
   In compliance with accounting practice, the Treasurer has provided the Partnership Director with a statement on the adequacy and effectiveness of the Partnership's internal financial control system for the year ended 31st March 2025. It is the Treasurer's opinion that reasonable assurance can be placed upon the adequacy and effectiveness of the Partnership's internal control system.

8. From this year's review, there is reasonable assurance that the Local Code of Corporate Governance is operating adequately, with overall compliance by the Partnership with its corporate governance arrangements.

9. The Partnership's governance arrangements and systems are confirmed as being operational and current at the date of signing of this Annual Governance Statement.
   Chair of Partnership
   Board: SALLY PATTLE   Date signed:

   Partnership Director:
                        BRIAN BUTLER   Date signed:

The South East of Scotland Transport Partnership (SESTRAN)

REMUNERATION REPORT

1. Audit of Remuneration Report
The tables at sections 5, 6, 7 and 8 on pages 16 and 17 in the Remuneration Report has been audited by the Partnership's external auditor. The other sections in the Remuneration Report were reviewed by the external auditor to identify material inconsistencies with the financial statements, or is inconsistent with knowledge obtained in the course of the audit, or otherwise appears to be materially misstated.

2. Remuneration Policy for Senior Employees
The Partnership Board determines remuneration for senior employees with reference to the level of responsibility of the post. The Partnership does not operate a Remuneration Committee. Annual inflationary increases are based on those agreed by the Scottish Joint Negotiating Committee (SJNC) for Local Authority services.

3. Remuneration for Senior Councillors
The Partnership does not provide any remuneration to senior councillors.
Expenses paid to Board members are detailed in note 19 to the annual accounts.

4. Management of Remuneration Arrangements
The remuneration of the Partnership's employees is administered by the City of Edinburgh Council, as part of a service level agreement with the Partnership.

5. Officers Remuneration
The numbers of employees whose remuneration during the year exceeded £50,000 were as follows:

Remuneration Bands	2024/25	2023/24
£50,000 - £54,999	1	1
£55,000 - £59,999	2	0
£60,000 - £64,999	0	1
£65,000 - £69,999	1	0
£90,000 - £94,999	0	1
£95,000 - £99,999	1	0

6. Senior Employees Remuneration
The remuneration paid to the Partnership's senior employees is as follows:

Name and Post Title	Salary, Fees and Allowances £	Total Remuneration 2024/25 £	Total Remuneration 2023/24 £
Brian Butler - Partnership Director	98,712	98,712	92,787
	98,712	98,712	92,787

The senior employees detailed above have/ had responsibility for management of the Partnership to the extent that they have power to direct or control the major activities of the Partnership (including activities involving the expenditure of money), during the year to which the Remuneration Report relates, whether solely or collectively with other persons.

7. Senior Employees Pension Entitlement
The pension entitlement of the Partnership's senior employee(s) is as follows:

	In-year pension contributions			Accrued pension benefits	
	2024/25	2023/24		As at 31 March 2025	Difference from 31 March 2024
Name and Post Title	£	£		£'000	£'000
Brian Butler - Partnership Director	25,923	30,713	Pension	5	3
			Lump Sum	0	0
	25,923	30,713			

The South East of Scotland Transport Partnership (SESTRAN)

REMUNERATION REPORT *(continued)*

7. Pension Entitlement

Pension benefits for the Partnership's employees are provided through the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS).

For the Partnership's employees, the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS) became a career average pay scheme on 1 April 2015. Benefits built up to 31 March 2015 are protected and based on final salary. Accrued benefits from 1 April 2015 will be based on career average salary.

The scheme's normal retirement age for employees is linked to the state pension age (but with a minimum of age 65).

From 1 April 2009 a five tier contribution system was introduced with contributions from scheme members being based on how much pay falls into each tier. This is designed to give more equality between the cost and benefits of scheme membership. Prior to 2009 contributions rates were set at 6% for all non-manual employees.

The tiers and members contributions rates for 2024-25 were as follows:

Whole Time Pay	Contribution rate
On earnings up to and including £27,000 (2023/2024 £25,300)	5.50%
On earnings above £27,000 and up to £33,000 (2023/2024 £25,300 to £31,000)	7.25%
On earnings above £33,000 and up to £45,300 (2023/2024 £31,000 to £42,500)	8.50%
On earnings above £45,300 and up to £60,400 (2023/2024 £42,500 to £56,600)	9.50%
On earnings above £60,400 (2023/2024 £56,000)	12.00%

From April 2015, when allocating contribution rates to members, pensionable pay means the actual pensionable pay, regardless of hours worked.

There is no automatic entitlement to a lump sum for members who joined the scheme post April 2009. Members may opt to give up (commute) pension for lump sum or bigger lump sum up to the limit set by the Finance Act 2004.

The value of the accrued benefits has been calculated on the basis of the age at which the person will first become entitled to receive a pension on retirement without reduction on account of its payment at that age; without exercising any option to commute pension entitlement into a lump sum; and without any adjustment for the effects of future inflation - assuming that the person left the related employment or service as at 31st March in the year to which the value relates.

8. Exit Packages

Exit packages include compulsory and voluntary redundancy costs, pension contributions in respect of added years, ex-gratia payments and other departure costs.

Exit Package Cost Band	Number of Compulsory Redundancies		Number of Other Agreed Departures		Total Number of Exit Packages by Cost Band		Total Cost of Exit Packages in Each Band	
							£'000	£'000
All Cost Bands	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

9. Trade Union (Facility Time Publication Requirements) Regulations 2017

The Partnership is required to report information on facility time made available to employees who are trade union representatives. For 2024/25, no individual spent time during the year on trade union-related activities.

Chair of Partnership Board:	SALLY PATTLE	_____	Date signed :
Partnership Director:	BRIAN BUTLER	_____	Date signed :

The South East of Scotland Transport Partnership (SESTRAN)

MOVEMENT IN RESERVES STATEMENT

This statement shows the movement in the year on different reserves held by the Partnership, analysed into "Usable Reserves" (that is, those that can be applied to fund expenditure) and "Unusable Reserves". The Surplus or (Deficit) on the Provision of Services line shows the true economic cost of providing the Partnership's services, more details of which are shown in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement. These are different from the statutory amounts required to be charged to the General Fund Balance before any discretionary transfers to or from earmarked reserves undertaken by the Partnership.

2023/24 - Previous Year Comparative	Usable Reserves		Unusable Reserves	Total Partnership Reserves
	General Fund Balance	Total Usable Reserves		
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Opening Balances at 1 April 2023	**208**	**208**	**220**	**428**
Movement in reserves during 2023/24				
Surplus or (Deficit) on Provision of Services	223	223	0	223
Other Comprehensive Expenditure and Income	0	0	(48)	(48)
Total Comprehensive Expenditure and Income	**223**	**223**	**(48)**	**175**
Adjustments between accounting basis & funding basis under regulations (Note 7)	(3)	(3)	3	0
Increase/Decrease in 2023/24	**220**	**220**	**(45)**	**175**
Balance at 31 March 2024 carried forward	**428**	**428**	**175**	**603**

2024/25 - Current Financial Year	Usable Reserves		Unusable Reserves	Total Partnership Reserves
	General Fund Balance	Total Usable Reserves		
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Opening Balances at 1 April 2024	**428**	**428**	**175**	**603**
Movement in reserves during 2024/25				
Surplus or (Deficit) on Provision of Services	107	107	0	107
Other Comprehensive Expenditure and Income	0	0	(31)	(31)
Total Comprehensive Expenditure and Income	**107**	**107**	**(31)**	**76**
Adjustments between accounting basis & funding basis under regulations (Note 7)	34	34	(34)	0
Increase/Decrease in 2024/25	**141**	**141**	**(65)**	**76**
Balance at 31 March 2025 carried forward	**569**	**569**	**110**	**679**

The South East of Scotland Transport Partnership (SESTRAN)

COMPREHENSIVE INCOME AND EXPENDITURE STATEMENT 2024/25

This statement shows the accounting cost in the year of providing services in accordance with generally accepted accounting practices, rather than the amount to be funded by government grant, council requisitions and other income.

2023/24				2024/25		
Gross Expenditure £'000	Gross Income £'000	Net Expenditure £'000	Services	Gross Expenditure £'000	Gross Income £'000	Net Expenditure £'000
749	0	749	Core	858	(5)	853
996	(990)	6	Projects	5,213	(5,197)	16
1,745	**(990)**	**755**	**Cost Of Services**	**6,071**	**(5,202)**	**869**
142	(148)	(6)	Financing & Investment Income (Note 9)	165	(208)	(43)
0	(972)	(972)	Taxation and Non-Specific Grant Income (Note 10)	0	(933)	(933)
1,887	**(2,110)**	**(223)**	**(Surplus) or Deficit on Provision of Services**	**6,236**	**(6,343)**	**(107)**
			Other Comprehensive Income and Expenditure			
0	(48)	(48)	Change in Demographic Assumptions	0	(4)	(4)
0	(164)	(164)	Change in Financial Assumptions	0	(474)	(474)
0	(68)	(68)	Changes in the effect of the asset ceiling	466	0	466
369	0	369	Other Experience	0	(28)	(28)
0	(41)	(41)	Return on Assets excluding amounts included in net interest	71	0	71
369	**(321)**	**48**	**Total Other Comprehensive Income and Expenditure**	**537**	**(506)**	**31**
2,256	**(2,431)**	**(175)**	**Total Comprehensive Income and Expenditure**	**6,773**	**(6,849)**	**(76)**

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The South East of Scotland Transport Partnership (SESTRAN)

BALANCE SHEET

The Balance Sheet shows the value as at the Balance Sheet date of the assets and liabilities recognised by the Partnership. The net assets of the Partnership (assets less liabilities) are matched by the reserves held by the Partnership. Reserves are reported in two categories. The first category of reserves are usable reserves, that is, those reserves that the Partnership may use to provide services, subject to the need to maintain a prudent level of reserves and any statutory limitations on their use. The second category of reserves are those that the Partnership is not able to use to provide services. This category of reserves include reserves that hold unrealised gains and losses (for example, the Capital Adjustment Account Reserve), where amounts would only become available to provide services if the assets are sold; and reserves that hold timing differences shown in the Movement in Reserves Statement line "Adjustments between accounting basis and funding basis under regulations".

31 March 2024 £'000		Note	31 March 2025 £'000
189	Property, plant and equipment	11	152
0	Other long-term assets (Pensions)	24	0
189	**Long term assets**		**152**
741	Short-term debtors	13	2,212
0	Provision for Bad Debts	14	0
228	Cash and cash equivalents	15	1,327
969	**Current assets**		**3,539**
0	Contributions and Grants Received in Advance		0
(555)	Short-term creditors	16	(3,001)
(555)	**Current liabilities**		**(3,001)**
0	Property Lease	23	(11)
0	**Long-term liabilities**		**(11)**
603	**Net assets/ (liabilities)**		**679**
	Financed by:		
428	Usable reserves	17	569
175	Unusable reserves	18	110
603	**Total reserves**		**679**

The unaudited Annual Accounts were issued on the 13th June 2025.

The audited Annual Accounts were authorised for issue by Richard Lloyd-Bithell on 19th September 2025

Treasurer: RICHARD LLOYD-BITHELL, CPFA _____   Date signed: _____

The South East of Scotland Transport Partnership (SESTRAN)

CASH FLOW STATEMENT

The Cash Flow Statement shows the changes in cash and cash equivalents of the Partnership during the reporting period. The statement shows how the Partnership generates and uses cash and cash equivalents by classifying cash flows as operating, investing and financing activities. The amount of net cash flow arising from operating activities is a key indicator of the extent to which the operations of the Partnership are funded by way of government grant income, council requisitions and other receipts and contributions for services provided by the Partnership. Investing activities represent the extent to which cash outflows have been made for resources which are intended to contribute to the Partnership's future service delivery. Cash flows arising from financing activities are useful in predicting claims on future cash flows by providers of capital (that is, borrowing) to the Partnership.

31 March 2024 £'000	31 March 2024 £'000		31 March 2025 £'000	31 March 2025 £'000
		OPERATING ACTIVITIES		
(782)		Government Grants	(3,730)	
(190)		Constituent Council Requisitions	(176)	
2		Interest paid/ (received)	(5)	
(1,871)		Other receipts from operating activities	(1,470)	
	(2,841)	**Cash inflows generated from operating activities**		**(5,381)**
585		Cash paid to and on behalf of employees	768	
2,121		Cash paid to suppliers of goods and services	3,513	
	2,706	**Cash outflows generated from operating activities**		**4,281**
	(135)	**Net cash flows from operating activities**		**(1,100)**
		INVESTING ACTIVITIES		
134		Purchase of property, plant and equipment	1	
0		Proceeds from the sale of property, plant and equipment	0	
	134	**Net cash flows from investing activities**		**1**
		FINANCING ACTIVITIES		
0		Other receipts from financing activities	0	
	0	**Net cash flows from financing activities**		**0**
	(1)	**Net (increase)/ decrease in cash and cash equivalents**		**(1,099)**
	227	**Cash and cash equivalents at the beginning of the reporting period**		**228**
	228	**Cash and cash equivalents at the end of the reporting period (Note 15)**		**1,327**

The South East of Scotland Transport Partnership (SESTRAN)

NOTES TO THE ANNUAL ACCOUNTS

1.   STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTING POLICIES

1.1   Accounting Policies

The Annual Accounts have been prepared in accordance with the International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS) based Code of Practice in the United Kingdom (the Code). This is to ensure that the Annual Accounts "present a true and fair view" of the financial position and transactions of the Partnership.

The Annual Accounts have been prepared on an historic cost basis, modified by the valuation of pension assets and liabilities and property, plant and equipment, where appropriate.

1.2   Revenue Expenditure

Revenue expenditure is that which does not yield benefit beyond the year of account. In broad terms the revenue expenditure of the Partnership can be divided into two categories:

- employees;
- day-to-day operating expenses, includes costs incurred in respect of office accommodation transport, ICT, and project expenditure.

1.3   Revenue Income

Revenue income is that which does not yield benefit beyond the year of account. In broad terms the revenue income of the Partnership can be divided into the following categories:

- Council requisitions, which fund day to day expenditure;
- European Union, Scottish Government and other grant income awarded to fund specific projects;
- other income recoveries to fund specific projects.

1.4   Accruals of Expenditure and Income

The revenue account has been prepared on an accruals basis in accordance with the Code of Practice. Amounts estimated to be due to or from the Partnership, which are still outstanding at the year end, are included in the accounts. Government Grants have been accounted for on an accruals basis.

1.5   Leases

a)   Right of Use Assets

Leased-in assets

Leases for assets are classified as Right of Use where the terms of the lease are consistent with International Financial Reporting Standard 16 (IFRS16). All other leases are classified as leases.

The Partnership has identified one leased-in property asset that falls within the definition of a finance lease.

The lease is recognised as a Right of Use asset on the Balance Sheet. Depreciation and an Interest expense is charged to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure statement over the life of the lease.

Leased-out assets

The Partnership has not identified any leased-out assets that fall under the definition of a Right of Use Asset.

b)   Leases

Leased-in assets

Rental payments are charged to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement on a straight line basis over the life of the lease.

Leased-out assets

The Partnership has not identified any assets that fall under the definition of a lease.

1.6   Overheads

The cost of service in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement includes overheads.

1.7   Charges to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement for use of non-current assets

Charges are made to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement for the use of non-current assets, through depreciation charges. The aggregate charge to individual services is determined on the basis of the assets used in each service.

1.8   Employee Benefits

Pensions

The Partnership is an admitted body to the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS) which is administered by Lothian Pension Fund. The LGPS is a defined benefit statutory scheme, administered in accordance with the Local Government Pension Scheme (Scotland) Regulations 1998, as amended.

The South East of Scotland Transport Partnership (SESTRAN)

NOTES TO THE ANNUAL ACCOUNTS

1.   STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTING POLICIES *(continued)*

1.8   Employee Benefits *(continued)*

Pensions *(continued)*

The Annual Accounts have been prepared including pension costs, as determined under International Accounting Standard 19 – Employee Benefits (IAS 19). The cost of service in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement includes expenditure equivalent to the amount of retirement benefits the Partnership has committed to during the year. Pensions interest cost and the expected return on pension assets have been included in the "Surplus or Deficit on the Provision of Services" within the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement.

The pension costs charged to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement in respect of employees are not equal to contributions paid to the funded scheme for employees. The amount by which pension costs under IAS19 are different from the contributions due under the pension scheme regulations are disclosed in the Movement in Reserves Statement for the General Fund.

Pension assets have been valued at bid value (purchase price), as required under IAS19.

Under pension regulations, contribution rates are set to meet 100% of the overall liabilities of the Fund.

Accruals of Holiday Leave

Cost of service includes a charge for annual leave to which employees are entitled, but have not taken as at the Balance Sheet date. The Partnership is not required to raise requisitions on constituent councils to cover the cost of accrued annual leave. These costs are therefore replaced by revenue provision in the Movement in Reserves Statement for the General Fund balance by way of an adjusting transaction with the Accumulated Absence Account.

1.9   Non Current Assets

Property, Plant and Equipment

Property, Plant and Equipment is categorised into the following classes:

- Vehicles, plant and equipment;
- Assets under construction.

Recognition

- Expenditure lower than £10,000 on individual assets is charged to revenue.

Measurement:

- Assets under construction are initially measured at historic cost, comprising their purchase price and any costs attributable to bringing the assets into use for their intended purpose.
- All other classes of property, plant and equipment are measured at fair value.
  Vehicles, plant, furniture and equipment - fair value is the amount equivalent to depreciated historical cost for short life and/or low value assets. For assets with longer lives and/or high values, fair value is the amount that would be paid for the asset in its existing use or depreciated replacement cost for specialised /rarely sold assets where insufficient market based evidence exists.
- Surplus assets - fair value is the price that would be paid for an asset in its highest and best use.

Depreciation

- Depreciation is provided on all property, plant and equipment except assets under construction.
- The Partnership depreciates its non-current assets in the year of acquisition. The Partnership operates a five-year rolling revaluation programme for assets and provides for depreciation on a straight-line basis on the opening book value plus the cost of acquisitions and enhancements during the year over the remaining useful life of the asset.
- The charge to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement for the year is impacted by changes in asset value during the year arising from enhancements but not revaluation.

De-recognition

- An asset is de-recognised either on its disposal, or where no future economic benefits or service potential are expected from its use or disposal.

The South East of Scotland Transport Partnership (SESTRAN)

NOTES TO THE ANNUAL ACCOUNTS

1. STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTING POLICIES *(continued)*

1.9 Non Current Assets (*continued*)

Intangible Assets

Recognition

- Intangible assets are non-current assets that have no physical substance but are identifiable and controlled by the Partnership and it can be established that there is an economic benefit or service potential associated with the item which will flow to the Partnership. This expenditure is mainly in relation to the purchase of software licenses. Expenditure on the acquisition, creation or enhancement of intangible assets is capitalised on an accruals basis.

Measurement

- Intangible assets are initially measured at cost and included in the Balance Sheet at net historical cost.

Depreciation

- In most cases intangible assets are depreciated over the period of the licence. Where the period of the licence is deemed 'infinite' the software is depreciated based on an assessment of expected useful life.
- Depreciation is calculated using the straight-line basis on the opening book value over the remaining useful life of the asset.

1.10 Government Grants and Other Contributions

Revenue

Revenue grants and other contributions have been included in the financial statements on an accruals basis.

Where such funds remain unapplied at the Balance Sheet date, but approval has been given to carry these funds forward to the next financial year, the funds have been accrued.

Capital

Capital grants and contributions are recognised in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement, except to the extent there are conditions attached to them that have not been met.

Where there are no conditions attached to capital grants and contributions, these funds are a reconciling item in the Movement in Reserves Statement by way of an adjusting transaction with the capital adjustment account where expenditure has been incurred and the unapplied capital grants account, where expenditure has not been incurred.

Where there are outstanding conditions attached to capital grants and contributions that have not been met by the Balance Sheet date, the grant or the contribution will be recognised as part of capital grants in advance. Once the condition has been met, the grant or contribution will be transferred from capital grants received in advance and recognised as income in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement.

1.11 Provisions

Provisions are made for liabilities of uncertain timing or amount that have been incurred.

The value of provisions is based upon the Partnership's obligations arising from past events, the probability that a transfer of economic benefit will take place, and a reasonable estimate of the obligation.

1.12 Reserves

Reserves held on the Balance Sheet are classified as either usable or unusable. Unusable reserves cannot be applied to fund expenditure. The Transport Scotland (2019) Act permits the Partnership to operate a usable reserve. In March 2020 a Reserves Policy was approved, permitting the Partnership to hold a general reserve with a minimum value of 5% of annual Core budget. Balances held in excess of 5% require to be reviewed annually in-line with risk/identified commitments. The Partnership also operates a General Fund reserve to manage slippage on approved Project budget delivery.

The Partnership operates the following unusable reserves:

a) *Pension Reserve*

The Partnership operates a Pensions Reserve Fund under the terms of the Local Government Pension Reserve Fund (Scotland) Regulations 2003. The Pension Reserve represents the net monies which the Partnership requires to meet its net pension liability, or is the value of the net pension asset, as calculated under IAS 19, Employee Benefits;

The South East of Scotland Transport Partnership (SESTRAN)

NOTES TO THE ANNUAL ACCOUNTS

1.   STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTING POLICIES *(continued)*

1.12   Reserves (*continued*)

b)   ***Capital Adjustment Account***

The Capital Adjustment Account represents movement in the funding of assets arising either from capital resources such as capital receipts, or capital funded directly from revenue contributions;

c)   **Accumulated Absences Account**

This represents the net monies which the Partnership requires to meet its short-term compensated absences for employees under IAS19.

1.13   Financial Instruments

Financial Assets

Loans and receivables are initially measured at fair value and carried at their amortised cost. Annual credits to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement for interest receivable are based on the carrying amount of the asset multiplied by the effective rate of interest for the instrument.

Surplus funds held on behalf of the Partnership are managed by the City of Edinburgh Council under a formal management agreement in a pooled investment arrangement.

1.14   Cash and Cash Equivalents

Cash and cash equivalents include:

- Credit and debit funds held in banks

1.15   Contingent Liabilities

A contingent liability arises where an event has taken place that gives the Partnership a possible obligation whose existence will only be confirmed by the occurrence or otherwise of uncertain future events not wholly within the control of the Partnership.

Contingent liabilities are not recognised in the Balance Sheet but disclosed in a note to the accounts.

1.16   Value Added Tax

VAT payable is included as an expense only to the extent that it is not recoverable from HM Revenue and Customs.

1.17   Events After the Reporting Period

Events after the reporting period are those events, both favourable and unfavourable, that occur between the end of the reporting period and the date when the Annual Accounts are authorised for issue.

Two types of events can be identified:

i) those that provide evidence of conditions that existed at the end of the reporting period - the Annual Accounts are adjusted to reflect such events;

ii) those that are indicative of conditions that arose after the reporting period - the Annual Accounts are not adjusted to reflect such events, but where a category of events would have a material effect, disclosure is made in the notes of the nature of the events and their estimated financial effect.

1.18   Short Term Debtors and Short Term Creditors

The revenue transactions of the Partnership are recorded on an accruals basis which means that amounts due to or from the Partnership, but still outstanding at the year end, are included in the accounts. Where there was insufficient information available to provide actual figures, estimates have been included.

1.19   Changes in Accounting Policies and Estimates and Errors

Changes in accounting policies are only made when required by proper accounting practices or the change provides more reliable or relevant information about the effect of transactions, other events and conditions on the Partnership's financial position or performance.

Changes in accounting estimates are accounted for prospectively i.e. in the current and future years affected.

Material errors discovered in prior period figures are corrected retrospectively by amending opening balances and comparative amounts for the prior period.

1.20   Going Concern

It is considered appropriate to adopt a going concern basis for the preparation of the Annual Accounts, given ongoing Regional Transport Partnership grant funding provided by Scottish Ministers under Section 70 of the Transport (Scotland) Act 2001 and constituent councils obligation to meet the net expenses of the Partnership under Section 3 of the Transport (Scotland) Act 2005.

The South East of Scotland Transport Partnership (SESTRAN)

NOTES TO THE ANNUAL ACCOUNTS

2. ACCOUNTING STANDARDS THAT HAVE BEEN ISSUED BUT NOT YET ADOPTED

The Code requires the disclosure of information relating to the impact of an accounting change that will be required by a new standard that has been issued but not yet adopted by the Code for the relevant financial year. The standards introduced by the 2025/26 Code where disclosures are required in the 2024/25 financial statements in accordance with the requirements of paragraph 3.3.4.3 of the Code are:

- IAS 21 The Effects of Changes in Foreign Exchange Rate (Lack of Exchangeability);
- IFRS 17 Insurance Contracts;
- changes to the measurement of non-investment assets, which include adaptations and interpretations of IAS 16 Property, Plant and Equipment and IAS 38 Intangible Assets.

For the standards introduced by the 2025/26 Code, there is currently no information known on the potential impact that application of the new standards will have on the Partnership's financial statements.

3. CRITICAL JUDGEMENTS IN APPLYING ACCOUNTING POLICIES

In applying the accounting policies set out in Note 1, the Partnership has had to make certain judgements about complex transactions or those involving uncertainty about future events.
The critical judgements made in the Annual Accounts are:

- There is high degree of uncertainty about future levels of funding for local government. The Partnership has determined that this uncertainty is not yet sufficient to provide an indication that the Partnership's assets might be impaired as a result of a need to reduce service provision;

- Section 37 confirmations (Virgin Media vs NTL Pension Trustees II Limited ruling) - the actuary to Lothian Pension Fund has made no additional allowance for this initial legal judgement from July 2023 due to:
  >the ruling only applying to the above-named private sector pension scheme;
  > the legal judgement was subject to appeal and in July 2024, the Court of Appeal dismissed the appeal, with the original ruling standing);
  > it is unknown whether there would be any potential remedy required to public service schemes;
  > it is unknown what the impact of any potential remedy would be;
  > The Department of Works and Pensions is being asked by pension bodies to look at pragmatic solutions where schemes are unable to evidence historic section 37 confirmation.

- Guaranteed Minimum Pension (GMP) equalisation / indexation treatment (Lloyds' ruling). The actuary has allowed for the impact of full GMP indexation in the calculation of the latest funding valuation results. The Employer's funding valuation results are used as the starting point for the accounting roll forward calculations and therefore an allowance for full GMP indexation is included in the disclosure;

- GMP equalisation – historical transfers (Further Lloyd's ruling) - the actuary has advised that this further ruling is unlikely to have a significant impact on the pension obligations of a typical employer. The historic individual member data required to assess the impact is not readily available. As a result, no allowance has been made within the actuary's calculations at the Accounting Date;

- Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS) - McCloud and Sargeant cases. The actuary has allowed for the McCloud judgement in the calculation of the latest funding valuation results. The Employer's funding valuation results are used as the starting point for the accounting roll forward calculations and therefore an allowance is included in the accounting disclosure;

- The Goodwin case judgement in respect of deemed discrimination in spousal transfer on death of a member may also result in the potential increasing of the pension liabilities. The actuary has previously carried out some approximate analysis across LGPS clients to understand the potential impact of implementing a solution to correct the past underpayment of spouses' benefits. The remedy is still uncertain. It is estimated the potential impact of this to be very small for a typical Fund (c0.1% of obligations). The actuary does not believe it is necessary or appropriate to make an adjustment to account for this at the moment, given the level of additional work and fees that would be involved for the Employer (and indeed the highly approximate nature of applying an unknown remedy);

The South East of Scotland Transport Partnership (SESTRAN)

NOTES TO THE ANNUAL ACCOUNTS

3. CRITICAL JUDGEMENTS IN APPLYING ACCOUNTING POLICIES *(continued)*

- The Walker and O'Brien court cases may impact on future LGPS benefits. The Partnership's actuary understands these are unlikely to be significant judgements in terms of impact on the pension obligations of a typical employer. As a result, and until further guidance is released from the relevant governing bodies in the LGPS, no allowance has been made for the potential remedies for these judgements.

4. ASSUMPTIONS MADE ABOUT THE FUTURE AND OTHER MAJOR SOURCES OF ESTIMATION UNCERTAINTY

The Annual Accounts contains estimated figures that are based on assumptions made by the Partnership about the future or events that are otherwise uncertain. Estimates are made taking into account historical experience, current trends and other relevant factors. However, because balances cannot be determined with certainty, actual results could be materially different from the assumptions and estimates.

The items in the Partnership's Balance Sheet at 31 March 2025 for which there is a significant risk of material adjustment in the forthcoming financial year are:

4.1 Pension Asset/Liabilities

Uncertainties
Estimation of the net liability to pay pensions depends on a number of complex judgements relating to the discount rate used, the rate at which salaries are projected to increase, changes in retirement ages, mortality rates and expected returns on pension fund assets. A firm of consulting actuaries is engaged to provide the Partnership with expert advice about the assumptions to be applied.

Effect if Actual Result Differs from Assumptions
Formal actuarial valuations are carried out every three years, where each employer's assets and liabilities are calculated on a detailed basis, using individual member data for cash contribution setting purposes. For LGPS Funds, asset investment returns have been greater than expected compared to last year's accounting date assumption. The net discount rate assumption has increased by more than the increase in the CPI assumption, which has resulted in a gain on the balance sheet position. Using more up-to-date longevity assumption has also led to a small gain on the obligations.

Under accounting guidance, employers are expected to disclose the sensitivity of the valuation to key assumptions. The following table shows the sensitivity of the results to the changes in the assumptions used to measure the scheme liabilities, including approximate percentage changes and monetary values:

	Approximate % increase to Defined Benefit Obligation	Approximate monetary amount (£000)
0.1% decrease in Real Discount Rate	2%	45
1 year increase in member life expectancy	4%	97
0.1% increase in the Salary Increase Rate	0%	1
0.1% increase in the Pension Increase Rate (CPI)	2%	45

5. EVENTS AFTER THE BALANCE SHEET DATE

The unaudited Annual Accounts were authorised for issue on 13th June 2025. Events taking place after this date are not reflected in the financial statements or notes. Where events taking place before this date provide information about conditions existing at 31st March 2025, the figures in the financial statements and notes have been adjusted in all material respects to reflect the impact of this information.

There were no events which took place after 31st March 2025 which would materially affect the 2024/25 Annual Accounts.

The South East of Scotland Transport Partnership (SESTRAN)

NOTES TO THE ANNUAL ACCOUNTS

6. EXPENDITURE AND FUNDING ANALYSIS

The Expenditure and Funding Analysis shows how annual expenditure is used and funded from resources by the Partnership in comparison with those resources consumed or earned by the Partnership in accordance with general accounting practice. It also shows how this expenditure is allocated for decision making purposes between service areas. Income and expenditure accounted for under generally accepted accounting practices is presented more fully in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement (CIES) (see page 19).

Expenditure and Funding Analysis

	Net Expenditure Chargeable to the General Fund	Adjustments	Net Expenditure in the CIES
2024/25	**£'000**	**£'000**	**£'000**
Core	820	33	853
Projects	16	0	16
Net Cost of Services	**836**	**33**	**869**
Other Income and Expenditure			
Government grant	(743)	0	(743)
Constituent council requisitions	(190)	0	(190)
Interest paid/ (received)	(44)	1	(43)
Interest on the effect of the asset ceiling	0	30	30
Net pension interest cost/ (income)	0	(30)	(30)
(Surplus) or deficit on the provision of services	**(141)**	**34**	**(107)**

	Net Expenditure Chargeable to the General Fund	Adjustments	Net Expenditure in the CIES
2023/24	**£'000**	**£'000**	**£'000**
Core	734	14	748
Projects	23	(16)	7
Net Cost of Services	**757**	**(2)**	**755**
Other Income and Expenditure			
Government grant	(782)	0	(782)
Constituent council requisitions	(190)	0	(190)
Interest paid/ (received)	(5)	0	(5)
Interest on the effect of the asset ceiling	0	31	31
Net pension interest cost	0	(32)	(32)
(Surplus) or deficit on the provision of services	**(220)**	**(3)**	**(223)**

The South East of Scotland Transport Partnership (SESTRAN)

NOTES TO THE ANNUAL ACCOUNTS

6. EXPENDITURE AND FUNDING ANALYSIS *(continued)*

Expenditure and Funding Analysis *(continued)*

6.1 Adjustments from the General Fund to arrive at the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement amounts:

2024/25	Adjusts. For Capital Purposes £'000	Net Change for Pensions Adjusts. £'000	Other Differences £'000	Total Statutory Adjusts. £'000
Core	52	(31)	12	33
Projects	0	0	0	0
Net Cost of Services	**52**	**(31)**	**12**	**33**
Other Income and Expenditure				
Interest paid/ (received)	1	0	0	1
Interest on the effect of the asset ceiling	0	30	0	30
Net pension interest cost/ (received)	0	(30)	0	(30)
(Surplus) or deficit on the provision of services	**53**	**(31)**	**12**	**34**

2023/24	Adjusts. For Capital Purposes £'000	Net Change for Pensions Adjusts. £'000	Other Differences £'000	Total Statutory Adjusts. £'000
Core	58	(47)	3	14
Projects	(16)	0	0	(16)
Net Cost of Services	**42**	**(47)**	**3**	**(2)**
Other Income and Expenditure				
Interest on the effect of the asset ceiling	0	31	0	31
Net pension interest cost	0	(32)	0	(32)
(Surplus) or deficit on the provision of services	**42**	**(48)**	**3**	**(3)**

- Adjustments for capital purposes include the removal of depreciation and impairment costs, and the inclusion of capital funded from current revenue.
- Net changes for pensions adjustment relates to the adjustment made for the removal of IAS19 Employee Benefits pension related expenditure and income with the pension contributions.
- Other differences relate to the reversal of the value of entitlement to accrued leave.

The South East of Scotland Transport Partnership (SESTRAN)

NOTES TO THE ANNUAL ACCOUNTS

6.   EXPENDITURE AND FUNDING ANALYSIS *(continued)*

6.2 Segmental Analysis of Income included in Expenditure and Funding Analysis

2024/25	Core £'000	Projects £'000	Total £'000
Expenditure			
Employee expenses	680	0	680
Other service expenses	145	5,213	5,358
Total Expenditure	**825**	**5,213**	**6,038**
Income			
Income from recharges for services	0	0	0
Government grants and other contributions	(5)	(5,197)	(5,202)
Total Income	**(5)**	**(5,197)**	**(5,202)**
Net Cost of Services	**820**	**16**	**836**

2023/24	Core £'000	Projects £'000	Total £'000
Expenditure			
Employee expenses	494	0	494
Other service expenses	240	1,013	1,253
Total Expenditure	**734**	**1,013**	**1,747**
Income			
Government grants and other contributions	0	(990)	(990)
Total Income	**0**	**(990)**	**(990)**
Net Cost of Services	**734**	**23**	**757**

6.3 Expenditure and Income Analysed by Nature

The Partnership's expenditure and income, as set out within the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement is analysed as follows:

	31st March 2025 £'000	31st March 2024 £'000
Expenditure		
Employee expenses	661	450
Other service expenses	5,352	1,234
Depreciation, amortisation and impairment	58	61
Interest payments	165	142
Total Expenditure	6,236	1,887
Income		
Fees, charges and other service income	0	0
Interest and investment income	(208)	(148)
Income from constituent councils	(190)	(190)
Government grants and other contributions	(5,945)	(1,772)
Total Income	(6,343)	(2,110)
(Surplus) or Deficit on the Provision of Services	(107)	(223)

The South East of Scotland Transport Partnership (SESTRAN)

NOTES TO THE ANNUAL ACCOUNTS

7.   ADJUSTMENTS BETWEEN ACCOUNTING BASIS AND FUNDING BASIS UNDER REGULATIONS

This note details the adjustments that are made to the total Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement recognised by the Partnership in the year in accordance with proper accounting practice to the resources that are specified by statutory provisions as being available to the Partnership to meet future capital and revenue expenditure.

2024/25	Usable Reserves	Unusable Reserves			
	General Fund Balance	Capital Adjustment Account	Accumulated Absence Account	Pension Reserve	Movement in Unusable Reserve
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Adjustments primarily involving the Capital Adjustment Account					
Reversal of items debited or credited to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement (CIES)					
Charges for depreciation and impairment of non-current assets	58	(58)			(58)
Insertion of items not debited or credited to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement (CIES)					
Contributions credited to the CIES that have been applied to capital financing	(5)	5			5
Adjustments primarily involving the Pensions Reserve					
Reversal of items relating to retirement benefits debited or credited to the CIES	111			(111)	(111)
Employer's pension contributions and direct payments to pensioners payable in the year	(142)			142	142
Adjustments primarily involving the Accumulated Absence Account					
Amount by which officer remuneration charged to the CIES on an accruals basis is different from remuneration chargeable in the year in accordance with statutory requirements	12		(12)		(12)
Total Adjustments	**34**	**(53)**	**(12)**	**31**	**(34)**

The South East of Scotland Transport Partnership (SESTRAN)

NOTES TO THE ANNUAL ACCOUNTS

7. ADJUSTMENTS BETWEEN ACCOUNTING BASIS AND FUNDING BASIS UNDER REGULATIONS _(continued)_

This note details the adjustments that are made to the total Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement recognised by the Partnership in the year in accordance with proper accounting practice to the resources that are specified by statutory provisions as being available to the Partnership to meet future capital and revenue expenditure.

	Usable Reserves	Unusable Reserves			
2023/24	General Fund Balance	Capital Adjustment Account	Accumulated Absence Account	Pension Reserve	Movement in Unusable Reserve
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Adjustments primarily involving the Capital Adjustment Account					
Reversal of items debited or credited to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement (CIES)					
Charges for depreciation and impairment of non-current assets	61	(61)			(61)
Insertion of items not debited or credited to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement (CIES)					
Contributions credited to the CIES that have been applied to capital financing	(19)	19			19
Adjustments primarily involving the Pensions Reserve					
Reversal of items relating to retirement benefits debited or credited to the CIES	74			(74)	(74)
Employer's pension contributions and direct payments to pensioners payable in the year	(122)			122	122
Adjustments primarily involving the Accumulated Absence Account					
Amount by which officer remuneration charged to the CIES on an accruals basis is different from remuneration chargeable in the year in accordance with statutory requirements	3		(3)		(3)
Total Adjustments	**(3)**	**(42)**	**(3)**	**48**	**3**

The South East of Scotland Transport Partnership (SESTRAN)

NOTES TO THE ANNUAL ACCOUNTS

8. TRANSFERS TO/FROM EARMARKED RESERVES

In accordance with the provisions of the Transport Scotland (2019) Act, the Partnership has agreed a Reserves Policy. An earmarked balance will be established to meet slippage on project delivery from 2024/25 to 2025/26.

9. FINANCING AND INVESTMENT INCOME

	2024/25 £'000	2023/24 £'000
Interest income on pension asset/liability	(165)	(143)
Interest Paid/ (Received)	(43)	(5)
Pensions interest cost	135	111
Interest on the effect of the asset ceiling	30	31
	(43)	(6)

10. TAXATION AND NON SPECIFIC GRANT INCOME

	2024/25 £'000	2023/24 £'000
Government Grant	(743)	(782)
Constituent Council Requisitions	(190)	(190)
	(933)	(972)

The South East of Scotland Transport Partnership (SESTRAN)

NOTES TO THE ANNUAL ACCOUNTS

11. PROPERTY, PLANT AND EQUIPMENT

11.1 Movements on balances:

Movements in 2024/25

Cost or Valuation	Property Lease (Right of Use Asset)	Vehicles Plant and Equipment £'000	Assets Under Construction £'000	Total Property Plant and Equipment £'000
At 1st April 2024	0	839	11	850
Additions	21	0	0	21
De-Recognised Assets	0	(476)	0	(476)
Revaluation increases/(decreases) recognised in the Surplus/Deficit on the Provision of Services	0	0	0	0
At 31st March 2025	21	363	11	395
Accumulated Depreciation				
At 1st April 2024	0	(661)	0	(661)
Depreciation charge	(5)	(53)	0	(58)
De-Recognised Assets	0	476	0	476
Depreciation written out to the Surplus/Deficit on the Provision of Services		0	0	0
At 31st March 2025	(5)	(238)	0	(243)
Net Book Value				
At 31st March 2025	16	125	11	152

Following approval of the Partnership's Asset Management Strategy on 14th March 2025, assets with Gross Book Value of £0.476m were de-recognised. All the assets were fully depreciated.
The assets had all reached the end of their useful operating life.

The South East of Scotland Transport Partnership (SESTRAN)

NOTES TO THE ANNUAL ACCOUNTS

11. PROPERTY, PLANT AND EQUIPMENT *(continued)*

11.2 Movements on balances:

Comparative Movements in 2023/24

Cost or Valuation	Vehicles Plant and Equipment £'000	Assets Under Construction £'000	Total Property Plant and Equipment £'000
At 1st April 2023	795	36	831
Additions	19	0	19
Transfers	25	(25)	0
Revaluation increases/(decreases) recognised in the Surplus/Deficit on the Provision of Services	0	0	0
At 31st March 2024	839	11	850
Accumulated Depreciation			
At 1st April 2023	(600)	0	(600)
Depreciation charge	(61)	0	(61)
Depreciation written out to the Surplus/Deficit on the Provision of Services	0	0	0
At 31st March 2024	(661)	0	(661)
Net Book Value At 31st March 2024	178	11	189

11.3 Depreciation

The following useful lives have been used in the calculation of depreciation:
- Vehicles, plant and equipment: 4 - 5 years

The Partnership provides depreciation on its Property, Plant and Equipment from the month when it comes into use.

11.4 Capital Commitments

As at 31st March 2025, the Partnership had no capital commitments.

The South East of Scotland Transport Partnership (SESTRAN)

NOTES TO THE ANNUAL ACCOUNTS

12. FINANCIAL INSTRUMENTS

12.1 **Financial Instruments - Classifications**

A financial instrument is a contract that gives rise to a financial asset of one entity and a financial liability or equity instrument of another entity. Non-exchange transactions, such as those relating to government grants, do not give rise to financial instruments.

Financial Liabilities

A financial liability is an obligation to transfer economic benefits controlled by the Partnership and can be represented by a contractual obligation to deliver cash or financial assets or an obligation to exchange financial assets and liabilities with another entity that is potentially unfavourable to the Partnership.

The Partnership's financial liabilities held during the year comprised:

- Trade payables for goods and services received.

Financial Assets

A financial asset is a right to future economic benefits controlled by the Partnership that is represented by cash, equity instruments or a contractual right to receive cash or other financial assets or a right to exchange financial assets and liabilities with another entity that is potentially favourable to the Partnership.

The Partnership's financial assets held during the year comprised:

- Cash in hand;
- Cash and cash equivalents (Loans and receivables). The Partnership maintains its funds as part of the City of Edinburgh Council's group of bank accounts. Any cash balance is effectively lent to the Council, but is offset by expenditure undertaken by the City of Edinburgh Council on behalf of the Partnership. Interest is given on month end net indebtedness balances between the Council;
- Trade receivables for goods and services provided.

12.2 **Financial Instruments - Balances**

The financial liabilities disclosed in the Balance Sheet are analysed across the following categories

	Current	
	31st March 2025 £'000	31st March 2024 £'000
Trade creditors	1,253	567

The financial assets disclosed in the Balance Sheet are analysed across the following categories:

	Current	
	31st March 2025 £'000	31st March 2024 £'000
Loans and receivables	3,261	562
Trade debtors	57	121
	3,318	683

The South East of Scotland Transport Partnership (SESTRAN)

NOTES TO THE ANNUAL ACCOUNTS

12. FINANCIAL INSTRUMENTS *(continued)*

12.3 **Financial Instruments - Fair Values**

The financial assets represented by loans and receivables are carried in the Balance Sheet at amortised cost. Since all of the Partnership's loans and receivables mature within the next 12 months, the carrying amount has been assumed to approximate to fair value. The fair value of trade and other receivables is taken to be the invoiced or billed amount.

The fair values calculated are as follows:

	31 March 2025		31 March 2024	
Financial Liabilities	Carrying Amount £'000	Fair Value £'000	Carrying Amount £'000	Fair Value £'000
Trade creditors	1,253	1,253	567	567

	31 March 2025		31 March 2024	
Financial Assets	Carrying Amount £'000	Fair Value £'000	Carrying Amount £'000	Fair Value £'000
Loans and receivables	3,261	3,261	562	562
Trade debtors	57	57	121	121
	3,318	3,318	683	683

12.4 **Income, Expenses, Gains and Losses**

The gains and losses recognised in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement in relation to financial instruments are made up as follows:

	31st March 2025 £'000	31st March 2024 £'000
Total expense and income in Surplus or Deficit on the Provision of Services:		
Interest Expense/ (Income)	(43)	(5)

13. DEBTORS

	31st March 2025 £'000	31st March 2024 £'000
Debtors:		
Central government bodies	1,934	340
Other local authorities	109	201
HM Customs and Excise - VAT	30	62
Other entities and individuals	139	138
	2,212	741

The South East of Scotland Transport Partnership (SESTRAN)

NOTES TO THE ANNUAL ACCOUNTS

14. PROVISION FOR BAD DEBTS

Cost or Valuation	31st March 2025 £'000	31st March 2024 £'000
Opening Balance	0	0
Provision made during year	0	0
Unused amounts reversed during the year	0	0
Closing Balance	0	0

15. CASH AND CASH EQUIVALENTS

The balance of cash and cash equivalents is made up of the following elements:

	31st March 2025 £'000	31st March 2024 £'000
Bank account	1,327	228
	1,327	228

16. CREDITORS

	31st March 2025 £'000	31st March 2024 £'000
Central government bodies	(92)	(4)
Other local authorities	(2,032)	(25)
Other entities and individuals	(846)	(511)
Employee costs	(26)	(15)
Finance Lease obligations	(5)	0
	(3,001)	(555)

17. USABLE RESERVES

		31st March 2025 £'000	31st March 2024 £'000
17.1	Unallocated General Fund Reserve	221	135
17.2	Earmarked Balance - Project Budget slippage	348	293
		569	428

The South East of Scotland Transport Partnership (SESTRAN)

NOTES TO THE ANNUAL ACCOUNTS

18. UNUSABLE RESERVES

		31st March 2025 £'000	31st March 2024 £'000
18.1	Capital Adjustment Account	136	189
18.2	Pension Reserve	0	0
18.3	Accumulated Absence Account	(26)	(14)
		110	175

18.1 Capital Adjustment Account

The Capital Adjustment Account absorbs the timing differences arising from the different arrangements for accounting for the consumption of non-current assets and for financing the acquisition, construction or enhancement of those assets under statutory provisions. The Account is debited with the cost of acquisition, construction or enhancement as depreciation, impairment losses and amortisations are charged to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement (with reconciling postings from the Revaluation Reserve to convert fair value figures to a historical cost basis). The Account is credited with the amounts set aside by the Partnership as finance for the costs of acquisition, construction and enhancement.

	2024/25 £'000	2023/24 £'000
Balance at 1st April	189	231
Reversal of items related to capital expenditure debited or credited to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement:		
• Charges for depreciation and impairment of non-current assets	(58)	(61)
• Charges for revaluation of non-current assets	0	0
Net written out amount of the cost of non-current assets consumed in year	131	170
Capital financing applied in the year:		
• Contributions credited to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement that have been applied to capital financing	5	19
Balance at 31st March	136	189

18.2 Pension Reserve

The Pension Reserve absorbs the timing differences arising from the different arrangements for accounting for post employment benefits and for funding benefits in accordance with statutory provisions. The Partnership accounts for post employment benefits in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement as the benefits are earned by employees accruing years of service, updating the liabilities recognised to reflect inflation, changing assumptions and investment returns on any resources set aside to meet the costs. However, statutory arrangements require benefits earned to be financed as the Partnership makes employer's contributions to pension funds or eventually pays any pensions for which it is directly responsible. The debit balance on the Pensions Reserve therefore shows a shortfall in the benefits earned by past and current employees and the resources the Partnership has set aside to meet them. The statutory arrangements will ensure that funding will have been set aside by the time the benefits come to be paid.

The South East of Scotland Transport Partnership (SESTRAN)

NOTES TO THE ANNUAL ACCOUNTS

18. UNUSABLE RESERVES *(continued)*

18.2 Pension Reserve *(continued)*

	2024/25 £'000	2023/24 £'000
Balance at 1st April	0	0
Remeasurements of the net defined benefit liability	(31)	(48)
Reversals of items relating to retirement benefits debited or credited to the Surplus or Deficit on the Provision of Services in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement.	(111)	(74)
Employer's pension contributions and direct payments to pensioners payable in the year.	142	122
Balance at 31st March	0	0

18.3 Accumulated Absence Account

The Accumulated Absence Account absorbs the differences that would otherwise arise on the General Fund Balance from accruing for compensated absences earned but not taken in the year, for example, annual leave entitlement carried forward at 31st March. Statutory arrangements require that the impact on the General Fund balance is neutralised by transfers to or from the Account.

	2024/25 £'000	2023/24 £'000
Balance at 1st April	(14)	(11)
Settlement or cancellation of accrual made at the end of the preceding year	14	11
Amounts accrued at the end of the current year	(26)	(14)
Balance at 31st March	(26)	(14)

19. MEMBERS EXPENSES

The Partnership paid the following amounts to members during the year:

	2024/25 £'000	2023/24 £'000
Expenses	0	0
	0	0

The South East of Scotland Transport Partnership (SESTRAN)

NOTES TO THE ANNUAL ACCOUNTS

20. EXTERNAL AUDIT COSTS

The Partnership has incurred the following costs in relation to the audit of the Annual Accounts by the Partnership's external auditors:

	2024/25 £'000	RESTATED 2023/24 £'000
Fees payable in respect of:		
• external audit services carried out by the appointed auditor for the year	13	15
	13	15

The 2023/24 cost is restated to include additional fees levied by Audit Scotland.

21. GRANT INCOME

The Partnership credited the following grants, contributions and donations to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement:

	2024/25 £'000	RESTATED * 2023/24 £'000
Credited to Taxation and Non Specific Grant Income		
Scottish Government - Revenue Grant	(782)	(782)
Constituent Council Requisitions (Note 22.3)	(190)	(190)
	(972)	(972)
Credited to Services		
EU Grant - Bling	0	(11)
EU Grant - Connect	0	(13)
EU Grant - Primaas	0	1
EU Grant - Regio Mob	0	2
EU Grant - Surflogh	0	(8)
Contribution - City of Edinburgh Council	0	(2)
Contribution - East Lothian Council	0	(2)
Contribution - Falkirk Council	0	(7)
Contribution - Fife Council	(1)	(3) *
Contribution - Midlothian Council	0	(5) *
Contribution - Scotrail	(5)	(5)
Contribution - Scottish Borders Council	(1)	(2) *
Contribution - Paths for All	(87)	0
Contribution - Stirling Communication Centre	(4)	(4)
Contribution - Scottish Government/ Transport Scotland	(5,084)	(867)
Contribution - The Media Shop	0	(1)
Contribution - West Lothian Council	(1)	(1) *
Contribution - HITRANS	0	(10)
Contribution - NESTRANS	(3)	(6)
Contribution - SPT	(5)	(11)
Contribution - SWESTRANS	(2)	(2)
Contribution - TACTRAN	(7)	(31)
Contribution - ZETRANS	(1)	(1)
	(5,201)	(989) *

* 2023/24 contributions reduced by £0.627m to remove agency income. The restatement reflects the removal of this agency income from the Grant Income credited to services note, in accordance with the Code of Practice and to reflect the audit adjustment applied to the 2023/24 Income and Expenditure Statement.

The South East of Scotland Transport Partnership (SESTRAN)

NOTES TO THE ANNUAL ACCOUNTS

22. RELATED PARTIES

The Partnership is required to disclose material transactions with related parties - bodies or individuals that have the potential to control or influence the Partnership or to be controlled or influenced by the Partnership. Disclosure of these transactions allows readers to assess the extent to which the Partnership might have been constrained in its ability to operate independently or might have secured the ability to limit another party's ability to bargain freely with the Partnership.

22.1 Scottish Government

The Partnership receives grant-in-aid revenue funding through the Scottish Government.
Grants received from the Scottish Government are set out in the subjective analysis in Note 21.

22.2 Members

Members of the Partnership have direct control over the Partnership's financial and operating policies.
The total of members' expenses paid by the Partnership in 2024-25 is shown in Note 19.

22.3 Other Parties

During the year, the Partnership entered into the following transactions with related parties:

	2024/25 Expenditure £'000	2024/25 Income £'000	2024/25 Debtor/ (Creditor) £'000	2023/24 Net Expenditure £'000	2023/24 Debtor/ (Creditor) £'000
Revenue Expenditure - Support Services					
City of Edinburgh Council - Financial and Clerking Services	42			42	
Falkirk Council - HR Services	0			0	
Revenue Expenditure - Interest on Revenue Balances					
City of Edinburgh Council		(44)		(5)	
Revenue Expenditure - Grants/ Other					
City of Edinburgh Council	825		(919)	0	(25)
Clackmannanshire Council	212		(181)	0	0
East Lothian Council	162		(104)	(2)	2
Falkirk Council	84		(19)	(7)	4
Fife Council	320	(1)	(267)	(3)	137
Midlothian Council	105		(89)	(5)	0
Scottish Borders Council	459	(1)	(198)	(2)	2
Scottish Government/Transport Scotland	105	(5,084)	1,826	(850)	331
West Lothian Council	151	(1)	(152)	(1)	56
	2,423	(5,087)	(103)	(870)	507

The South East of Scotland Transport Partnership (SESTRAN)

NOTES TO THE ANNUAL ACCOUNTS

22. RELATED PARTIES *(continued)*

22.3 Other Parties *(continued)*

	2024/25 Expenditure £'000	2024/25 Income £'000	2024/25 Debtor/ (Creditor) £'000	2023/24 Net Expenditure £'000	2023/24 Debtor/ (Creditor) £'000
Revenue Income - Requisitions					
Clackmannanshire Council		(6)		(6)	
East Lothian Council		(13)		(13)	
City of Edinburgh Council		(61)		(62)	
Falkirk Council		(19)		(19)	
Fife Council		(44)		(44)	
Midlothian Council		(11)		(11)	
Scottish Borders Council		(14)		(13)	
West Lothian Council		(22)		(22)	
		(190)		(190)	
Revenue Income - Agency Income					
Clackmannanshire Council		(2)		0	
Fife Council		(151)		(180)	
Falkirk Council		(52)		0	
Midlothian Council		0		(275)	
Scottish Borders Council		(59)		(59)	
West Lothian Council		0		(46)	
		(264)		(560)	

The South East of Scotland Transport Partnership (SESTRAN)

NOTES TO THE ANNUAL ACCOUNTS

23. LEASES

Right of Use Asset

From 1st April 2024, the Partnership adopted IFRS 16 to recognise right of use assets. As a consequence, the Partnership's lease of office space at Victoria Quay, Edinburgh is included on the Partnership's balance sheet. The Right-of-use asset has been calculated as if IFRS 16 had always applied, but recognised in the year of adoption and not by adjusting prior year figures.

From 8th February 2016 the Partnership took occupancy of office space in Victoria Quay, Edinburgh, under the terms of a Memorandum of Terms of Occupation with the Scottish Government.

The Partnership is permitted to occupy the space until ended by either party giving notice under the terms of the Agreement.

	2024/25 £'000	2023/24 £'000
Office Accommodation - Victoria Quay, Edinburgh		
• Not later than 1 year	5	0
• Over 1 year	11	0
	16	0

Leases

Leases that do not meet the definition of a Right of Use Asset are accounted for as a lease.

On 15th December 2023, the Partnership entered an Agreement with Brompton Bike Hire Limited for the provision of two eight-bay Brompton Hire bicycle docks and sixteen hire bicycles over a period of five years at a total cost of £113,564. The full value of £113,564 was paid in 2023/24. This Agreement does not meet the requirements to be recognised as a Right of Use Asset under IFRS16.

At 31st March 2025, the Partnership has a contract with Ricoh UK Ltd to lease an office printer and a contract with O2 to lease ten SIM cards. As the low value lease exemption has been applied, these contracts are not measured as Right of Use Assets under IFRS16.

The Partnership's expenditure on lease payments during 2024/25 was £24,000 (2023/24 £30,000).

The minimum lease payments due under non-cancellable leases in future years are:

	2024/25 £'000	RESTATED * 2023/24 £'000
Hire Bicycles, Bicycle Docks, Office Printer, SIM cards.		
• Not later than 1 year	24	41
• Over 1 year	62	84
	86	125

 * 2023/24 is restated to reflect recognition of the Brompton Bike Hire Limited Agreement.

24. DEFINED BENEFIT PENSION SCHEMES

24.1 Participation in Pension Schemes

As part of the terms and conditions of employment of its staff, the Partnership makes contributions towards the cost of post employment benefits. Although these benefits will not actually be payable until the employees retire, the Partnership has a commitment to make the payments that require to be disclosed at the time that employees earn their future entitlement. As explained in Accounting Policy 1.8, the Partnership is an admitted body to the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS) which is administered by the Lothian Pension Fund. The Partnership participates in:

• A funded defined benefit pension scheme. The Partnership and employees pay contributions into the fund, calculated at a level intended to balance the pension liabilities with investment assets.

• An arrangement for the award of discretionary post retirement benefits upon early retirement - this is an unfunded defined benefit arrangement, under which liabilities are recognised when awards are made. However, there are no investment assets built up to meet these pension liabilities, and cash has to be generated to meet actual pensions payments as they eventually fall due.

The South East of Scotland Transport Partnership (SESTRAN)

NOTES TO THE ANNUAL ACCOUNTS

24. DEFINED BENEFIT PENSION SCHEMES *(continued)*

24.2 Transactions Relating to Post-employment Benefits

The Partnership recognises the cost of retirement benefits in the reported cost of services when they are earned by employees, rather than when the benefits are eventually paid as pensions. However, the charge that is required to be made is based on the cash payable in the year, so the real cost of post employment/ retirement benefits is reversed out of the General Fund via the Movement in Reserves Statement. The following transactions have been made in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement and the General Fund Balance via the Movement in Reserves Statement during the year:

	2024/25 £000	2024/25 £000	2023/24 £000	2023/24 £000
Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement				
Cost of services:				
Service cost, comprising:				
Current service costs	111		75	
Past service costs	0	111	0	75
Financing and investment income:				
Net interest expense/ (income)	(30)		(32)	
Interest on the effect of the asset ceiling	30	0	31	(1)
Total post employee benefit charged to the surplus on the provision of services		111		74
Other post-employment benefits charges to the Comprehensive Income / Expenditure Statement				
Remeasurement of the net defined liability, comprising:				
Return on pension assets, excluding the amount included in the net interest expense above	71		(41)	
Actuarial gains and (losses) arising on changes in financial assumptions	(474)		(164)	
Actuarial gains and (losses) arising on changes in demographic assumptions	(4)		(48)	
Restriction in Pension Asset	466		(68)	
Other experience	(28)		369	
		31		48
Total post-employment benefits charged to the Comprehensive Income / Expenditure Statement		142		122
Movement in Reserves Statement				
Reversal of net charges made to the surplus on the provision of services for post-employment benefits in accordance with the Code.		(31)		(48)
Actual amount charged against the General Fund Balance for pensions in the year:				
Employer's contributions payable to the scheme		142		122
		142		122

The South East of Scotland Transport Partnership (SESTRAN)

NOTES TO THE ANNUAL ACCOUNTS

24. DEFINED BENEFIT PENSION SCHEMES *(continued)*

24.3 Pension Assets and Liabilities Recognised in the Balance Sheet

The amount included in the Balance Sheet arising from the Council's obligations in respect of its defined benefit plan is as follows:

	2024/25 £'000	2023/24 £'000
Fair value of employer assets	3,541	3,363
* Restriction in Pension Asset	(1,106)	(610)
Present value of funded liabilities	(2,435)	(2,753)
Net asset/(liability) arising from defined benefit obligation	0	0

24.4 Reconciliation of the Movements in the Fair Value of Scheme Assets

	2024/25 £'000	2023/24 £'000
Opening fair value of scheme assets	3,363	2,976
Interest income	165	143
Remeasurement gain / (loss):		
Other Experience	0	143
Return on plan assets, excluding the amount included in the net interest expense	(71)	41
Contributions from employer	142	122
Contributions from employees into the scheme	36	27
Benefits paid	(94)	(89)
Unfunded benefits paid	0	0
Closing fair value of scheme assets	3,541	3,363

Reconciliation of Present Value of the Scheme Liabilities

	2024/25 £'000	2023/24 £'000
Present value of funded liabilities	(2,753)	(2,329)
Present value of unfunded liabilities	0	0
Opening balance at 1st April	(2,753)	(2,329)
Current service cost	(111)	(75)
Interest cost	(135)	(111)
Contributions from employees into the scheme	(36)	(27)
Remeasurement gain / (loss):		
Change in demographic assumptions	4	48
Change in financial assumptions	474	164
Other experience	28	(512)
Past service cost		0
Benefits paid	94	89
Unfunded benefits paid	0	0
Closing balance at 31st March	(2,435)	(2,753)

* International Accounting Standard 19 imposes a limit on the maximum amount of surplus which can be recognised on the balance sheet. This adjustment reduced the value of the Pension Asset to the restricted amount for 2023/24 and 2024/25.

The South East of Scotland Transport Partnership (SESTRAN)

NOTES TO THE ANNUAL ACCOUNTS

24. DEFINED BENEFIT PENSION SCHEMES *(continued)*

24.5 Fair Value of Employer Assets

The following asset values are at bid value as required under IAS19.

	2024/25 £'000	%	2023/24 £'000	%
Equity Securities:				
Consumer *	448.7	12.7	397.2	11.8
Manufacturing *	426.3	12.0	461.9	13.7
Energy and Utilities *	198.1	5.6	182.7	5.4
Financial Institutions *	197.7	5.6	198.0	5.9
Health and Care *	223.9	6.3	217.3	6.5
Information technology *	109.5	3.1	166.7	5.0
Information technology	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.0
Other *	238.6	6.7	206.3	6.1
Sub-total Equity Securities	**1,842.9**		**1,830.1**	
Debt Securities:				
Corporate Bonds (investment grade) *	0.0	0.0	54.3	1.6
UK Government *	617.5	17.4	452.1	13.4
Other *	58.1	1.6	58.2	1.7
Sub-total Debt Securities	**675.6**		**564.6**	
Private Equity:				
All *	5.4	0.2	17.2	0.5
All	600.4	17.0	13.7	0.4
Sub-total Private Equity	**605.8**		**30.9**	
Real Estate:				
UK Property *	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
UK Property	133.2	3.8	171.9	5.1
Overseas Property *	0.0	0.0	11.4	0.3
Sub-total Real Estate	**133.2**		**183.3**	
Investment Funds and Unit Trusts:				
Equities *	6.2	0.2	0.0	0.0
Bonds *	51.6	1.5	0.0	0.0
Bonds	60.6	1.7	85.5	2.5
Commodities	0.0	0.0	37.3	1.1
Infrastructure *	0.0	0.0	7.6	0.2
Infrastructure	13.7	0.4	499.4	14.8
Other *	29.3	0.8	0.0	0.0
Sub-total Investment Funds and Unit Trusts	**161.4**		**629.8**	
Derivatives:				
Foreign Exchange *	0.7	0.0	-0.5	0.0
Sub-total Derivatives	**0.7**		**-0.5**	
Cash and Cash Equivalents				
All *	121.4	3.4	124.9	3.7
Sub-total Cash and Cash Equivalents	**121.4**		**124.9**	
Total Fair Value of Employer Assets	**3,541.0**		**3,363.1**	

Scheme assets marked with an asterisk (*) have quoted prices in active markets.

The South East of Scotland Transport Partnership (SESTRAN)

NOTES TO THE ANNUAL ACCOUNTS

24. DEFINED BENEFIT PENSION SCHEMES *(continued)*

24.6   Basis for Estimating Assets and Liabilities

Hymans Robertson, the independent actuaries to Lothian Pension Fund, have advised that the financial
assumptions used to calculate the components of the pension expense for the year ended 31 March 2025 were
those from the beginning of the year (i.e. 31 March 2024) and have not been changed during the year.

The principal assumptions used by the actuary in the calculations are:

Investment returns
- Total returns for the period from 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025   2.8%

	2024/25	2023/24
Mortality assumptions - longevity at 65 for current pensioners:		
• Males	21.9 years	22.0 years
• Females	22.8 years	22.9 years
Mortality assumptions - longevity at 65 for future pensioners:		
• Males	22.1 years	22.2 years
• Females	25.6 years	25.7 years
Pension increase rate	2.75%	2.75%
Salary increase rate (see below)	3.45%	3.45%
Discount rate	5.80%	4.85%

Estimation of defined benefit obligations is sensitive to the actuarial assumptions set out above. In order
to quantify the impact of a change in the financial assumptions used, the Actuary has calculated and
compared the value of the scheme liabilities as at 31 March 2025 on varying bases. The approach taken
by the Actuary is consistent with that adopted to derive the IAS19 figures.

The principal demographic assumption is the longevity assumption (i.e. member life expectancy). For sensitivity
purposes, the Fund's Actuary has estimated that a one year increase in life expectancy would approximately
increase the Employer's Defined Benefit Obligation by around 3-5%. In practice the actual cost of a one year
increase in life expectancy will depend on the structure of the revised assumption (i.e. if improvements to survival
rates predominantly apply at younger or older ages).

The South East of Scotland Transport Partnership (SESTRAN)

NOTES TO THE ANNUAL ACCOUNTS

24. DEFINED BENEFIT PENSION SCHEMES *(continued)*

24.7 **Analysis of projected amount to be charged to profit or loss for the period to 31 March 2026**

	Assets £000	Obligations £000	Net (liability) / asset £000	% of pay
Projected current service cost	0	(80)	(80)	(15.9%)
Past service cost including curtailments	0	0	0	
Effect of settlements	0	0	0	
Total Service Cost	0	(80)	(80)	
Interest income on plan assets	208	0	208	
Interest cost on defined benefit obligation	0	(142)	(142)	
Total Net Interest Cost	208	(142)	66	
Total included in Profit or Loss	208	(222)	(14)	

The Partnership's estimated contribution to Lothian Pension Fund for 2025/26 is £136,000.

25. NATURE AND EXTENT OF RISKS ARISING FROM FINANCIAL INSTRUMENTS

The Partnership's activities expose it to a variety of financial risks:

- Credit risk - the possibility that other parties might fail to pay amounts due to the Partnership;
- Liquidity risk - the possibility that the Partnership might not have funds available to meet its commitments to make payments;
- Re-financing risk - the possibility that the Partnership might be requiring to renew a financial instrument on maturity at disadvantageous interest rates or terms;
- Market risk - the possibility that financial loss might arise for the Partnership as a result of changes in such measures as interest rate movements;
- Price risk - the possibility that fluctuations in equity prices has a significant impact on the value of financial instruments held by the Partnership;
- Foreign exchange risk - the possibility that fluctuations in exchange rates could result in loss to the Partnership.

Treasury Management is carried out on the Partnership's behalf by the City of Edinburgh Council. The Council's overall risk management procedures focus on the unpredictability of financial markets and implementing restrictions to minimise these risks. The Council complies with the CIPFA Prudential Code and has adopted the CIPFA Treasury Management in the Public Services Code of Practice.

Credit risk
Credit risk arises from deposits with banks and financial institutions, as well as credit exposures to the Partnership's customers.
The Partnership's surplus funds not immediately required to meet expenditure commitments are held with the City of Edinburgh Council, and the Partnership receives interest on revenue balances on these monies. As the Partnership's surplus funds are held with the City of Edinburgh Council, the counterparty default exposure is effectively nil.
All Partnership invoices become due for payment on issue, and all trade debtors are overdue less than a month.
Collateral - During the reporting period the Partnership held no collateral as security.

The South East of Scotland Transport Partnership (SESTRAN)

NOTES TO THE ANNUAL ACCOUNTS

25. NATURE AND EXTENT OF RISKS ARISING FROM FINANCIAL INSTRUMENTS *(continued)*

Liquidity risk

The Partnership is required by statute to provide a balanced budget, which ensures sufficient monies are raised to cover annual expenditure. There is therefore no significant risk that it will be unable to raise finance to meet its commitments under financial instruments. The arrangement with the City of Edinburgh Council ensures sufficient liquidity is available for the Partnership's day to day cash flow needs.
The Council manages the Partnership's liquidity position through the risk management procedures above as well as through cash flow management procedures required by the Code of Practice.

Refinancing risk

The Partnership has only a small level of surplus funds and no long term debt. The refinancing risk to the Partnership relates to managing the exposure to replacing financial instruments as they mature.
As such, the Partnership has no refinancing risk on its liabilities.
The Partnership has no investments with a maturity greater than one year.

Market risk

Interest rate risk
The Partnership is exposed to interest rate movements on its investments. Movements in interest rates have a complex impact on an organisation, depending on how variable and fixed interest rates move across differing financial instrument periods.
For instance, a rise in variable and fixed interest rates would have the following effects:
- borrowings at variable rates - the interest expense charged to the Surplus or Deficit on the Provision of Services will rise;
- borrowings at fixed rates - the fair value of the liabilities borrowings will fall;
- investments at variable rates - the interest income credited to the Surplus or Deficit on the Provision of Services will rise; and
- investments at fixed rates - the fair value of the assets will fall.

The Partnership currently has no borrowings. Changes in interest receivable on variable rate investments will be posted to the Surplus or Deficit on the Provision of Services and affect the General Fund Balance.
However, all investments currently have a maturity of less than one year and the fair value has therefore been approximated by the outstanding principal.
The Partnership's surplus funds are held with the City of Edinburgh Council.
The Council's Treasury Management Team continue to monitor market and forecast interest rates during the year and adjust investment policies accordingly.

Price risk

The Partnership does not invest in equity shares.

Foreign Exchange risk

As at 31 March 2025, the Partnership had no financial assets subject to foreign exchange risk.
The Partnership has no financial liabilities denominated in foreign currencies.

26. AGENCY ARRANGEMENTS

Through a Partnership procurement framework contract, the Partnership makes payment for the supply of Bus Passenger Transport Information system ICT equipment and recovers cost from other bodies. Similarly, the Partnership also makes payments to develop and design active travel routes and recovers cost from other bodies. The Partnership has assessed the nature of these transactions to determine if it is acting as a Principal or Agent. Under the Code an Agent is acting as an intermediary, whereas a Principal is acting on its own behalf. In 2024/25, the Partnership entered into agency arrangements with Clackmannanshire Council, Fife Council, Falkirk Council and Scottish Borders Council. The total income received and expenditure incurred of £0.264m is not included in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement.

The South East of Scotland Transport Partnership (SESTRAN)

INDEPENDENT AUDITOR'S REPORT

Independent auditor's report to the members of South East of Scotland Transport Partnership and the Accounts Commission

Report on the audit of the financial statements

Opinion on financial statements

I certify that I have audited the financial statements in the annual accounts of The South East of Scotland Transport Partnership for the year ended 31 March 2025 under Part VII of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973. The financial statements comprise the Movement in Reserves Statement, Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement, Balance Sheet, Cash Flow Statement and notes to the financial statements, including material accounting policy information. The financial reporting framework that has been applied in their preparation is applicable law and UK adopted international accounting standards, as interpreted and adapted by the Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2024/25 (the 2024/25 Code).

In my opinion the accompanying financial statements:

- give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the body as at 31 March 2025 and of its income and expenditure for the year then ended;
- have been properly prepared in accordance with UK adopted international accounting standards, as interpreted and adapted by the 2024/25 Code; and
- have been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973, The Local Authority Accounts (Scotland) Regulations 2014, and the Local Government in Scotland Act 2003.

Basis of opinion

I conducted my audit in accordance with applicable law and International Standards on Auditing (UK) (ISAs (UK)), as required by the Code of Audit Practice approved by the Accounts Commission for Scotland. My responsibilities under those standards are further described in the auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements section of my report. I was appointed by the Accounts Commission on 03 April 2023. my period of appointment is five years, covering 2022/23 to 2026/27. I am independent of the body in accordance with the ethical requirements that are relevant to my audit of the financial statements in the UK including the Financial Reporting Council's Ethical Standard, and I have fulfilled my other ethical responsibilities in accordance with these requirements. Non-audit services prohibited by the Ethical Standard was not provided to the body. I believe that the audit evidence I have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for my opinion.

Conclusions relating to going concern basis of accounting

I have concluded that the use of the going concern basis of accounting in the preparation of the financial statements is appropriate.
Based on the work I have performed, I have not identified any material uncertainties relating to events or conditions that, individually or collectively, may cast significant doubt on the body's ability to continue to adopt the going concern basis of accounting for a period of at least twelve months from when the financial statements are authorised for issue.

These conclusions are not intended to, nor do they, provide assurance on the body's current or future financial sustainability. However, I report on the body's arrangements for financial sustainability in a separate Annual Audit Report available from the Audit Scotland website.

Risks of material misstatement

I report in my Annual Audit Report the most significant assessed risks of material misstatement that I identified and my judgements thereon.

The South East of Scotland Transport Partnership (SESTRAN)

INDEPENDENT AUDITOR'S REPORT (Contd.)

Responsibilities of the Treasurer and Partnership for the financial statements

As explained more fully in the Statement of Responsibilities, the Treasurer is responsible for the preparation of financial statements that give a true and fair view in accordance with the financial reporting framework, and for such internal control as the Treasurer determines is necessary to enable the preparation of financial statements that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

In preparing the financial statements, the Treasurer is responsible for assessing the body's ability to continue as a going concern, disclosing, as applicable, matters related to going concern and using the going concern basis of accounting unless there is an intention to discontinue the body's operations.

The South East of Scotland Transport Partnership is responsible for overseeing the financial reporting process.

Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements

My objectives are to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statements as a whole are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error, and to issue an auditor's report that includes my opinion. Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance, but is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with ISAs (UK) will always detect a material misstatement when it exists. Misstatements can arise from fraud or error and are considered material if, individually or in the aggregate, they could reasonably be expected to influence the decisions of users taken on the basis of these financial statements.

Irregularities, including fraud, are instances of non-compliance with laws and regulations. I design procedures in line with my responsibilities outlined above to detect material misstatements in respect of irregularities, including fraud. Procedures include:

- using my understanding of the local government sector to identify that the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973, The Local Authority Accounts (Scotland) Regulations 2014, and the Local Government in Scotland Act 2003 are significant in the context of the body;
- inquiring of the Treasurer as to other laws or regulations that may be expected to have a fundamental effect on the operations of the body;
- inquiring of the Treasurer concerning the body's policies and procedures regarding compliance with the applicable legal and regulatory framework;
- discussions among my audit team on the susceptibility of the financial statements to material misstatement, including how fraud might occur; and
- considering whether the audit team collectively has the appropriate competence and capabilities to identify or recognise non-compliance with laws and regulations.

The extent to which my procedures are capable of detecting irregularities, including fraud, is affected by the inherent difficulty in detecting irregularities, the effectiveness of the body's controls, and the nature, timing and extent of the audit procedures performed.

Irregularities that result from fraud are inherently more difficult to detect than irregularities that result from error as fraud may involve collusion, intentional omissions, misrepresentations, or the override of internal control. The capability of the audit to detect fraud and other irregularities depends on factors such as the skilfulness of the perpetrator, the frequency and extent of manipulation, the degree of collusion involved, the relative size of individual amounts manipulated, and the seniority of those individuals involved.

A further description of the auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements is located on the Financial Reporting Council's website www.frc.org.uk/auditorsresponsibilities. This description forms part of my auditor's report.

Reporting on other requirements

Opinion prescribed by the Accounts Commission on the audited part of the Remuneration Report

I have audited the parts of the Remuneration Report described as audited. In my opinion, the audited parts of the Remuneration Report have been properly prepared in accordance with The Local Authority Accounts (Scotland) Regulations 2014.

The South East of Scotland Transport Partnership (SESTRAN)

INDEPENDENT AUDITOR'S REPORT (Contd.)

Other information

The Treasurer is responsible for the other information in the annual accounts. The other information comprises the Management Commentary, Annual Governance Statement, Statement of Responsibilities for the Annual Accounts and the unaudited part of the Remuneration Report.

My responsibility is to read all the other information and, in doing so, consider whether the other information is materially inconsistent with the financial statements or my knowledge obtained in the course of the audit or otherwise appears to be materially misstated. If I identify such material inconsistencies or apparent material misstatements, I am required to determine whether this gives rise to a material misstatement in the financial statements themselves. If, based on the work I have performed, I conclude that there is a material misstatement of this other information, I am required to report that fact. I have nothing to report in this regard.

My opinion on the financial statements does not cover the other information and I do not express any form of assurance conclusion thereon except on the Management Commentary and Annual Governance Statement to the extent explicitly stated in the following opinions prescribed by the Accounts Commission.

Opinions prescribed by the Accounts Commission on the Management Commentary and Annual Governance Statement

In my opinion, based on the work undertaken in the course of the audit:

- the information given in the Management Commentary for the financial year for which the financial statements are prepared is consistent with the financial statements and that report has been prepared in accordance with statutory guidance issued under the Local Government in Scotland Act 2003; and

- the information given in the Annual Governance Statement for the financial year for which the financial statements are prepared is consistent with the financial statements and that report has been prepared in accordance with the Delivering Good Governance in Local Government: Framework (2016).

Matters on which I am required to report by exception

I am required by the Accounts Commission to report to you if, in my opinion:
- adequate accounting records have not been kept; or
- the financial statements and the audited part of the Remuneration Report are not in agreement with the accounting records; or
- I have not received all the information and explanations I require for my audit.

I have nothing to report in respect of these matters.

Conclusions on wider scope responsibilities

In addition to my responsibilities for the annual accounts, my conclusions on the wider scope responsibilities specified in the Code of Audit Practice, including those in respect of Best Value, are set out in my Annual Audit Report.

Use of my report

This report is made solely to the parties to whom it is addressed in accordance with Part VII of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 and for no other purpose. In accordance with paragraph 108 of the Code of Audit Practice, I do not undertake to have responsibilities to members or officers, in their individual capacities, or to third parties.

Christopher Gardner FCPFA
Audit Scotland
4th Floor, The Athenaeum Building
8 Nelson Mandela Place
Glasgow
G1 2BT

Date:

FINANCE OFFICER'S REPORT

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 This report presents the first update on the financial performance of the Partnership's Core and Projects budgets for 2025/26, in accordance with the Financial Regulations of the Partnership. This report presents an analysis of financial performance to the end of July 2025.

1.2 The Partnership's Core and Projects budgets for 2025/26 were approved by the Partnership on 14th March 2025.

2. CORE BUDGET

2.1 The Core budget provides for the day-to-day running costs of the Partnership and includes employee costs, premises costs and supplies and services. The approved Core budget is £852,000. Details of the Core budget are provided in Appendix 1.

2.2 Cumulative expenditure for the four months to 31st July 2025 was £286,000. This is within the Core budget resources available for the period.

2.3 Estimates have been updated to reflect current expenditure commitments. The forecast includes a cost of £31,000 for the local government pay award of 4%.

2.4 It is projected that net expenditure for the year will be £3,000 less than budget. For 2025/26, the cost of £49,000 to host the Novus FX service will be met by a recharge to the Projects budget.

2.5 The Partnership is proposing an ICT technology refresh for 2025/26, with the cost of £20,000 to be met from a drawdown from the unallocated General Fund Reserve.

Projects Budget

2.6 The approved Projects budget is detailed in Appendix 2.

2.7 Cumulative Projects expenditure for the year to date is £147,000. This is within the Projects budget resources available.

2.8 At 31st July April 2025, the Partnership has an audited earmarked balance of £348,000 from project budgets carried forward from 2024/25. The allocation of Projects budget carried forward from 2024/25 is shown in column 2 of Appendix 2.

2.9 At 1st April 2025, the Partnership has an audited General Reserve of £221,000. In 2025/26, the Partnership is proposing to drawdown £119,000 from the unallocated General Fund Reserve to fund three new projects. The projects are:
- Data Strategy - £50,000,
- Multi Modal Interchanges - £51,000

- SEStran Conference 2025 - £18,000.

These projects are shown in column 3 of Appendix 2.

2.10 Following confirmation of the 2024/25 outturn, a review and re-alignment has been undertaken of the Projects budget to reflect current and planned activity. The re-alignment is shown in column 5 of Appendix 2.

2.11 It is forecast that expenditure on projects in 2025/26 will be within budget. The forecast is based on a full spend of project budgets carried forward from 2024/25.

2.12 Expenditure on both the core and projects budgets will be subject of ongoing review for the remainder of 2025/26. The Partnership's Reserves Policy will be applied when reviewing the year-end outturn.

Cash Flow

2.13 The Partnership maintains its bank account as part of the City of Edinburgh Council's group of bank accounts. Cash balances are managed by the Council and are offset by expenditure incurred by the City of Edinburgh Council on behalf of the Partnership.

An update of month-end balances is shown in the following table:

Date	Balance due to SEStran(+ve) /due by SEStran (-ve)
	£
30 April 2025	+ 1,813,420
31 May 2025	+ 1,183,977
30 June 2025	+ 278,201
31 July 2025	+ 1,390,623

2.14 Interest is charged/paid on the monthly indebtedness between the Council and the Partnership. Interest will be calculated in March 2026.

2.15 The positive cash balance at 31st July 2025 is attributable to funding received from Scottish Government grants – principally the People and Place programme grant.

Reserves

2.16 The Board's Reserves Policy recommends establishment of an unallocated General Fund Reserve based on a minimum value of 5% (£43,000) of the Partnership's core revenue budget. At 1st April 2025, the Partnership has an unallocated General Fund Reserve of £221,000 - 25% of the core budget.

2.17 It is proposed for the following funding drawdowns to be made from the Partnership's unallocated General Fund Reserve in 2025/26:
- ICT Technology Refresh £20,000 (paragraph 2.5 refers)
- Data Strategy £50,000 (paragraph 2.9 refers)

- Multi Modal Interchanges £51,000 (paragraph 2.9 refers)
- SEStran conference £18,000 (paragraph 2.9 refers).

2.18 Based on the proposed total drawdown of £139,000 during 2025/26, the Partnership's unallocated General Fund Reserve will be reduced to £82,000, which is 9% of the core revenue budget.

2.19 An update of Financial Risks for 2025/26 is included at Appendix 3.

3   RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the Partnership:

3.1 notes the forecast underspend on the Core revenue budget of £3,000.

3.2 approves the allocation of £20,000 from the General Fund Reserve for the proposed ICT technology refresh in 2025/26.

3.3 approves the allocation of £119,000 from the General Fund Reserve for the following projects:
- Data Strategy £50,000
- Multi Modal Interchanges £51,000
- SEStran conference £18,000.

3.4 approves the re-alignment of the 2025/26 Projects budget to reflect planned activity.

Richard Lloyd-Bithell
Treasurer
19 September 2025

Appendix   Appendix 1 – Core Budget Statement at 31st July 2025
Appendix 2 – Projects Budget as at 31st July 2025
Appendix 3 – Financial Risks
Contact   iain.shaw@edinburgh.gov.uk

Policy Implications	There are no policy implications arising as a result of this report.
Financial Implications	There are no financial implications arising as a result of this report.
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.

Core Budget 2025/26 – as at 31st July 2025   **Appendix 1**

	Annual Budget £'000	Period Budget £'000	Period Actual £'000	Annual Forecast £'000	Forecast Variance £'000
Employee Costs					
Salaries	564	188	184	575	10
National Insurance	76	25	24	76	0
Pension Fund	151	50	48	146	(4)
Project Recharges	(149)	0	0	(100)	49
Training & Conferences	8	3	3	8	0
Interviews & Advertising	2	1	0	1	(1)
	652	**267**	**259**	**706**	**54**
Premises Costs					
Office Accommodation	**21**	**5**	**0**	**21**	**0**
Transport					
Staff Travel	**5**	**2**	**1**	**5**	**0**
Supplies and Services					
Communications & Computing	48	17	21	40	(8)
Hosted Service - Novus FX	45	45	0	(4)	(49)
Printing, Stationery & General Office Supplies	7	2	2	7	0
Insurance	7	0	0	7	0
Equipment, Furniture & Materials, Miscellaneous	4	1	2	5	1
	111	**65**	**25**	**55**	**(56)**
Support Services					
Finance	31	0	0	31	0
Legal Services / HR	7	0	1	7	0
	38	**0**	**1**	**38**	**0**
Corporate & Democratic					
Clerks Fees	12	0	0	12	0
External Audit Fees	12	0	0	12	0
Members Allowances and Expenses	1	0	0	0	(1)
	25	**0**	**0**	**24**	**(1)**
Total Expenditure	**852**	**339**	**286**	**849**	**(3)**
Funding:					
Scottish Government Grant	(662)	(341)	(341)	(662)	0
Council Requisitions	(190)	0	0	(190)	0
Total Funding	**(852)**	**(341)**	**(341)**	**(852)**	**0**
Net Expenditure/ (Income)	**0**	**(2)**	**(55)**	**(3)**	**(3)**

Projects Budget 2025/26 - as at 31st July 2025 **Appendix 2**

	Approved Budget	Add: Project carry forward from 2024/25	Add: Proposed General Reserve Drawdown	Less: Income /Other Grant	Budget Realignment	Net Budget	Annual Forecast	Forecast Variance
Column	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Projects Approved by Partnership Board 14th March 2025								
Sustainable Travel	20	25		(20)	(15)	10	10	0
RTPI – System Maintenance	25	8		(15)	(8)	10	10	0
RTS Delivery Plan	18	20			17	55	55	0
Rail Strategy	0	13				13	13	0
Equalities Access to Healthcare	10	(2)			52	60	60	0
Regional Bike Share	10	26			(11)	25	25	0
Thistle Assistance	30	6		(24)	(4)	8	8	0
Transport Appraisal	0	5			(5)	0	0	0
Active Travel Network	5	84		(5)		84	84	0
Projects Consultancy	22	3			(5)	20	20	0
Mobility as a Service	0	34			(33)	1	1	0
Bus Strategy Development	40	122		(40)	(51)	71	71	0
Regional EV Infrastructure	5	(6)			1	0	0	0
Freight Strategy	20	10		(20)	40	50	50	0
People & Places	6,369			(6,369)		0	0	0
New Projects subject to Partnership Board approval								
Data Strategy	0		50			50	50	0
Multi Modal Interchanges	0		51			51	51	0
Conference SEStran 2025	0		18		22	40	40	0
Total	**6,574**	**348**	**119**	**(6,493)**	**0**	**548**	**548**	**0**

Risk Description	Mitigation and Controls
Pay award The revenue budget made provision for a pay award of up to 3% in 2025/26. The Local Government pay award of 4% represents an increase on the budget provision.	The financial impact of the Local Government pay award of 4% is included in the forecast.
Inflation There is a risk that the indicative budget does not adequately cover price inflation and increasing demand for services.	Ongoing monitoring and review of all costs and forecasts during 2025/26.
Delays in payment of grant by external funding bodies Resulting in additional short-term borrowing costs.	Grant claims submitted timeously and in line with conditions of grant award.
Pension Fund Contributions A deficit on the staff pension fund could lead to increases in the employer's pension contribution.	Following Lothian Pension Fund's Triennial Actuarial Review in 2023, Partnership employer pension fund contribution rates are now confirmed at 26.8% until 31 March 2027.
Funding Reductions Reduction in funding from Scottish Government and/or council requisitions. There is a risk that current levels of staffing cannot be maintained due to funding constraints and that the Partnership will incur staff release costs.	Scottish Government grant and Council contributions are confirmed for 2025/26. Recruitment control and additional sources of external funding for activities aligned to the Partnership's objectives to supplement resources.

Partnership Director's Update

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide the Partnership Board with brief updates on a number of matters that are not covered in separate papers or presentations but which will be of interest to Board Members.

1.2 This update includes the following sections:
2: Flat Bus Fare Pilot
3. COSLA White Paper on Population Balance
4. Scottish Government Consultation on Regional Economic Partnerships
5: Council Requisitions and Financial Planning Procedure
6: Potential Changes to the Business Plan for 2025/26

2. FLAT BUS FARE PILOT

2.1 In 2024, Transport Scotland published a 'Fair Fares Review' designed "to make recommendations to realise the Scottish Government's vision for a future for public transport which is more accessible, available and affordable, with the costs of transport shared more evenly across government, business and society, in line with the First Minister's Policy Prospectus and in support of the National Transport Strategy's vision that "we will have a sustainable, inclusive, safe and accessible transport system, helping deliver a healthier, fairer and more prosperous Scotland for communities, businesses and visitors".

2.2 As reported to the last meeting of the Board, the review committed to developing a proposal for a bus flat fares pilot for an area-based scheme to provide flat fares on bus travel, or reduced fares on zonal integrated travel for consideration in future budgets.

2.3 There has been no movement since the last Board meeting, but SEStran has been asked to draft a case for the Edinburgh and South East Scotland City-Region to be considered for the pilot.

2.4 A paper will be presented to the CRD Directors' meeting on 2 October 2025, along with a strong recommendation that it should be submitted by SEStran, on behalf of the SEStran region, rather than the CRD.

3. COSLA WHITE PAPER ON POPULATION BALANCE

3.1 On 11 August 2025, COSLA circulated a draft White Paper on Population Balance to its member authorities (see Appendix 1). This White Paper will sit under the COSLA Manifesto which is currently being developed with the intent of influencing political parties ahead of the elections next year.

3.2 The paper addresses growing concerns in Local Government that the long-standing issue of tackling population challenges is becoming an increasingly critical issue. This is affecting local authorities that are experiencing significant population growth and those facing critical depopulation, as well as many that are facing both challenges within their council areas.

3.3 The paper is one of a series of white papers which support the priorities set out in the 2026 COSLA Manifesto. The purpose of these white papers is to provide a deep dive into complex current and emerging challenges that need attention, with proposed policy solutions.

3.4 The white paper has been developed with support from the Improvement Service and in consultation with the Society of Local Authority Chief Executives and Senior Managers (SOLACE), the Scottish Local Authorities' Economic Development (SLAED) Group, the Scottish Collaboration of Transport Specialists (SCOTS)/Regional Transport Partnerships (RTPs), the Association of Local Authority Chief Housing Officers (ALACHO) and the COSLA/Scottish Government Population Roundtable, EAG on Migration and Population, and Dr. D. Vampa, University of Edinburgh.

3.5 SEStran was not consulted as part of the above exercise.

3.6 The updated document, based on feedback received, was presented to the Population Board on 10 September, still in draft form, with the intention of being submitted to Leaders for sign off on 26 September.

3.7 As part of the consultation on the white paper, COSLA were keen to hear about:
- Any missing challenges
- Any missing asks/solutions
- Any clarifications or content that doesn't accurately reflect your experience/is unhelpful for the population balance agenda
- Additional case studies that you would like us to consider adding – if so, please share a paragraph with us that we can include
- Any further comments

3.8 Despite not being a member of COSLA, SEStran submitted a brief response, via the ESESCRD programme management office, restricted to the transport section of the white paper.

3.9 The SEStran response noted that the white paper restates a number of already accepted principles, all of which SEStran would support.

3.10 It's worth noting that Transport Scotland's Sustainable Transport Hierarchy (below) guided development of the Regional Transport Strategy (RTS). Prioritisation of the RTS Delivery Plan (RTSDP), which is currently being undertaken, is heavily based on this hierarchy, although local circumstances are taken into account in this process.

Prioritising Sustainable Transport

Walking and wheeling

Cycling

Public transport

Taxis & shared transport

Private car
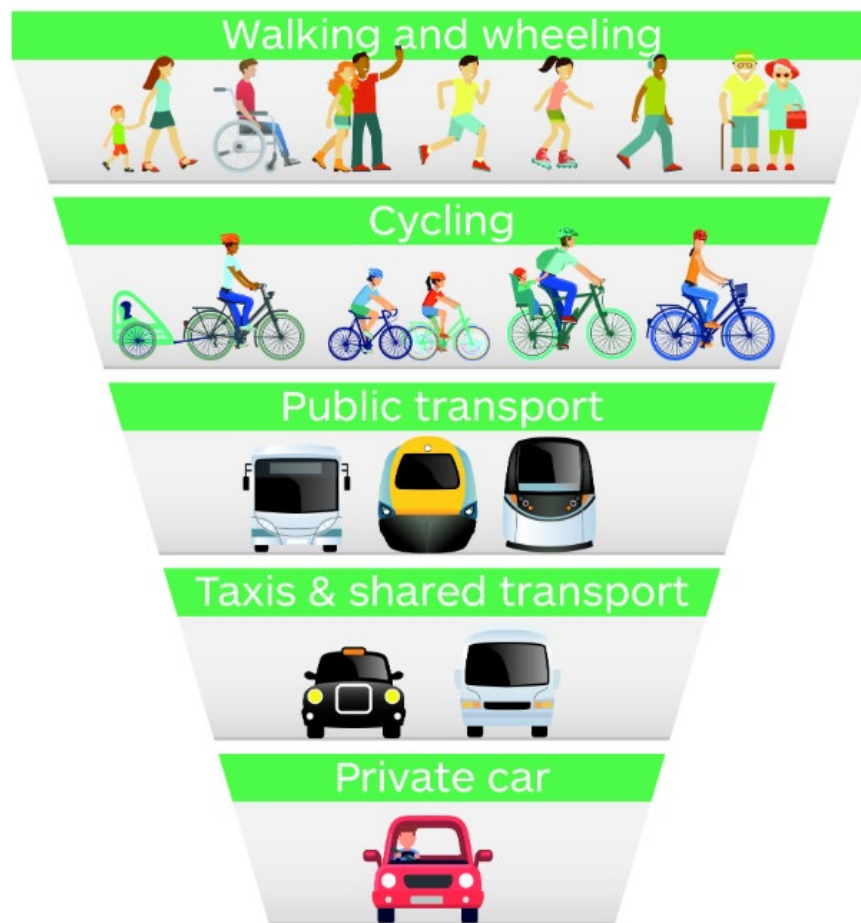
3.11 In reassessing the viability of its commitment to reduce car usage by 20% by 2030, Transport Scotland recognised that its originally proposed approach would not work as well in rural areas as it would in built up areas.

3.12 TS accepted that active and sustainable travel (including public transport), would not meet the principles of the just transition because it does not support people in rural areas to connect with the healthcare, employment, education or leisure opportunities open to people in urban and semi-urban areas, unless they own cars.

3.13 As a result, the redrafted plan suggested that car use is more acceptable in rural areas, provided there is a switch to zero emission vehicles. The redraft was rejected by COSLA mainly because of its over-reliance on demand management (e.g. road user charging) as opposed to improving alternatives to the car including public transport.

3.14 This shows that the COSLA position on sustainable transport has been consistent across the 20% reduction proposal and the white paper i.e. the government needs to increase investment in public transport in rural areas, irrespective of other factors.

3.15 SEStran is working on a number of fronts (often jointly with the ESESCRD team) to deliver the priorities in the RTS, many of which will directly address the unique transport challenges experienced in this region.

3.16 The development of a Regional Bus Strategy, which will be published in December. This has examined the challenges being experienced in rural areas, and will propose a number of improvements. Transport Scotland has still not published regulations or guidance for key parts of the Transport (Scotland) Act 2019, so it's still too early to know if the Strategy will have real teeth. Publication of both of these documents must be a priority for Transport Scotland.

3.17 The establishment of Project SEStransit (working title at this point). This project will build on the mass transit theme of the RTSDP, and will include a refresh of STPR2 recommendation 12 (a mass transit system for the south east of Scotland), which will seek to improve the connectivity of people across the region in the quickest, most cost-efficient manner. A separate paper on this project will be submitted to this meeting of the Partnership Board.

3.18 It should be noted that the RTPs have agreed to work together with COSLA in future, subject to COSLA identifying sufficient resources, in order to ensure that a number of other key themes are included in COSLA work, including Transport to Health and Freight.

4. SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT CONSULTATION ON REGIONAL ECONOMIC PARTNERSHIPS

4.1 The Scottish Government published a commitment in the most recent Programme for Government that said they would: "Work with regional and local partners to identify how best to formally devolve further elements of decision-making and delivery to Regional Economic Partnerships (REPs), and present options before the end of this Parliament."

4.2 As part of this exercise, the SG Directorate for Economic Development has been speaking to a range of stakeholders to identify and consider potential routes forward. These stakeholders have included all Regional Transport Partnerships.

4.3 SEStran met the SG on 24 July 2025. The actual format of the meeting was a relatively unstructured discussion which allowed full exploration of the questions listed in the rough guide for the discussions which was sent by SG ahead of the meeting and is attached as Appendix 2.

4.4 In summary, the SG was looking for improvements which could ideally be implemented before the next election, which is anticipated to take place in May 2026. In real terms this rules out any changes that require new or amended legislation.

4.5 The SEStran region includes 4 Regional Economic Partnerships:
- The Edinburgh and South East Scotland City-Region (ESESCRD)
- The Forth Valley REP
- South of Scotland Enterprise (SOSE)
- Tay Cities Growth Deal

SEStran noted that not all local authorities in the SEStran region are included in the Edinburgh and South East Scotland City Region. Clackmannanshire and Falkirk Councils are in the SEStran region but in the Forth Valley Regional Economic Partnership along with Stirling Council. Scottish Borders is in both the ESESCRD and SOSE areas.

4.6   SEStran and the ESESCRD agreed a Concordat in 2023. This includes a 'Shared Vision for Integrated Economic, Land-Use and Transport Planning and Provision', and a commitment to complementary working'.

4.7   SEStran also works closely with SOSE and is a member of the SOSE Strategic Action Group for Transport.

4.8   SEStran expressed support for the devolution of increased powers to a regional level, and for the regional body to have 'oversight' of economic development, planning and transport planning.

4.9   SEStran holds the view that the importance of transport is often underestimated, and notes that there are only two transport projects (Sheriffhall Roundabout on the A720 and the West Edinburgh Transport Improvement Plan) included in the current ESESCRD despite its bold economic ambitions (compare this with the much greater transport ambition in the Glasgow City Region Deal).

4.10   SEStran also notes the absence of regional planning authorities and the lack Regional Spatial Strategies, and is of the view that REPs could be strengthened by addressing this anomaly. It is also crucial that local authorities can work together to extract. transport contributions from developers where developments in one LA will have major impacts on an adjoining LA

4.11   SEStran noted that there are advantages and disadvantages of Regional Economic Partnerships becoming statutory organisations, Councils already have powers to work jointly and to delegate powers and the disbursement of funds to Joint Committees set up for that purpose.

4.12   Although creating statutory REPs would provide additional clarity, it is SEStran's view that changes to governance and budgets, rather than legislative changes, are key to delivering the transport system required to underpin economic growth of the south east of Scotland. This view was welcomed by SG.

4.13   It should be noted that work has recently commenced on Project SEStransit (working title only at this point), which has been described by Transport Scotland as the east coast's version of 'Clyde Metro' or 'Aberdeen Rapid Transit'. It is a synthesis of the Regional Transport Strategy Delivery Plan and STPR2 Recommendation 12 (a mass transit system for Edinburgh and south east Scotland). This project will deliver the transport infrastructure and network required to support and drive the region's economic development. SEStransit will include Clackmannanshire and Falkirk Councils.

4.14   Communication lines are still open with SG and, if the Partnership Board would like to provide them with additional feedback or clarification of any of the above, this can be easily arranged.

5.   COUNCIL REQUISITIONS AND FINANCIAL PLANNING PROCEDURE

5.1   At its last meeting, the Partnership Board was informed that papers on both of the above topics would be presented at this meeting.

5.2   Due to the focus on closing out the external audit and confirming last year's accounts, this has not been possible and it is now intended to bring both papers to the December meeting of the Board.

5.3   In the meantime, the Stakeholder Liaison Group and the Performance and Audit Committee have both been briefed on the reasons for seeking an increase in Council Requisitions and informed that the Board will be asked to approve such an increase at a later date.

5.4   It is therefore intended that the Partnership Director will write to all partner Councils asking them to plan for an increase subject to Board approval of the increase.

6.   POTENTIAL CHANGES TO THE BUSINESS PLAN FOR 2025/26

6.1   The emergence of Project SEStransit (see separate report) is likely to generate significant additional workload for the SEStran team. As a result, delivery plans and budget allocation for the current year are being reviewed and will be reported to the next meeting of PaSDOS.

7.   RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1   The Partnership Board is asked to note the contents of this report.

Brian Butler
Partnership Director
16 September 2025

Appendix 1: COSLA Draft White Paper – Population Balance Position
Appendix 2: Stakeholder Engagement Paper – Regional Economic Partnership PfG

Policy Implications	None
Financial Implications	None
Equalities Implications	None
Climate Change Implications	None

FOREWORD

Include:

- This report is one of a series of white papers, which support the priorities set out in the 2026 COSLA Manifesto. The purpose of these white papers is to provide a deep dive into complex current and emerging challenges that need attention, with proposed policy solutions.
- This white paper has been developed with support from the Improvement Service and in consultation with the Society of Local Authority Chief Executives and Senior Managers (SOLACE), the Scottish Local Authorities' Economic Development (SLAED) Group, the Scottish Collaboration of Transport Specialists (SCOTS)/Regional Transport Partnerships (RTPs), the Association of Local Authority Chief Housing Officers (ALACHO) and the COSLA/Scottish Government Population Roundtable.
- Acknowledge academics too - EAG on Migration and Population, Dr. D. Vampa, University of Edinburgh

INTRODUCTION

There are growing concerns in Local Government that the long-standing issue of tackling population challenges is becoming an increasingly critical issue. This is affecting local authorities that are experiencing significant population growth and those facing critical depopulation, as well as many that are facing both challenges within their council areas.

The role of local authorities is crucial to achieving a more balanced population and a place-based approach is essential to effectively addressing these challenges. Local authorities are keenly aware of the social and economic impacts on areas in vital need of repopulation and areas that are 'overheating' due to rapid population growth. They are best placed to take a holistic view of the challenges and assess what policy solutions can and cannot work at local level. However, this work must also be undertaken in collaboration with both Scottish Government and UK Government, and will require their support and resources, to enable councils to deliver the change that is required.

This is why the Population Roundtable was established in November 2020, to ensure that a Local Government voice was included during the development of the Scottish Government Population Strategy 'A Scotland for the future: opportunities and challenges of Scotland's changing population'. The Roundtable is jointly hosted by COSLA and Scottish Government and membership consists of senior officers from local authorities. In March 2021, council Leaders agreed that the Population Roundtable should continue to meet to ensure both Scottish Government and Local Government remain committed to taking the population programme work forward collaboratively. The Roundtable was consulted with during the development of the Scottish Government Action Plan to Address Depopulation, which was published in February 2024 and consists of 83 actions.

The aim of achieving a more balanced population continues to be a strategic priority for COSLA and local authorities, and was agreed by COSLA Community Wellbeing Board in February 2025.

It is imperative that the population programme remains a priority for the new Scottish Government administration following the 2026 election.

Population sits under the 'Communities, place and local democracy' priority area in the COSLA 2026 manifesto. It states that:

> Public.services.work.best.when.they.are.accountable.and.place_based.and.when. decisions.are.taken.with.and.as.close.to.communities.as.possible¡ .A.new.Scottish. Government.should.support.us.to.avoid.centralisation.of.decision_making.and.to.ensure. no.community.is.left.behind¡ .Decisions.and.resources.must.be.devolved.closest.to. those.they.affect.to.counter.centralisation.of.economy.and.population

As part of this work, Members of the Population Roundtable requested that we work towards a set of clear, unified and well-informed Local Government 'asks' relating to achieving better population balance. Given the scale and complexity of the population landscape, roundtable members agreed that we should focus on 3 key priority areas in the first instance. These are: economy and jobs, housing, and transport. There was broad agreement by roundtable members that there is a crucial nexus around these policy areas.

This paper will focus on some of the economic, housing and transport challenges faced by those councils experiencing rapid population increases and those in need of critical repopulation. It will explore potential policy solutions that would contribute towards improving population balance and preventing the extremes of these population challenges.

Definition of population balance

The term 'population balance' can be used in a variety of contexts, e.g. the age-dependency ratio of the population or the spatial spread of the population. This paper will draw on the definition of population balance set out in the Scottish Government Population Strategy and will focus on the geographical spread of population. This means addressing the social and economic challenges of either extreme depopulation or rapid population growth. Whilst recognising that it can be difficult to disentangle age and geographical balance in some policy areas.

ECONOMY & JOBS

TACKLING THE BIGGEST CHALLENGES (key areas that require addressing)

Scotland's changing population is having, and will have, a major impact on jobs and the economy. With both a shrinking and ageing working age population, skills and labour shortages are becoming an increasing concern, and this is likely to become more pronounced in the future. While these changes will be felt across the country, we are already seeing a number of particular experiences at a local level. Rural councils are acutely aware of the rapid decline in their populations and the impacts on their workforce and are considering how to use their local economies to help combat these trends. More urban councils, predominantly on the east coast, are also managing the challenges of an ageing workforce but balancing the economic benefits of population growth with the pressures this creates on services, housing and infrastructure.

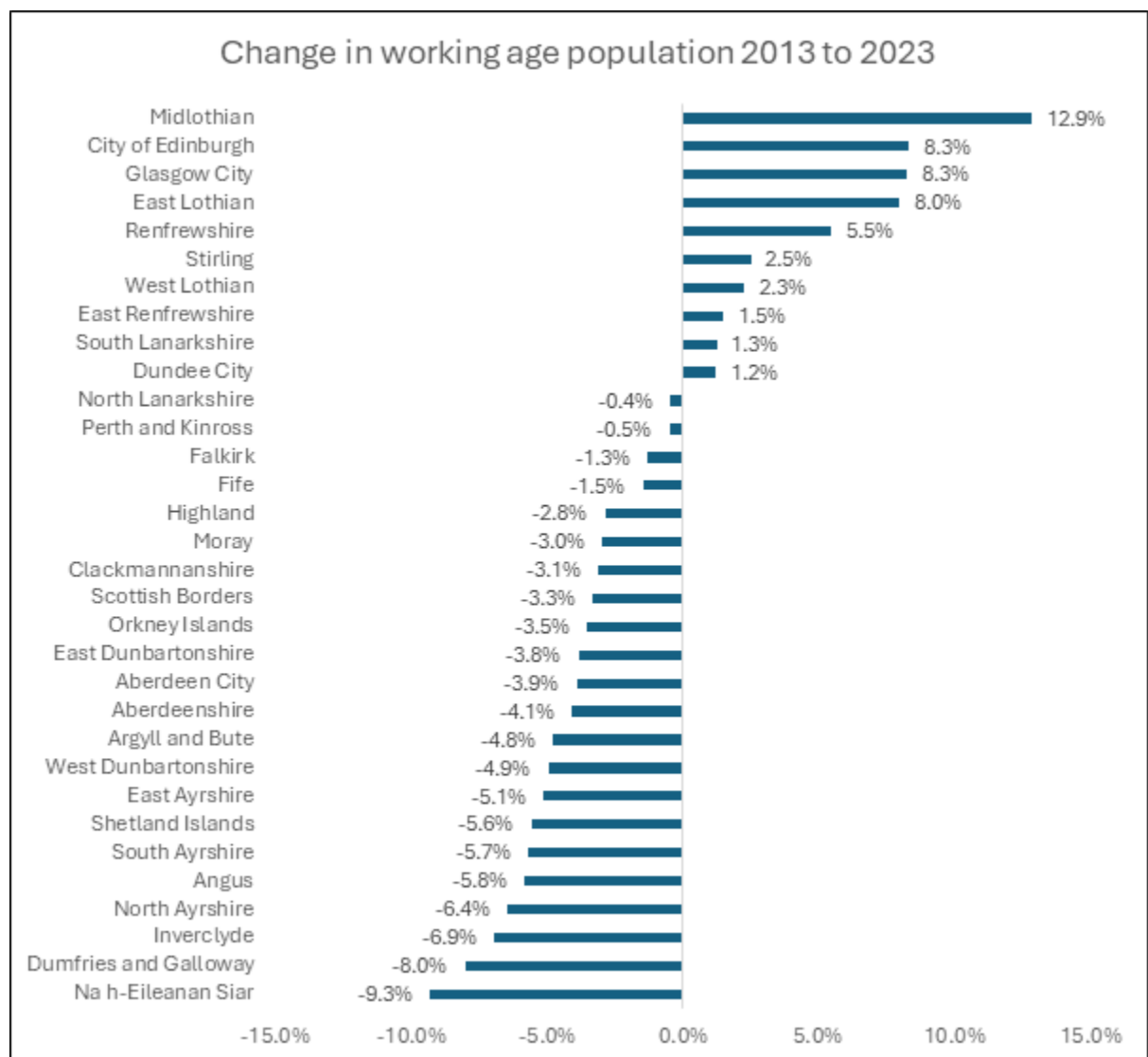Some of the key challenges local authorities face in relation to the economy and population balance include:

- Scotland''s.working.age.population.is.shrinking.and.ageing?and.there.is.increasing. disparity.across.Scotland.

Scotland's population is changing. Population growth is projected to slow nationally, and all council areas are experiencing ageing within their populations. Experiences differ across the country. Some councils, predominantly rural areas and parts of the west, are facing rapid population decline, whilst others, especially in the east-central belt, are experiencing "overheating" with infrastructure struggling to maintain pace with the increasing population. Some councils are experiencing a mix of both decline and growth across their area.

Between 2011 and 2022, Scotland's overall population has increased by 141,200 (2.7%), but this is unevenly spread. Midlothian saw the largest population increase of 16.1%, followed by East Lothian, City of Edinburgh and West Lothian – these increases were primarily driven by inward migration from the rest of Scotland, the UK and overseas. Overall, population decreases were concentrated in the west and southwest - Na h-Eileanan Siar saw the biggest decrease, down 5.5 %, followed by Argyll and Bute, Scottish Borders, Dumfries and Galloway and Inverclyde. [i]

Scotland's estimated inflow into the workforce has been declining and from 2026 there is a projected outflow from the workforce, with a greater number of people of working age likely to be leaving compared with entering. Again, there is growing disparity across Scotland (see Figure 1).

3

Figure 1: Percentage change in working age population across Scottish local authorities, 2013-2023

Change in working age population 2013 to 2023

| Local Authority	Change
Midlothian	12.9%
City of Edinburgh	8.3%
Glasgow City	8.3%
East Lothian	8.0%
Renfrewshire	5.5%
Stirling	2.5%
West Lothian	2.3%
East Renfrewshire	1.5%
South Lanarkshire	1.3%
Dundee City	1.2%
North Lanarkshire	-0.4%
Perth and Kinross	-0.5%
Falkirk	-1.3%
Fife	-1.5%
Highland	-2.8%
Moray	-3.0%
Clackmannanshire	-3.1%
Scottish Borders	-3.3%
Orkney Islands	-3.5%
East Dunbartonshire	-3.8%
Aberdeen City	-3.9%
Aberdeenshire	-4.1%
Argyll and Bute	-4.8%
West Dunbartonshire	-4.9%
East Ayrshire	-5.1%
Shetland Islands	-5.6%
South Ayrshire	-5.7%
Angus	-5.8%
North Ayrshire	-6.4%
Inverclyde	-6.9%
Dumfries and Galloway	-8.0%
Na h-Eileanan Siar	-9.3%

Source: IS Policy Briefing (details tbc)

These changes in population size and structure will inevitably impact Scotland's workforce. This is also being experienced differently across Scotland, resulting in a concentration of working age population in some areas and a sustained reduction in others.

- Achieving.population.balance.in.an.increasingly.centralised.Scottish.economy.

  There has been an increasing centralisation of the economy and people in Scotland, and this is forecast to continue. Edinburgh has become more productive per person and more populous, and as a result, its contribution to Scotland's total economic output – measured as a share of Scottish Gross Value Added (GVA) – has risen steadily over the past 25 years. In 1998, Edinburgh accounted for less than one-sixth of Scotland's total GVA. If the trend observed over the past 25 years continues at a similar pace, it could represent more than one-fifth by 2050. The wider East-Central Scotland region, which also includes Edinburgh's surrounding areas, is following a similar trajectory.[ii]

4

Figure 2 brings together the two key trends – rising productivity and population growth – to show how they translate into changes in the overall economic weight of different areas within the national economy.
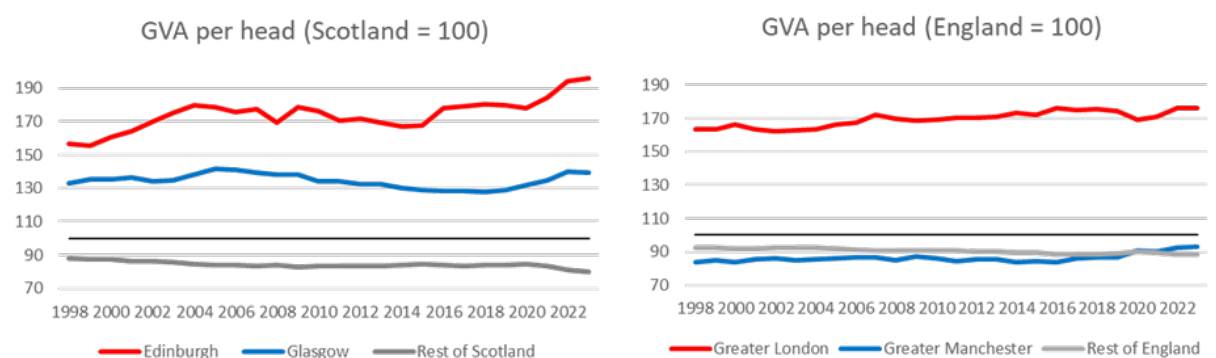
Figure 2
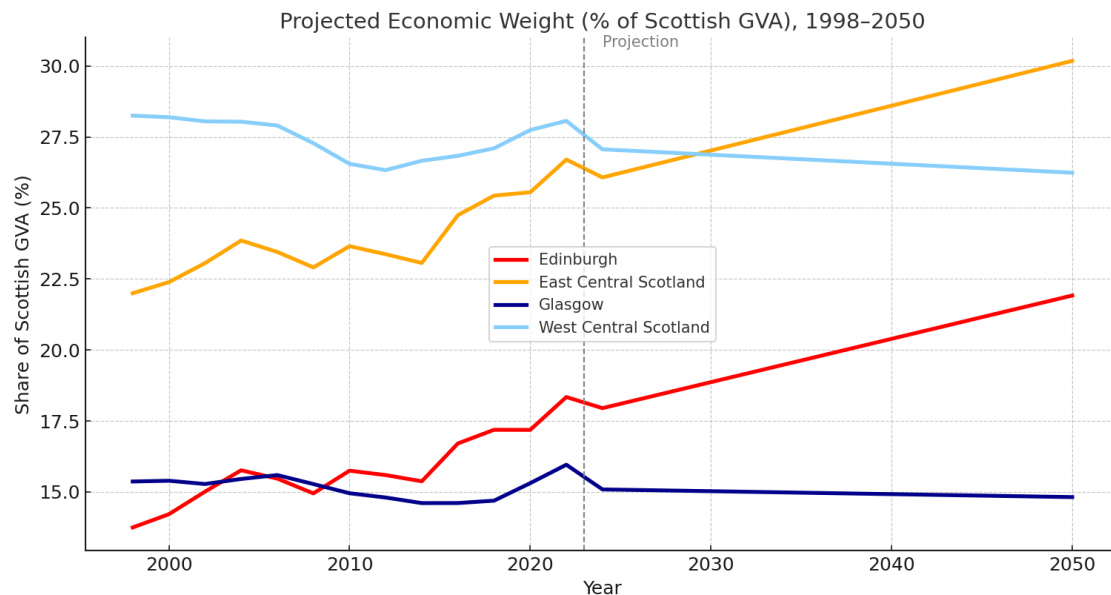
Projected Economic Weight (% of Scottish GVA), 1998–2050

Source: D. Vampa (July 2025) extrapolated using ONS data Regional gross value added (balanced) per head and income components - Office for National Statistics

The shift in the economic weight toward Edinburgh has been sharper and more dramatic than the shift toward London (see Figure 3 below).

Figure 3

Source: D. Vampa (July 2025) extrapolated using ONS data Regional gross value added (balanced) per head and income components - Office for National Statistics

Scotland's economic centre of gravity is shifting eastward. This trend has major implications for regional development, infrastructure investment, and long-term policymaking. The East-Central Belt is growing, while the West-Central Belt has remained relatively stable. The rest of Scotland beyond the Central Belt, with slower population growth and lower productivity has been steadily losing economic ground. If the patterns of

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the past 25 years continue, this will have significant implications for East-Central Belt councils, with infrastructure struggling to maintain pace with increasing population, while much of the rest of Scotland, primarily in the west and rural areas, at risk of being increasingly left behind.[iii]

- Workforce.challenges

One of the challenges that local authorities are facing is having insufficient working-age population to support the aging population. This is further compounded by population balance issues such as depopulation, or fast-growing retired populations.

Scotland has an increasingly inactive workforce. ONS data shows that 34% of the Scottish working-age population who were economically inactive were inactive due to being long-term sick or disabled[iv]. The Improvement Service report also points to a 12% increase between 2023 and 2024 in the number of 16–64-year-olds who were inactive due to retirement.

According to the Improvement Service report, "Analysis of employment numbers under different migration and employment rate scenarios suggests that improving economic inactivity rates may have greater potential to improve the overall level of employment than migration alone".

Additionally, businesses are reporting difficulties recruiting, particularly in social care, transport and storage, and administration and support services industries. 16.6% of the population who are economically inactive want to work.

Apprenticeships can provide training and education opportunities across Scottish local authority areas that aren't restricted by where Universities are. Evidence suggests that the majority of Modern Apprentices and Graduate Apprentices in the green industry, for example, remain in the sector, remain in Scotland and often remain with the same employer after completion of apprenticeships.

- Scotland"s.population.is.driven.by.migration.

Population growth in Scotland is driven by migration and is projected to continue increasing. In the ten years from mid-2022 to mid-2032, the population is projected to increase by 4.4% to 5.7million. In the 25 years from mid-2202 to mid-2047, it is projected to increase by 6.2% to 5.8 million. All the projected population increase comes from inward migration to Scotland. The projections suggest Scotland's population will not experience 'natural growth', as more deaths than births are projected each year going forward.[v] As figure 1 demonstrates changes in working age population vary dramatically between local authorities.

Migration to Scotland significantly impacts councils by influencing population size and workforce availability. As such, migration (both international and from the rest of the UK) can support the repopulation of areas. Migration is a reserved area and there are recent policies that are likely to have a disproportionate impact on Scotland including the increased salary threshold for working visas. This is particularly impactful on areas and

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industries that rely on migration but don't have employment opportunities at this higher salary level. There is currently little political appetite at a UK level to increase migration, but population growth in Scotland is dependent on this.

WORKING TOGETHER FOR CHANGE (what's working, potential solutions and recommendations)

1. Promote more balanced economic growth across all of Scotland
   Investment is needed to grow economic opportunities and promote population growth, but there are often regional disparities in investment opportunities. As we have seen above, Scotland is becoming an increasingly centralised economy. As the Improvement Service report highlights, this can create a circular problem as better performing economies attract investment more easily, encouraging continued migration to these overheating areas at the expense of areas with a declining population. It is possible that more could be done to encourage more equally dispersed investment across the country. At a national level, a more targeted incentivised approach could be taken to ensure the focus is not solely on bringing investment into Scotland but also considers where in Scotland this investment is directed. Conditionalities around various grants and funds are often aimed at areas experiencing deprivation but could also consider demographic change as a factor for targeting this investment. There are also growing opportunities for more widely dispersed investment through the growing green industry which could support rural areas looking to grow and repopulate. [vi]

   Also, SMEs have voiced disparities in accessing finance. In the Scotland SME Access to Finance report participants noted that rural and remote areas (including but not limited to the Highlands and Islands region) face more challenges in accessing finance, since finance providers and investors tend to be concentrated in the central belt and major cities like Edinburgh and Glasgow. This can also be a matter of perceptions as businesses in less densely populated areas may have access to fewer opportunities to increase their awareness of finance options, including face-to-face interactions with lenders. [vii]

2. Work together to improve the apprenticeships system
   The skills system in Scotland could be better used to maximise the potential of the existing workforce and create opportunities that encourage people to remain in their local area. Apprenticeships are a crucial but underutilised part of this skills system. In 2021 less than one in five employers in Scotland offered formal apprenticeships. [viii] This may be because employers are not fully empowered within the skills system. The OECD suggest that currently there are few incentives to encourage employers to either offer apprenticeships or to get more involved in the governance of the apprenticeship system. [ix] They also highlight that the funding of apprenticeships further contributes to the issue. The funding system for modern apprenticeships can give learning providers disproportionate influence over the mix and scale of places on offer, therefore the system may reflect which apprenticeships are easy or cost-effective for the provider to offer, rather than what employers, trainees, or the overall economy needs.

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Funding for skills also disproportionately favours higher education over apprenticeships. Higher education is fully funded, but employers must bear some of the training costs involved in Modern Apprenticeships, especially for older adults. The apprenticeship funding model in Scotland also differs from what is seen in England. England's model focuses on giving employers the power to fund training directly, while Scotland uses a more centralised approach, where the government allocates funds raised through the apprenticeships levy for various skill development programs, including apprenticeships.[x] Improving the role of employers (including local authorities as significant employers) through financial incentives and greater influence over what is offered, may increase apprenticeship provision, better align skills planning with labour market challenges, and provide an improved response to the changing population. [xi]

Scottish Government has shared in the Public Service Reform Strategy the intent to introduce 'a new Scottish Government-led approach to national skills planning, and strengthening regional skills planning[xii]'. Local Government must be engaged with throughout developments in national and regional skills planning.

3. Better support for re-entry to work, and support for older people to remain in the workforce,
To help counteract the population challenges faced by local authorities, it is important to consider ways of maximising the existing potential workforce. Local authorities and partners already undertake a great deal of work in this area and have skills and experience on interventions that make a difference. To enable the biggest impact and positive outcomes sustainable, long-term funding is required.

Employability has predominantly focused on the employment of young people. However, IS report shows that we have an ageing population as well as increasing numbers of people retiring at an earlier age, which highlights another area for consideration. Flexibility in employability funding would allow local authorities respond to the key challenges in their areas. Approaches could include supporting enterprise and self-employment of people 50+ and engaging with employers on the potential positives of flexible working policies.

4. Workforce footprint and improvements on remote working
Scottish Government's action in the Population Strategy regarding workforce footprint should be reviewed, including consideration of how distributing the workforce across the country could be actioned. This would be an example of action to disrupt the trend towards further concentration of the population in the East-Central Belt.

There is evidence that increased access to remote working has caused some population movement from urban to more rural areas[xiii]. Whilst remote workers are predominantly moving to suburbs or accessible urban areas, there is potential to consider barriers such as digital connectivity that impact both on remote work and on business development in rural areas.

5. Better evaluation, monitoring and measurement of policy impact
There is a need for strong linkages and coherence between demographic change and other policy areas. Policies should be developed and considered with a population lens.

Our ability to understand and measure the impact of policies and programmes is imperative, yet to date has not been robust. This is emphasised by the Expert Advisory Group on Migration and Population in their recent report on the challenge of population balance, which maps Scotland's institutional and intervention landscape.[xiv] The Expert Advisory Group recommends establishing objective baseline indicators of population balance, and relative measures of policy impact, as a basis for comparable policy documents.[xv]

The Addressing Depopulation Action Plan (ADAP) Pathfinder work has started the explore formative evaluation methods which could provide a better understanding of the relative impact of different forms of intervention in pursuit of population balance at the community-level. Scottish Government, COSLA and local authorities should work in partnership to explore the learning from the ADAP work and establish evaluation and monitoring methods that take better account of policy impact from a population balance perspective.

Sharing our learning, knowledge and expertise in population balance is crucial. The Expert Advisory Group recommendation for the initiation of regular 'stock-taking' conferences to pull knowledge of policy relating to population balance from across Scottish Government, the public sector and third sector should be taken forward.[xvi] This invitation should also be expanded to include UK Government and the private sector.

6. Migration policies
Population growth in Scotland is driven by migration but changes to UK migration policy could make it more difficult for Scotland to attract new migrants, putting future populating growth at risk.

Scottish Government has published a response to the UK Government Immigration White Paper, with a set of tailored migration proposals. As we have noted above, migration to Scotland significantly impacts councils by influencing population size and workforce availability. Migration can support the viability of services through employment but can also add to the demand for public services. There has been a longstanding acknowledgement by COSLA and Scottish Local Government that Scotland would benefit from a more flexible immigration system. An immigration system that can take account of the diversity that exists within Scotland, and that is responsive to local population shortages, local salaries and local skills requirements faced by different parts of the country would be beneficial.[xvii] In this respect we support the premise of the Rural Migration Pilot set out by Scottish Government. However, we must recognise the distinct requirements of each local area and cannot replicate an immigration system in Scotland that could exacerbate East-Central Belt challenges.

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Given the reluctance from successive UK Governments to incorporate more flexibility within the immigration system, we must explore in full what is achievable in the current system. This includes ensuring that the Scottish Migration Service (SMS) has strong links and works closely with local authorities, employers and partners in areas requiring repopulating.

HOUSING & INFRASTRUCTURE

TACKLING THE BIGGEST CHALLENGES (key areas that require addressing)

A strong economy and access to job opportunities is key to population growth but this needs to be underpinned by access to appropriate and affordable housing. Housing, planning and infrastructure are consistently emphasised by councils as critical to population balance. Housing is a necessity for attracting people to areas requiring repopulation (for example, the Highlands and Islands Enterprise (HIE) repopulation strategy identified that 45% of businesses cited a lack of staff accommodation[xviii]), while 'overheating' areas also emphasise the need for better join up of planning and investment structures. All highlight the need to acknowledge the pressure housing systems are under, with thirteen councils having declared housing emergencies thus far. It is possible that others will follow as demand continues to rise and to outstrip supply.

There are currently various initiatives and legislative changes which focus on addressing the housing crisis, e.g. Housing to 2040 Strategy, Housing (Scotland) Bill, Scottish Government Housing Emergency Dashboard, housing emergency pillars (More High Quality Homes, Right Homes in Right Places, and Permanent Home for Everyone), COSLA Housing Special Interest Group (SIG) medium to long-term actions (which stemmed from the SOLACE Housing in Scotland report[xix]), and a number of governance structures to support them, e.g. Housing to 2040 Board, Housing Investment Taskforce, and Housing Special Interest Group.

The aim of this paper is not to add to an already crowded housing policy landscape. Rather the report aims to consider elements of housing policy through a population lens. It is worth noting that household composition is shifting and every council area in Scotland is facing an increase in households, even those that are facing population decline. Households are smaller on average than in the past (meaning much existing stock may be too large), while an ageing population puts particular demands on the system. In addition, existing stock needs to meet modern standards in relation to repair and energy efficiency, but much of it, particularly in rural areas, does not. Therefore, meeting the needs of a changing population is not just about more houses.

This report aims to recognise the need for strong linkages and coherence between demographic change and housing policy and seeks to amplify some of the medium- to long-term actions from the COSLA Housing SIG, which were agreed by council Leaders in June 2025. These could make a significant difference to population balance and the paper explores how some of these actions could be fine-tuned to ensure population balance is a consideration.

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Councils have informed COSLA that some of the key population challenges they are facing relating to housing and population balance are:

- The current housing delivery model and population imbalance
  Rural and island areas requiring repopulation suffer from a number of housing challenges, such as high building costs, lack of scale to attract developers, lack of capacity to complete projects, and a market failure of development (unable to deliver the scale and profit levels large developers demand) and private rented sectors.[xx] Deindustrialised areas facing depopulation may have empty sites but they are often contaminated and costly to develop, which can act as a crucial disincentive for housing developers. On the other hand, large scale, market led housing developments, and the infrastructure demands these place on areas, are further exacerbating the challenges facing 'overheating' areas experiencing rapidly increasing population growth.

- Infrastructure issues for high demand areas
  There are significant challenges with delivering public infrastructure to meet a rapidly growing population. Councils highlighted concerns around house building without the right infrastructure to support this growth, and added pressures for councils further down the line. Councils are also raising an inherent conflict caused by planners having to deliver city plans despite infrastructure not being there to support them.

    Case study:

    East Lothian's population has grown from 99,000 in 2001 to 112,000 in 2021 (an increase of 21.5% over a decade) and is projected to continue to grow. The 2018 Local Development Plan required East Lothian to deliver 10,000 new houses, which is effectively adding a further quarter of homes within East Lothian. To support this level of growth, East Lothian is building 5 new primary schools and a new secondary school, as well as extending many of their other schools. Developer contributions did not cover full cost of the capital infrastructure, and there are revenue costs to support the schools (e.g. each primary school on average costs £4m per annum to run once fully operation and approximately £11m per annum to run the secondary).

  This case study also reflects the pressure councils are under to deliver on national housing targets and raises questions around how achievable this is with current resources.

- Second and holiday homes
  In popular tourist areas local housing markets are affected by second home ownership and holiday letting. HIE states their region has 41% of Scotland's second homes [xxi] and, according to figures from the SOLACE housing report, 13.3% of properties in Comhairle Nan Eilean Siar, 10.4% in Argyll and Bute, 9.1% in both Orkney and Shetland and 6.7% in Highland Council are empty due to an increase in short term letting and owners of second homes.[xxii] Competition for second homes can inflate prices beyond the means of local people. Seasonal occupancy and transient populations also change communities and affect the viability of local services.

- Removal of local connection exacerbating homelessness figures in 'overheating' areas

There continues to be a significant demand placed on homelessness and temporary accommodation services, alongside the increase in energy, food and fuel costs, requiring a comprehensive preventative approach. Homelessness is not inevitable and can often be prevented. The [Homeless Persons (Suspension of Referrals between Local Authorities) (Scotland) Order 2022](#) gives people the opportunity to seek homelessness assistance in any council area. SOLACE has identified the implementation of the removal of the necessity to have a local connection to an area under this legislation as a key issue that requires addressing in their 'Housing in Scotland' report.[xxiii] Councils have reported that they are seeing a shift in persons now presenting in already 'overheating' areas with rapidly increasing population numbers. For example, Midlothian did not experience immediate impact during the first 18 months of changes to legislation. However, they are now reporting an increase in people approaching the council for assistance and seeking alternative options as neighbouring councils struggle to provide accommodation that meets their needs/wishes.[xxiv]

Whilst Scotland is and will continue to be a welcoming place for those fleeing persecution, there are also increasing pressures from asylum cases and humanitarian protection programmes being placed on housing and homelessness services. ALACHO's recent RAG Report highlights how the number of refugees in the system has risen in recent months as the UK Government has increased the rate of decision making on asylum applications. This is bringing additional challenges for some areas, particularly Glasgow. Combined with the more progressive homelessness legislation in Scotland, this is seen as exacerbating an increase in homelessness applications in some areas.

> Case study:
>
> Glasgow City Council has a long and proud history of accommodating asylum applicants (approximately 95% of asylum applicants in Scotland are accommodated in the city). In addition to the high number of refugees granted leave to remain in Glasgow, the city is also witnessing a considerable increase in the number of households that are granted leave to remain elsewhere in the UK, who are then traveling to Glasgow to make an application for homelessness assistance. Homelessness Services receive no advance notification of these households and receive no additional funding for them.
>
> In 2023/24, Glasgow received 599 homelessness applications from those granted leave to remain outwith the city and in 2024/25 a further 1,050 presentations were made. The growth in homelessness presentations in the city is being driven by those granted leave to remain.[xxv]

West Lothian Council Homelessness Strategy 2025-28 identifies resettlement schemes, the streamlined asylum process, and the removal of local connection as contributing to their high demand for homelessness services.[xxvi]

WORKING TOGETHER FOR CHANGE (what's working, potential solutions and recommendations)

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1. Rebalanced housing development – revitalise repopulation and abating 'overheated' areas
   The importance of balanced population is recognised in key housing and planning documents. Rebalanced development is one of six spatial principles in the National Planning Framework 4 (NPF 4), which aims to focus on directing investment and development towards areas experiencing decline, while managing growth sustainably in areas of high demand. Rural revitalisation is another spatial principle in NPF4, with the aim to encourage sustainable development in rural areas, recognising the need to grow and support urban and rural communities together. The Housing to 2040 Strategy places importance on repopulation of rural and island areas and has an action "to support housing development in rural and island areas, helping to stem rural depopulation and supporting communities to thrive".

   Acknowledgement of the population disparities in Scotland is a strong first step to supporting better population balance, but it must be followed by evidence-based, and appropriately funded interventions. The COSLA Housing SIG actions emphasise the need to establish metrics to assess housing policies and programmes, ensuring that they are effective and adaptable to changing needs.

   Funding and taking a place-based approach to rural revitalisation and housing development is crucial for incentivising developers to build affordable housing and social housing in the right places. An action from the COSLA Housing SIG highlights the need for a review of the way in which funding allocations are calculated to take local circumstances into account. We would suggest that this would include some of the specific challenges faced by rural and island communities, deindustrialised and 'overheating' areas, as set out in the housing challenges section of the paper. Furthermore, regularly reviewing housing strategies to respond to evolving demographic and economic conditions, such as migration and population drivers, is crucial to understanding and finding the mechanisms that support rebalancing development. Another COSLA Housing SIG action emphasises the need to agree on a long-term, 15-year supply strategy and targets. It is imperative that population balance is recognised and reflected in the supply strategy and targets.

2. Infrastructure first requirement
   The Housing to 2040 Strategy has committed to strengthen planning policies by embedding an infrastructure first approach to development. However, as we have seen above many councils are still facing significant challenges with delivering public infrastructure to meet rapidly growing housing developments and city plans. The COSLA Housing SIG mid-to long-term actions stress the increasing need for investment in infrastructure, which ensures that housing developments are accompanied by adequate infrastructure investments, including transportation, schools, and healthcare facilities. The SIG action reflects the need to support councils to align housing projects with community needs.

3. Second and holiday homes
   When councils are given adequate powers to deal with this type of occupancy, the results can be significant, e.g. Short Term Let Zones, Council Tax Premium and Visitor Levy. The Council Tax (Variation for Unoccupied Dwellings) (Scotland) Amendment

Regulations 2023 authorised councils to levy a council tax premium of up 100% on second homes starting April 2024.

> Case study:
> In Argyll and Bute, the implementation of the council tax premium on second homes has seen a notable reduction in the number of second homes and, in turn, has increased private housing stock, which has made a positive impact on addressing the local housing emergency. It has also generated significant financial benefits - this additional revenue supports local services, particularly in rural areas where resources are most needed. [xxvii]

The new powers for councils under the Visitor Levy (Scotland) Act 2024 will ensure they can generate funds that can be reinvested in local facilities and services. Councils across Scotland are actively developing proposals for visitor levies, which will cover holiday lets.

> Case study:
> City of Edinburgh Council is introducing a 5% visitor levy for overnights guests in paid accommodation from 24 July 2026. The levy is projected to raise up to £50 million a year once established and the funds, after administration costs, will be invested into city operations and infrastructure (55%); culture, heritage and events (35%); and destination and visitor management (10%). [xxviii]

COSLA Housing SIG recommends the exploration of legislative powers to restrict the sale of housing in pressured areas for second homes and holiday homes. Taking a population balance perspective, this paper endorses the benefits of such legislation from a population perspective.

As a key commitment contained within the Addressing Depopulation Action Plan (ADAP), Scottish Government has launched an Addressing Depopulation Fund. The fund is providing five local councils with a small pot of money over 2 years to develop and trial new pathfinder interventions in support of population attraction and retention. Argyll and Bute and Dumfries and Galloway pathfinder initiatives are experimenting with a wide range of guidance and advice to increase availability of privately rented homes for local people, and to discourage the transfer to second home status.

> Case study:
> Geographic mapping is being undertaken by Dumfries and Galloway Council for second homes, short term lets and vacant and derelict properties. This is designed to understand hot spots across the region, to assist in identifying where is most impacted by occasional users and maintaining community.

It is crucial that the learning and costings from these initiatives (and the other ADAP pilots), and any potential for expanding to other areas, is recognised and taken forward through both Housing 2040 and Population Programme governance structures.

4. **Understand and adequately support the consequences of the changes to homelessness legislation**
   There is a growing need for consideration to be given to how homelessness prevention duties are impacting councils' ability to prevent homelessness in areas outwith their

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own council boundaries, and how this can be better recorded once a duty is agreed. We are seeing an increasing bearing on some councils and their communities, and we may not have seen the full impact yet. There is a need to implement the COSLA Housing SIG action to focus on understanding the varying levels of homeless applications between council areas to inform our approach long term, and to adequately support those councils experiencing the consequences of legislative change. There is also a need to establish metrics to assess housing policies and programmes, ensuring that they are effective and adaptable to changing needs.

TRANSPORT

TACKLING THE BIGGEST CHALLENGES (key areas that require addressing)

There are transport-related challenges across Scotland. These differ depending on the area and are influenced by the geography and demography of the area. There are also particular complexities faced in rural and island communities as well as lower populated areas of local authorities.

As with the housing section above, this paper is seeking to reflect existing areas of need within the Transport sector with a population balance lens. Challenges experienced by rural and island communities is well-documented in the National Transport Strategy 2 (NTS2)[xxix] and there is a key action specifically focused on areasat risk of depopulation: 'Minimise the connectivity and cost disadvantages faced by island communities and those in remote rural and rural areas, including safeguarding of lifeline services'. The aim of this section is to highlight challenges and areas where further progress is required to meet the needs of areas with declining population numbers and those with rapid growth.

The impact of public transport on Scotland's ability to meet Net Zero is rightly a key policy focus. Transport's impact on population patterns is another important strategic lens and another reason for increased attention and investment.

Buses are a key focus due to being the most commonly used form of public transport. Scottish Transport Statistics show that in 2023-24, 74% of public transport journeys were made by bus, followed by rail (18%), air (6%) and ferry (2%)[xxx]. Car remains the most widely used form of transport overall[xxxi] and in some areas are essential due to current gaps in public transport infrastructure. Transport must be considered in the whole to ensure that transport is accessible to people no matter where they live in Scotland. Improving transport infrastructure can be a key tool in helping to improve population balance.

Some of the key challenges local authorities face in transport provision that relates to population balance includes:

- Dispersed populations in rural areas can make public transport hard to coordinate. The National Transport Strategy Monitoring and Evaluation Report 2024 states: 'In around 24% of remote rural areas, there was no access to public transport, as was the case in around 18% of accessible rural areas (compared to around 1% of data zones in large urban areas).'[xxxii] Issues are not restricted to remote rural areas; there are wider issues of accessibility including in accessible rural areas such as market towns. This

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can be because of dispersed populations and demand, and services/settlements not being concentrated along an easily formed route.

- Low passenger uptake along bus routes also brings challenges of difficulty in provision and local authorities sometimes have to subsidise routes which are not financially sustainable for private sector providers. The cost challenges of running routes that have low utilisation means they are more likely to be infrequent and with shorter operation hours, which in turn reduces reliability and utilisation. This pattern can be seen in data from Transport Scotland which shows that 42% of people in large urban areas use the bus at least once a month but that this falls to 24% in other urban areas and 12% in remote rural areas[xxxiii].

- Due to cost pressures on operators, and lack of revenue funding accessible to Local Government to put into subsidising bus provision, there have been significant reductions in levels of service, alongside fare increases. Increases in fares causes pressure on the local population and contributes to the lack of uptake of public transport. A Public Health Scotland report states, "travel is by far the greatest source of additional costs for residents of remote rural Scotland" and can contribute to the existence of transport poverty in these areas[xxxiv]. These costs include not only public transport, but also high costs of fuel and car ownership. Whilst concessionary fares are available for some of the most vulnerable groups, this has minimal impact when there are no buses available.

- People living in areas without or limited availability of public transport are often reliant on cars to access employment, services, social activities and so on. Those dependent on car use are facing higher fuel costs, and higher costs to replace and finance their cars.

Lack of infrastructure and high costs of transport can act as a deterrent away from living in rural areas and contribute to an imbalanced population. A recent IPPR report highlights risks of insufficient public transport infrastructure including on depopulation: 'Remote and rural areas are particularly underserved by Scotland's existing transport infrastructure (highlighted by chronic ongoing problems with ferry services), and this poses major barriers to investment and workforce mobility, risking depopulation, isolation, additional costs borne disproportionately by local communities, and failure across a host of Just Transition Outcomes'[xxxv].

Island communities have distinct transport-related challenges to staying connected to mainland and for inter-island travel. This includes reliance on strong ferry links, air travel and alternative, more expensive forms of transport such as private cars. There have been various challenges with the running of ferries, such as reliability of services and repeated technical faults. This can make island communities a less attractive option for those looking to relocate, as well as significantly impacting availability of goods and services from the mainland.

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WORKING TOGETHER FOR CHANGE (what's working, potential solutions and recommendations)

Investment in public transport infrastructure has positive impacts. A paper, 'Public transport investments as generators of economic and social activity' states: ›Public.transport. improvements.increase.economic.activity?both.at.an.aggregate.level.(higher.gross.domestic. product).and.household.level.(higher.income)?although.the.effect.can.be.geographically. imbalanced"xxxvi¡.Investment in sustainable public transport is at its core a public health measure, reducing hospital admissions and easing pressure on other services, reducing road traffic fatalities and casualties, creating cleaner air and healthier lungs and encouraging physical activity. It is also a strong source of employment in Scotland and an important element of work to counteract current population imbalance trends.

1. Partnership approach – Scottish Government has strong engagement, knowledge and understanding of transport challenges, including its impact on population balance. We must continue to work across local and national governments as well as with other key partners including Transport Scotland, Regional Transport Partnerships (RTPs), private and third sector transport providers and service users. The key role of local authorities, including through close collaboration with RTPs, in having a whole system perspective should be recognised.

2. Population lens strengthened within Transport policy – Population is mentioned in NTS2 e.g. 'Importantly, the Strategy will ensure those living in rural, remote or island communities will be well connected and have as equitable access to services as those living in the rest of the country, therefore making a positive contribution to maintaining and growing the populations in these areas'. However, there were no actions within the latest NTS Delivery Plan to progress towards this goal.

   The next Delivery Plan should have specific actions and include funding that aligns with the NTS2's intent.

3. Evaluation of the under 22s free bus travel scheme – which includes ferry travel to and from island authorities – should look at the impact of the scheme on retention of young people and potential improvements.

   The scheme can have a positive impact on young people's lives including their independence[xxxvii] and can remove a financial barrier to taking the bus to school, socialising, volunteering, working and more. It would be beneficial to further understand the scheme's impact, including whether it is helping with the retention of young people in their local area after leaving school, and whether there are ways it can be improved to have more benefit for young people living in rural areas. For example, 16% of young people indicated the reason they stopped using the scheme was a range of accessibility issues with local bus services[xxxviii].

4. Funding – appropriate and sustainable funding is required to achieve policy intent and meaningful outcomes, including to help create the conditions for a more balanced

population spread. Funding should have flexibility to allow for local innovation and initiatives that meet the particular needs of local communities. Approaches require strong engagement with Local Government, including through Professional Associations to ensure they are well informed.

> Case Study:
>
> In.Aberdeenshire?there.was.a.pilot.demand.responsive.transport.(DRT).system. called.Ready8Go.that.allowed.individuals.to.travel.around.Inverurie.and. surrounding.smaller.towns.more.easily¡.DRT.provided.users.with.app‗based.on. demand.pick.up.and.drop.off·.deviating.away.from.traditional.fixed.route‑fixed. timetable.bus.services¡.Other.similar.schemes.are.also.underway.across. Scotland¡.This.can.be.very.helpful.for.parents.so.they.have.more.flexibility.and. can.use.the.transport.system.to.fit.around.their.childcare.opening.hours.and. their.work?rather.than.fit.around.a.fixed.public.transport.timetable¡.
>
> The.Ready8Go.as.a.pilot.came.to.an.end.in.April.8689?due.to.the.funding. challenges.to.maintain.the.service?despite.achieving.key.objectives.around. inclusion.and.accessibility¡.The.service.brought.a.lot.of.positive.benefits.such.as. improved.trip.chaining.and.access.to.opportunities?and.increased.the.practical. availability.of.public.transport.for.many¡

The above case study illustrates that where funding is available, local authorities can take effective, place-based action toward transport challenges, which can have a positive impact on equalities and the accessibility of rural areas.

5. COSLA and local authorities are committed to working with Scottish Government on joint areas of priority such as the second Net Zero and Just Transition work. It is essential that work to reduce emissions is conducted in a way that is fair and equitable. This includes recognition of the unique challenges being faced by those in our most deprived areas, as well as those in rural and remote communities, as recognised in the renewed car use reduction policy statement[xxxix].

Recent IPPR research also points to the importance of building up alternatives as part of an approach to reducing car use. One of their recommendations is 'Infrastructure first: for people to make changes there need to be viable alternatives, and they need to feel that they have a choice which goes beyond just car ownership or buses (for example, safe active travel routes or trains)'[xl].

6. Transport is the most significant source of carbon emissions in Scotland. Decarbonisation of the transport sector, including fleet electrification, encouraging people towards more sustainable methods of transport and a reduction in car use across Scotland, are anticipated to be some of the most effective drivers in ensuring Scotland meets its Net Zero by 2045 targets. Initiatives such as national car use reduction cannot be effective without appropriate investment in alternatives to car such as bus and other forms of public transport and active travel.

7. Transport is an area of opportunity to help improve population balance within Scotland. This should be recognised through investment and strategy which must consider the whole transport picture including support for active travel, buses, ferries, EV infrastructure, and essential air travel connecting island communities.

ACTIONS AND NEXT STEPS

Manifesto (White Paper series)

Governance and arrangements with SG to take forward

Summary of actions here or appended?

[i] Scotland's Census 2022 – Rounded population estimates Scotland's Census 2022 - Rounded population estimates | Scotland's Census

[ii] D. Vampa, Territorial.Inequalities.and.Centralism.in.Scotland – presentation (June 2025)

[iii] D. Vampa, Territorial.Inequalities.and.Centralism.in.Scotland – presentation and unpublished report (June 2025)

[iv] People not in work - Scotland's Labour Market Insights: February 2025 - gov.scot

[v] NRS Projected Population of Scotland:2022-based (Jan 2025) Projected Population of Scotland: 2022-based - National Records of Scotland (NRS)

[vi] IS Policy Briefing (details tbc)

[vii] Business Gateway & British Business Bank (March 2025) Scotland.SME.Access.to.Finance.Report.Scotland SME Access to Finance Report - 2025 | British Business Bank

[viii] Faser of Allander Institute. (October 2024). Skills.for.Today.and.Tomorrow https://fraserofallander.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/Skills-for-today-and-tomorrow-final-for-publication.pdf

[ix] OECD. (2022), Strengthening.Apprenticeship.in.Scotland?United.Kingdom. https://doi.org/10.1787/2db395dd-en.

[x] OECD. (2022), Strengthening.Apprenticeship.in.Scotland?United.Kingdom. https://doi.org/10.1787/2db395dd-en.

[xi] IS Policy Briefing (details tbc)

[xii] Scotland's Public Service Reform Strategy Delivering for Scotland.

[xiii] The impact of remote work on mobilities in the UK

[xiv] Independent Expert Advisory Group on Migration and Population (Jan 2025) The challenge of population balance: mapping Scotland's institutional and intervention landscape - gov.scot

[xv] Independent Expert Advisory Group on Migration and Population (Jan 2025) The challenge of population balance: mapping Scotland's institutional and intervention landscape - gov.scot

[xvi] Independent Expert Advisory Group on Migration and Population (Jan 2025) The challenge of population balance: mapping Scotland's institutional and intervention landscape - gov.scot

[xvii] COSLA (Nov 2019) MAC.Salary.threshold.and.points_based.system.commission¿COSLA.response.to.call.for. evidence. MAC salary threshold and points-based system commission: COSLA response to call for evidence | Migration Scotland

[xviii] Highlands & Islands Enterprise (HIE) HIE.Strategy.8689._8❹hie-strategy-2023-28-final-031023.pdf

[xix] SOLACE Housing.in.Scotland¿Current.Context.and.Preparing.for.the.Future (July 2023) Housing in Scotland Current Context and Preparing for the Future - July 2023

[xx] CIH ›Scotland''s.rural.housing.emergency'' (July 2024) Scotland's rural housing emergency | Chartered Institute of Housing

[xxi] HIE Strategy 2023 – 28 hie-strategy-2023-28-final-031023.pdf

[xxii] SOLACE ›Housing.in.Scotland¿Current.Context.and.Preparing.for.the.Future" (July 2023 [Housing in Scotland Current Context and Preparing for the Future - July 2023](#)

[xxiii] SOLACE ›Housing.in.Scotland¿Current.Context.and.Preparing.for.the.Future" (July 2023 [Housing in Scotland Current Context and Preparing for the Future - July 2023](#)

[xxiv] Midlothian Council Rapid.Rehousing.Transition.Plan.8680_868❶[Midlothian_Council_RRTP_202425.pdf](#)

[xxv] Glasgow City Integration Joint Board, Glasgow's.Housing.Emergency (January 25) [Item No 13 - Glasgow's Housing Emergency_0.pdf](#)

[xxvi] West Lothian Council Homeless Strategy 2025-2028 [viewSelectedDocument.asp](#)

[xxvii] Argyll and Bute 'Council Tax on Second Homes – Collection rates 2024/2025' (Sept 2024) [COUNCIL TAX ON SECOND HOMES - COLLECTION RATES 2024-2025.pdf](#)

[xxviii] Edinburgh Visitor Levy [Edinburgh Visitor Levy – The City of Edinburgh Council](#)

[xxix] [national-transport-strategy.pdf](#)

[xxx] [Summary transport statistics | Transport Scotland](#)

[xxxi] https://www.transport.gov.scot/media/gw4fexwl/value-of-transport.pdf

[xxxii] [National Transport Strategy Monitoring and Evaluation Report 2024](#)

[xxxiii] [Public use of transport – Trends and patterns | Transport Scotland](#)

[xxxiv] [Transport poverty: a public health issue](#)

[xxxv] [Making the Future : Initial Report of the 2nd Just Transition Commission](#)

[xxxvi] [Public transport investments as generators of economic and social activity](#)

[xxxvii] [Impact on young people and families | Transport Scotland](#)

[xxxviii] [Awareness, uptake and use of the scheme | Transport Scotland](#)

[xxxix] [Achieving Car Use Reduction in Scotland: A Renewed Policy Statement | Transport Scotland](#)

[xl] [Wheels of change](#)

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FUTURE OF REGIONAL EMPOWERMENT IN SCOTLAND

2 July 2025

Introduction

Growing our economy is one of the Scottish Government's top priorities. Our regional economies, and regional economic partnerships are key to delivering this. The Enterprise and Skills Review in 2017 recommended the creation of Regional Economic Partnerships (REPs) across Scotland. Since then, REPs have been created covering all of Scotland. The Scottish Government published the Regional Economic Policy Review in 2022, which set out a list of 11 recommendations that would increase the policy and fiscal autonomy of REPs. These were fully endorsed by Ministers, and steps have been taken to implement them over recent years. However, it is clear that there is more to do if we want to capitalise on the opportunities that regional working offers; and meet the ambitions of our REPs.

The 2025/26 Programme for Government contained a commitment for the Scottish Government to:

"Work with regional and local partners to identify how best to formally devolve further elements of decision-making and delivery to Regional Economic Partnerships, and present options before the end of this parliament."

As part of this, officials are seeking views from a wide range of stakeholders across different sectors on what regional working could look like in the future. Below is a short summary of the current landscape, but our focus in discussions will be on how we can build on this, and what is possible over time.

Current Landscape

Our main focus is on Regional Economic Partnerships (REPs). These are collaborative arrangements in Scotland that bring together local authorities, enterprise agencies, education and skills providers, the private sector, and the third sector. There are currently eight REPs operating in Scotland, with every local authority sitting on at least one. The purpose of REPs is to coordinate economic development within a region, and support regional economic strategies and investment whilst aligning to national priorities.

REPs are not the only regional structure that exists in Scotland. It may be helpful to consider others, and how they operate, when thinking about the future of regional working. These include, City and Regional Growth Deals, Regional Transport Partnerships, Regional Improvement Collaboratives, Health Boards and Integrated Joint Boards, and Enterprise Agencies.

It may also be helpful to consider regional structures from elsewhere in the UK and abroad. For example, Mayoral Combined Authorities in England, or Corporate Joint Committees in Wales; or existing regional structures in other parts of Europe such as Autonomous Communities in Spain, or Administrative Regions in France.

Discussion Questions

Our starting question is deliberately broad:

- What is your vision for what should be delivered at a regional level in the short, medium, and long-term?

Below are some other prompts you may wish to consider when answering this question:

- What powers would be required to do this and who (if anyone) currently holds them?
- What funding would be required, and who currently holds it?
- What resources or structures would be required in order to do this?
- What timescale do you envisage for the changes you want to see?
- What would be the most effective action that the Scottish Government could take now to empower regions?
- What role would you want your organisation to have in future regional working models?

Next Steps

Scottish Government officials will use the views of stakeholders to shape a list of options on how we could formally devolve further elements of decision-making to REPs, and a report will be provided to Ministers before the end of this parliament.

Project SEStransit

1.   Introduction

1.1   SEStran is working with partner authorities, the Edinburgh and South East Scotland City Region team (CRD), Transport Scotland and Network Rail to develop a Strategic Business Case (SBC) for an integrated regional transport network.

1.2   The SBC is a synthesis of the Regional Transport Strategy Delivery Plan (RTSDP) and a refreshed Recommendation 12 from Transport Scotland's 2nd Strategic Transport Projects Review.

2.   Main Report

2.1   In December 2024 the Board received an overview of the RTSDP.

2.2   It explained the work that has been done to:
- Collate all transport projects planned by partners across the reason
- Work with colleagues across economic development, planning and transport teams in partner councils to assess each project against a wide range of criteria
- Devise a prioritised list of projects for which funding will be sought to undertake appraisals and build business cases

2.3   Since that time, work has continued and further thought given to transport governance matters, such as whether appraisals and analysis should be undertaken by Transport Scotland, as at present, or at a regional level.

2.4   More recently, discussions with TS have clarified that they expect regional partners to lead on work to further develop the business case for STPR2 recommendation 12 – a mass transit system for Edinburgh and the South East of Scotland.

2.5   At a workshop on 23 July 2025, LA partners, the CRD, Transport Scotland and Network Rail considered the interdependencies between these two pieces of work (the RTSDP and STPR2 rec12) and agreed that they should be considered jointly.

2.6   In broad terms, this amounts to adding the following to the Strategic Business Case for STPR2 rec12:
- Clackmannanshire and Falkirk Council areas
- Any strategic sites or significant trip generators not considered in the RTSDP or STPR2 rec12

- Orbital routes and interchanges required to get people to or from the main corridors into and out of Edinburgh, or to make cross-boundary journeys elsewhere around the region
- Data

2.7   A bid for £250,000 was submitted to the Bus Infrastructure Fund to support a review of the SBC, and a grant award letter for the full amount was received in late August 2025. The grant must be spent by the end of March 2026.

2.8   The methodology attached at Appendix 1, which provides a detailed description of the proposed project, was agreed at a follow-up workshop held on 15 September 2025.

2.9   When complete, the revised SBC will be presented to the SEStran Board for approval and also submitted to partners' internal governance processes. The SBC and accompanying report will define the scope, future programme and funding requirements, amongst many other things

2.10   In the meantime, a report will be submitted to the next meeting of PaSDOS so that the resource requirement and impact on the Business Plan for the current year can be scrutinised and assessed.

3.   Recommendations

3.1   It is recommended that the Partnership Board note the contents of this report.

Brian Butler
Partnership Director
26 September 2025

Appendix   1. ESES Regional Connectivity Outline Methodology

Contact   brian.butler@sestran.gov.uk

Policy Implications	There are no policy implications arising as a result of this report
Financial Implications	There are no financial implications arising as a result of this report
Equalities Implications	There are no equality implications arising as a result of this report
Climate Change Implications	There are no climate change implications arising due to this report

This note provides an outline methodology to develop the **Strategic and the Socio-Economic dimensions** of a **programme-level Strategic Business Case (SBC) for a regional connectivity investment programme across the South East of Scotland**. This initial work will be developed with funding from the Scottish Government administered by Transport Scotland under the Bus Infrastructure Fund (BIF), available until 31st March 2026.

The programme will adopt a **region-wide approach to connectivity**, with a focus on identifying and addressing the key connectivity problems and barriers experienced across all local authority areas within the SEStran region. The emphasis will be on identifying a coherent, multimodal network that improves access to opportunity, supports inclusive growth and enables sustainable patterns of movement across the region.

Additionally, we will include some **preliminary scoping of the Financial, Commercial and Management** dimensions. However, any substantial work on these dimensions will only take place in financial year 2026/27, subject to additional funding becoming available.

The end product, therefore, is a Programme SBC, which will:

1. Set out the **Case for Investment (CfI)** across the South East of Scotland, i.e., why enhanced regional connectivity is required and what socio-economic outcomes are expected from a coordinated programme of interventions?
2. Identify the strategic corridors, feeder networks and orbital links that can support improved access to key destinations, reduce inequalities and enable modal shift

In line with H.M. Treasury *Green Book* and Transport Scotland's *Guidance on the Development of Business Cases* (broadly reflecting *Green Book* principles), it is essential that this Programme SBC follows a structured and **evidence-based approach**. Following this process is a critical enabler of good governance, value for money and long-term deliverability, providing a credible foundation for future investment decisions.

Importantly, the Programme SBC – when complete with the Financial, Commercial and Management dimensions – will act as a **strategic gateway**, identifying a sequence of potential individual investment propositions, e.g., specific corridors, enhancements to existing infrastructure, etc. These can then be taken forward, as separate projects under the umbrella of the investment programme, through the next stages of business case development: the Outline Business Case (identifies the 'preferred option') and the Full Business Case (procurement and delivery of the 'preferred option'). This approach allows for a natural flow of projects **from programme-level vision and outcomes to project-level delivery**, ensuring coherence, integration and alignment with regional transport and development strategies.

A key principle underpinning this programme is the recognition that investment in connectivity has the potential to shape long-term land-use patterns, rather than merely responding to them. This marks a shift away from a reactive model – where transport infrastructure follows dispersed, car-dependent development – towards a proactive approach that supports compact, mixed-use and well-connected places.

The Programme SBC will consider several factors that will influence the **Value for Money (i.e., the social and economic outcomes the system may deliver across the region), feasibility and affordability** of the proposed connectivity programme:

- Candidate corridors for enhanced connectivity, including those suitable for high-capacity public transport and those requiring 'feeder' or orbital solutions, which represents a step-change in provision from that currently in place across the South East of Scotland
- The role, hierarchy and integration of different modes – bus, BRT, tram, light rail and heavy rail – including existing networks and infrastructure
- Links to existing demand (and challenges) and growth areas
- The terminus strategy, i.e., will services operate to an interchange point or into town centres?
- 'Systems' considerations such as vehicle types, capacity, frequency and comfort
- Cross-boundary operational governance and delivery models

The tasks proposed below are considered to be deliverable this financial year and will be completed within the allocated funding envelope.

Task 0 – Stakeholder Engagement Plan

We will develop a comprehensive Stakeholder Engagement Plan within the first two weeks following our appointment. This plan will outline the key elements of the Programme SBC that we will be engaging on, specifying with whom and when we will engage.

Whilst a budget allocation has been set aside to facilitate stakeholder engagement, recognising the short timescales involved within this particular workstream, the engagement will primarily focus on the organisations that are part of the governance structure. We will also investigate whether a more focused engagement exercise can be carried out with a few external organisations.

1 Case for Investment

Task 1 – Define the strategic context

Recommendation 12 in STPR2 relates to Edinburgh & South East Scotland Mass Transit – *A mass transit system for the region which would provide more public transport options for cross-boundary travel. The system would focus on key corridors of demand and disadvantaged areas with greatest dependence on public transport.*

However, the work proposed under this Programme SBC goes beyond the scope of Recommendation 12. Rather than starting with a predefined solution (of which mass transit corridors may be a key component), **the Programme SBC will adopt a bottom-up approach**, initially focusing on setting out the socio-economic context, establishing patterns of demand and travel and identifying key connectivity gaps across the whole of the South East of Scotland.

Building up on the extensive work carried out by SEStran and the local authority partners, we propose to carry out a comprehensive review of existing policy documents, strategy, data etc., including:

- SEStran's RTS and associated Delivery Plan
- National Developments in NPF4
- ESES City Region Deal's Strategic Sites Programme
- Local development plans and transport strategies across local authority partners
- Current and future strategic development sites across several sectors
- Travel data (including travel to work) and travel patterns (including a matrix showing travel volumes between discrete areas in the region to capture orbital movement)
- Demographic and socio-economic trends
- Changing operational models (e.g., no peak fares)
- A review of existing and planned infrastructure across the region including the status, impact and data from projects recently delivered or currently underway, e.g., BPRDF, Trams to Newhaven, Workforce Mobility, Levenmouth Rail Link, the trial of 7/7/7 Bus Lanes, WETIP, bus services and fleet improvements and others

This review will allow us to establish **how the strategic context has evolved across the South East of Scotland** since STPR2 was published in 2022. In addition, we will benchmark against other regions to determine at what point does a growing, globally-facing region like the South East of Scotland might outgrow a bus-only solution.

A **Strategic Context Report** will provide a comprehensive summary of the above. Importantly, we will develop a reporting PowerBI dashboard including the combined mapping of strategic development sites, existing transport corridors and infrastructure, areas of deprivation and travel data.

Task 2 – Problems and opportunities

Building on the work undertaken as part of the RTS Delivery Plan, as well as the outputs of Task 1, we will aim to establish why improved connectivity is required across the South East of Scotland, focusing on several key themes at systems level:

- First, we will identify the current failings and examine what is not working with the current arrangements, e.g., fragmentation, journey times, cross-boundary connectivity, lack of integrated ticketing etc.
- Additionally, we will explore why buses alone are not enough, considering issues like the number of vehicles, slow and complicated networks, lack of permanence and the absence of an urban rail backbone
- We will also investigate the opportunities for using existing heavy rail infrastructure, space availability along wider roads in the network etc.
- We will consider and assess key strategic risks such as funding uncertainty, technological disruption, cross-boundary governance and policy shifts
- We will articulate the opportunities that enhanced connectivity could unlock, framing the investment as a catalyst for wider benefits, i.e., what are the societal and economic outcomes that a truly integrated network would deliver?

Task 3 – Connectivity and demand analysis

We will undertake detailed connectivity work at postcode level to identify spatial disparities in access to key destinations across the South East of Scotland. For example:

- Regional employment centres
- Education hubs
- Healthcare
- Strategic transport nodes
- Shopping centres
- Regional tourism hotspots

By overlaying the outputs of the connectivity analysis with socio-economic and travel data, we will be able to:

1. Identify areas where poor connectivity intersects with deprivation and other socio-economic indicators
2. Identify regional OD movements where there is significant demand for travel and relatively poor public transport connectivity

Task 4 – Establish the strategic framework for regional connectivity

Defining what we mean by a *regional connectivity programme* in the context of the South East of Scotland is a critical decision point in the development of the Programme SBC, and a solid first step toward defining an integrated set of solutions.

To inform this decision point, we will undertake targeted preparatory analysis across several key themes. This analysis will not only help clarify the strategic ambition of the programme but will also lead to the definition of the **critical success factors** – or key parameters – that must be met for any future regional solution to be considered effective, inclusive and deliverable. Our analysis will include:

- **Operational Governance:** We will explore the future governance arrangements required to deliver and manage a truly integrated regional transport system. This will include consideration of cross-boundary coordination, the role of existing transport authorities and potential models for oversight and delivery, particularly in relation to potential mass transit corridors, 'feeder' services and orbital links
- **System Features:** We will assess key technical and operational characteristics of potential solutions including vehicle types, capacity, frequency and comfort
- **Integration:** We will examine how any potential solutions can be integrated with existing and planned transport networks (bus, rail and active travel), as well as land-use. This will include assessing interchange opportunities, land-use patterns and the role of improved connectivity in supporting inclusive growth and sustainable development
- **Functional Geography:** We will analyse the economic geography of the region to understand how improved connectivity can contribute to the development of the South East of Scotland. This will include the identification of the spatial extent of any potential solutions, defining the functional reach of different modes

Task 5 – Case for Investment

The Case for Investment (CfI) is a central component of the Programme SBC and forms the foundation of the Strategic Dimension. It sets out the rationale for intervention, the alignment with strategic objectives and the expected societal and economic outcomes of improved connectivity across the

region. This task will synthetise the outputs of Tasks 1 to 4 into **a coherent and compelling narrative that sets out the case for any future investment**.

We will produce a concise and purposeful CfI with agreed network development principles, covering:

1. **Strategic Rationale**, clearly articulating what it is that we are trying to deliver, i.e., the approach to regional connectivity, the role of different modes and the expected societal and economic outcomes
2. **Vision and Objectives**, developing a statement for improved regional connectivity and defining a set of outcomes-based Transport Planning Objectives (TPOs) aligned with regional priorities
3. **Network Development Principles**, agreeing a set or principles for how the network may evolve, including modal hierarchy and integration, streetscape and routing principles (e.g., roadspace prioritisation, segregation levels, etc) and the role of different radial and orbital corridors
4. **Governance and Delivery Considerations**, providing initial thinking on how partners might come together to deliver an integrated transport system that improves connectivity across the region, exploring potential governance models, delivery mechanisms and timescales

2   Socio-Economic Dimension

Tasks 6 and 7 will form the backbone of the Socio-Economic Dimension of the Programme SBC. Building on the CfI, these tasks will begin to translate the regional vision into spatial and modal priorities.

Task 6 – Define and agree priority investment areas

We will define and agree the priority areas for improved connectivity across the South East of Scotland, forming the spatial and operational basis of the future regional network. Prioritisation will be guided by a combination of:

- **Existing and Planned Infrastructure**, considering the role of existing rail infrastructure and corridors, and other transport-related development across the region and nationally
- **High-Volume Corridors**, identifying corridors with significant existing or projected demand
- **Supporting networks and modal hierarchy**, serving and complementing the fastest and highest capacity services
- **Stakeholder Views**, including the bus operators' views in relation market dynamics, operational constraints and commercial viability of different systems
- **Development and Land-Use**, linking to existing and future strategic development sites across several sectors, e.g., employment, housing, education, healthcare etc.
- **Socio-Economic**, prioritising corridors serving areas of deprivation and deliver on equity outcomes

135

Task 7 – Set out the strategic approach to network development

In parallel to the identification of priority investment areas, we will establish a strategic framework for network development. The aim is to provide a coherent, regionally integrated approach that is not overly-process heavy and balances ambition with deliverability. Key components will include:

- **Prioritisation Methodology**, developing a transparent, evidence-based and comprehensive methodology for prioritising radial and orbital corridors
- **Edge Strategy**, defining how areas at the edge of the core functional geography will connect into the regional network including 'feeder' and orbital movement, P&R and interchange and active travel
- **Commercial and Operational Integration**, exploring how to deliver an integrated network that delivers the expected outcomes while making commercial sense for operators, considering aspects such as the potential for franchising or partnership models, ticketing and fare integration, service standards and branding
- **Terminus Strategy**, assessing whether any future services should terminate at interchange points or extend into town centres, balancing operational efficiency with accessibility. As part of this, we will consider whether a framework similar to Edinburgh's Circulation Plan is needed for towns such as Livingston, Musselburgh or Dalkeith, thus supporting integration and modal shift
- **Modal Hierarchy**, establishing a clear hierarchy of modes based on corridor characteristics, demand and strategic role

Task 8 – Scoping of remainder of the Programme Strategic Business Case

Recognising that it will not be possible to complete all components of the Programmatic SBC within this timeframe we will scope out the remaining tasks and associated timescales required to complete the Programme SBC.

3   Programme

The following programme provides an indicative timeline for the completion of the tasks outlined above.
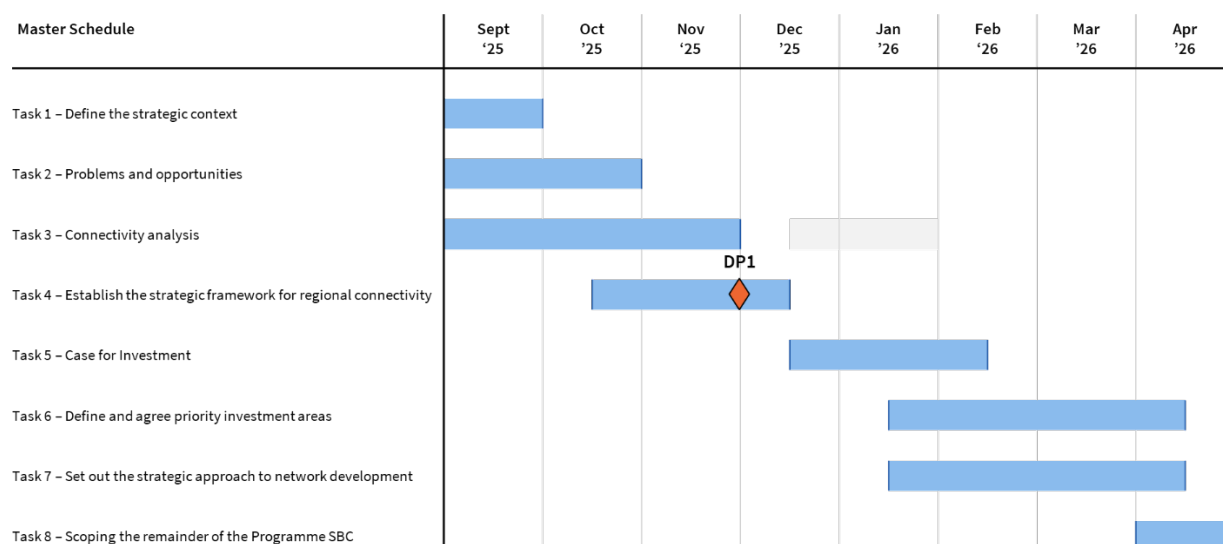
Figure 3-1 Indicative timeline for financial year 2025/26

REGIONAL BUS STRATEGY – PUBLIC CONSULTATION

1.   INTRODUCTION

1.1   The purpose of this report is to update the Board on the progress and initial findings of the public consultation of the Regional Bus Strategy.

2.   BACKGROUND

2.1   Following extensive collaboration with local authorities, board members, operators, and stakeholders, SEStran has completed the case for change and options deliverability review for our Regional Bus Strategy.

2.2   Our consultation ran from 27th July to 25th August. Consultation questions can be found in Appendix 1.

2.3   The consultation focused on understanding user experience and motivations. We received 5,359 responses throughout the month—an encouraging result that reflects both the effectiveness of our survey structure and communications strategy, and the strong public interest in bus services. These responses included over 1,600 open text responses, which the consulting team will now process.

3.   PROMOTION OF THE CONSULTATION

3.1   To promote the consultation, officers produced:
- Social media content, including a video that was used across various social media platforms and on the website
- A specific landing page on our website
- A communications pack for stakeholder organisations to allow them to promote the consultation on our behalf
- A press release, picked up by multiple regional newspapers (including the Linlithgow Gazette, the Alloa Advertiser and the Dunfermline Press)
- Local authority-specific advertising via Meta (Facebook and Instagram)

3.2   Advertising via Meta proved particularly effective in reaching bus users and encouraging direct feedback. The Meta ads resulted in over 17,500 views of our consultation web page, 760 comments on the ads and the ads were shared almost 150 times onto other Facebook pages and groups. While these responses were outside the formal consultation, they offer valuable insights to share with operators and local authorities.

4.   PRINCIPAL FINDINGS

4.1   Top reasons for avoiding or being unable to complete bus journeys:
- Infrequent services (59.3%)

- Poor connections (56.2%)
- Indirect routes (51.4%)
- No buses at needed times (51.4%)

4.2 Affordability challenges:
- 23.2% of respondents have avoided using the bus due to high costs.
- Most desired affordability improvements include:
  - Simple fares (35.7%)
  - Automatic best-value pricing (33.1%)
  - Discounts for young/low-income groups (28.2%)

4.3 Ticketing confusion:
- 36.6% have been unsure if their ticket is valid across different services
- 14.2% have avoided buses due to confusing ticketing

4.4 Top safety issues include:
- Fear of crime/anti-social behaviour (51.4%)
- Poor lighting (33.1%)
- Isolated stops (25.2%)

4.5 Accessing the network:
- 65.3% of respondents said easy access (low floors, ramps, wheelchair spaces) is one of the most important features when travelling by bus
- At bus stations, accessibility was also a priority: 45.1% selected it as one of the top five valued features

Among the top five improvements across the whole survey selected:
- Better-designed, safer, and more accessible bus stops and stations – chosen by 44.6%
- Modern, clean, and accessible buses – chosen by 44.6%

5. **NEXT STEPS**
- Consultants will review public feedback alongside previously considered options
- This analysis will inform the **draft strategy**, which will be presented to the Board and showcased at the **Southeast Scotland Transport Summit in December**

6. **RECOMMENDATIONS**
- Note the public feedback received.
- Remain engaged in the final stages of the Bus Strategy development.

Rachael Murphy
Strategy Manager
26 September 2025

Appendix 1: Regional Bus Strategy Consultation Questions

Policy Implications	The aspiration for a regional bus strategy to facilitate a World Class Bus Service aligns with objectives and actions in SEStran's Regional Transport Strategy and the National Transport Strategy 2.
Financial Implications	SEStran applied to and won £150k from the TS Community Bus Fund in November 2023, to fund the Regional Bus Strategy.
Equalities Implications	The Regional Bus Strategy will support the equalities objectives in the Regional Transport Strategy. Without this work, there is a risk that a key facilitator of equalities is impinged.
Climate Change Implications	The aspiration for a regional bus strategy will support and positively impact on SEStran's Climate. Without improving our public transport offering, we risk increased private car use and corresponding worsening climate.

SEStran Regional Bus Strategy - Public Survey

Be part of shaping the future of buses in South East Scotland

We're delighted to invite you to take part in a survey that will help shape an ambitious new Strategy for how buses serve people and places across our region.

Buses play a vital role in our communities: they connect places, provide access to jobs, education, healthcare, and leisure, and are essential in tackling inequalities and climate change. However, many people across the South East of Scotland still face barriers when it comes to travelling by bus.

We are developing the SEStran Regional Bus Strategy, which seeks to address these challenges.

Our vision is:

"To provide a high quality, affordable, accessible and available bus network for the whole region which is fully integrated with other forms of transport and increases passenger numbers and passenger satisfaction, to support the social, environmental and inclusive economic development of the region."

About SEStran

SEStran (South East of Scotland Transport Partnership) is the statutory Regional Transport Partnership for eight local authorities: City of Edinburgh, Clackmannanshire, East Lothian, Falkirk, Fife, Midlothian, Scottish Borders, and West Lothian. To find out more about SEStran and our current transport projects, please visit sestran.gov.uk/about-us/.

About This Survey

- Most questions are multiple choice, but some invite written comments.

- If you need assistance completing this form or require it in a different format or if you prefer to respond by phone, please contact SEStran by emailing rachael.murphy@sestran.gov.uk or calling 0131 524 5150.

- You can submit your responses until the end of 25th August 2025.

Confidentiality

Your participation in this survey is entirely voluntary. To take part, you must be aged 16 or over and live in, work in, or regularly travel in South East Scotland. The survey will ask for your views on bus services and, optionally, some demographic information (such as age, gender, ethnicity, health, and sexual

orientation) to help ensure responses reflect the whole community. You are free to skip these questions or select 'prefer not to say'.

Who sees your responses?

SEStran has commissioned the transport consultancies SYSTRA Ltd and Stantec UK Ltd to deliver this survey and analyse the anonymised data. Survey responses will be reported only in aggregate—neither SEStran, SYSTRA, nor Stantec will be able to identify you personally.

Data protection and your rights

We are committed to handling your information in accordance with the UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR), the Data Protection Act 2018, and the Market Research Society Code of Conduct. We do not request any personally identifiable information, and all responses are anonymised upon submission. Only aggregated, non-identifiable data will be shared with SEStran or project partners, or used in reporting. Because responses cannot be linked to individuals after submission, it is not possible to delete a submission or grant a request to view individual answers once the survey is completed.

You may withdraw from the survey at any point before submitting your responses.

This survey does not ask for any personally identifiable information, and we kindly ask that you do not include names or any information that could identify yourself or another individual in your responses. If you do provide personal data in a free-text field, it will be identified and removed from the dataset before analysis and reporting, wherever possible, in accordance with our privacy policy and the requirements of the UK GDPR and Data Protection Act 2018.

Please read the _Survey Privacy Notice_ for full details about how your data will be used, stored, and your rights.

* 1. **Consent to Proceed:** To continue, please confirm that you understand how your data will be used and consent to take part in this survey. You will have the option to provide, or opt out of providing, demographic and special category data as outlined in the Survey Privacy Notice.

○ Yes, I consent to participate

○ No, I do not consent (you will not proceed further)

SEStran Regional Bus Strategy - Public Survey

Section 1: About You and your Travel

2. What is your age group? (Please select one option)

◯ Under 16 (If you are 15 or under, you are not eligible to participate.)

◯ 16–17

◯ 18–24

◯ 25–34

◯ 35–44

◯ 45–54

◯ 55–64

◯ 65–74

◯ 75–84

◯ 85+

◯ Prefer not to say

3. Which of the following describes your current work, study, training or caring situation? (Please select all that apply)

☐ Paid Work (full time, part time, including as an employee, self-employed or freelance)

☐ Other Work (e.g. volunteering, family business)

☐ On a Government sponsored training scheme

☐ Unemployed, looking for a job

☐ Unemployed, not looking for a job

☐ Retired

☐ On maternity or paternity leave

☐ Looking after home or family

☐ Caring for someone (for example, a child, relative, or person at home)

☐ Long-term sick or disabled

☐ Student

☐ Prefer not to say

☐ None of the above

4. Which type of area do you live in? (Please select one option)

○ City

○ Town

○ Village

○ Rural

○ Prefer not to say

5. In which council area do you live? (Please select one option)

○ City of Edinburgh

○ Clackmannanshire

○ East Lothian

○ Falkirk

○ Fife

○ Midlothian

○ Scottish Borders

○ West Lothian

○ I do not live in Scotland

○ Prefer not to say

○ Another area of Scotland (please specify)

[   ]

6. Which council area(s) do you regularly travel in or through? (Please select all that apply)

☐ City of Edinburgh

☐ Clackmannanshire

☐ East Lothian

☐ Falkirk

☐ Fife

☐ Midlothian

☐ Scottish Borders

☐ West Lothian

☐ A neighbouring local authority

☐ I do not travel in or around the South East of Scotland (this will end the survey)

☐ Prefer not to say

☐ Another area (please specify):

[   ]

7. Do you have access to any of the following as a driver/rider? (Please select all that apply)

- [ ] Car or van
- [ ] Motorbike or moped
- [ ] Bicycle
- [ ] Prefer not to say
- [ ] None of the above

8. Scotland offers free bus travel for eligible groups via the National Entitlement Card schemes:

- Young Persons' Scheme: For those aged under 22 and resident in Scotland
- Older or Disabled Persons' Scheme: For people aged 60+ or who meet disability eligibility criteria

Are you entitled to a Scottish National Entitlement Card for free bus travel? (Please select one option)

- ( ) Yes – Young Persons' Scheme
- ( ) Yes – Older or Disabled Persons' Scheme
- ( ) No
- ( ) Not sure
- ( ) Prefer not to say

9. If you're eligible, do you have a card? (Please select one option)

- ( ) Yes
- ( ) No
- ( ) Not applicable / Not eligible / Prefer not to say

10. Travel Frequency: How often do you use the following in South East Scotland? (Please select one option per row)
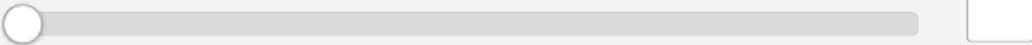
	5 or more days/week	3–4 days/week	1–2 days/week	At least once a month	Less than once a month	Never
Bus, minibus, or coach	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
Train	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
Tram	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
Walking/wheeling	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
Cycling	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
Car/van (driver)	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
Car/van (passenger)	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
Motorcycle/moped	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
Taxi/private hire	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )

11. Main reason for using public transport (Please select all that apply)

- [ ] I do not use public transport
- [ ] Commuting to work
- [ ] Education/training
- [ ] Shopping
- [ ] Healthcare or medical appointment
- [ ] Leisure/social activities
- [ ] Visiting friends/family
- [ ] Volunteering
- [ ] Caring for others
- [ ] Prefer not to say
- [ ] Other (please specify)

12. How likely are you to recommend bus services in South East Scotland to others? (Please select one number on the scale below)

0 = Not at all likely   5 = Neither likely nor unlikely   10 = Extremely likely

SECTION 2: MAIN TOPICS IN THE REGIONAL BUS STRATEGY

This part of the survey covers the main topics that the new Regional Bus Strategy will address. Each represents way of improving bus travel for passengers and communities. You will also have a chance to share your general thoughts about bus services in an open comment section at the end of the survey.

Please answer these questions based on your experiences in South East Scotland.

Some questions (marked *) will need to be completed before moving onto the next page, although most questions can be left blank if you prefer to skip them. As a reminder, please do not include names or other information that could identify you or another individual in your responses.

SEStran Regional Bus Strategy - Public Survey

LEVEL OF SERVICE OF BUSES

Level of service means how well bus times and routes meet people's needs in terms of day-to-day operation — such as how often buses run (frequency), how many places they serve (coverage), how close and easy buses are to access, the days and times buses are available, and whether journeys are direct or require changes. Good bus services make it easier to get to work, school, healthcare, and other places, but in some areas services can be limited, less frequent, or hard to reach.

13. Have any of the following ever made you avoid using the bus, or meant you were unable to complete a journey by bus? (Please select all that apply)

☐ Buses do not run frequently enough

☐ No buses at the times I need (e.g. evenings, Sundays, early mornings)

☐ Routes are not direct enough (require long or multiple changes)

☐ Poor connections with other buses or transport modes

☐ There are no buses at all where I live or where I need to go

☐ Bus stop is too far away

☐ Buses are much slower than car

☐ No, I have not avoided or been unable to complete a journey because of these

☐ I have not tried to use the bus

☐ Other (please specify)

14. Thinking about the issues above, how often have you avoided using the bus or been unable to complete a journey for any of these reasons in the past 12 months? (Please select one option)

◯ Nearly every time

◯ More than half the time

◯ Less than half the time

◯ Once or twice

◯ Never

◯ Haven't used the bus in the last 12 months

15. If the issues you selected above were resolved, do you think you would use the bus more often? (Please select one option)

○ Yes, much more

○ Yes, a little more

○ No, it wouldn't change

○ Not sure / Not applicable

GO SEStran
South East of Scotland Transport Partnership

IMPROVE AFFORDABILITY OF BUS TRAVEL

Our research in South East Scotland suggests that bus fares can be seen as too high in some areas, are sometimes confusing, and not everyone knows how to get best value tickets. This makes it hard for some people—especially those on lower incomes—to use buses. Making fares fairer and simpler can help more people travel affordably. People's experience of this will vary across the South East of Scotland, depending on where they live and travel.

16. Have you ever avoided using the bus because it was too expensive for your journey? (Please select one option)

- ○ Yes, often
- ○ Yes, sometimes
- ○ No
- ○ Not sure

* 17. What are the top five things that would make bus travel more affordable for you? (Please select **up to five** options)

- ☐ Simple fares that are easy to understand (e.g. one price per area/zone)
- ☐ Automatic best-value prices (never paying more than a daily/weekly cap)
- ☐ No extra cost for changing between buses
- ☐ Low-cost or free connections between bus and other public transport
- ☐ Discounted or free travel for young people, older people, or lower incomes
- ☐ Fares that are competitive with car or parking costs
- ☐ Easy ways to buy tickets (cash, card, mobile)
- ☐ Help finding or applying for discount/free fares
- ☐ Other (please specify)

  [   ]

- ☐ None of the above

NETWORK PERFORMANCE AND STABILITY

Our research suggests that buses work best when they are reliable, on time, and follow predictable routes and timetables. However, traffic delays, unexpected problems, and frequent timetable or route changes can disrupt services—often making journey times unpredictable or leading to cancellations. Some areas have much more reliable service than others, and it's not always easy for passengers to keep up with changes or understand why they happen. We believe improving reliability and keeping routes and times stable could help more people feel confident using buses for everyday journeys.

18. Have you ever avoided using the bus because you were worried that any of the following might happen? (Please select all that apply)

- [ ] Bus might not arrive on time
- [ ] Bus might be cancelled
- [ ] No, I have never avoided the bus because of these worries
- [ ] Not sure
- [ ] Other (please specify)

19. Have you experienced any of the following because bus services (routes, timetables, etc.) were changed or removed? (Please select all that apply)

- [ ] I started using the bus more often
- [ ] My journeys became easier or more convenient
- [ ] My journeys became harder or more inconvenient
- [ ] I stopped using the bus for certain trips
- [ ] I stopped using the bus for most or all trips
- [ ] I noticed changes, but they didn't affect my travel
- [ ] I didn't notice any changes
- [ ] Not sure

20. Do you feel you have enough information about how well local bus services are performing, e.g. if they are mostly on time or often late? (Please select one option)

- ( ) Yes
- ( ) No
- ( ) Not sure / Neutral

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* 21. Please select up to three features that you consider most important for good bus services, in terms of network performance and stability. (Please select **up to three** options)

☐ Buses are on time

☐ Measures to keep buses moving during traffic

☐ Buses aren't cancelled mid-journey

☐ Bus journeys are quick

☐ Clear, up-to-date information on route changes

☐ Changes to routes/timetables aren't too frequent

☐ Passengers can give feedback on changes to bus services

☐ None of the above

SEStran Regional Bus Strategy - Public Survey

TICKETING

Our research suggests that buying the right bus ticket can still be confusing in certain areas of South East Scotland, especially if your journey involves more than one company or type of transport. Modern features like contactless payment and automatic fare capping aren't available everywhere, and most tickets only work with one bus company. For people who don't use digital payments, it can be even harder to find or access the best value fares. Finding clear, simple information about all your ticket options can also be a challenge for many passengers.

22. How easy is it to buy the right bus ticket? (Please select one option)

◯ Very easy

◯ Quite easy

◯ Not sure / Neutral

◯ Quite difficult

◯ Very difficult

23. Have you ever been unsure if your ticket is valid on a certain bus or by another bus company? (Please select one option)

◯ Yes, often

◯ Yes, sometimes

◯ Rarely

◯ Never

24. Have you ever avoided using the bus because ticketing was too confusing for your journey? (Please select one option)

◯ Yes, frequently

◯ Yes, sometimes

◯ No, never

◯ Not sure

* 25. Which of these ticketing features are most important to you? (Please select **up to three** options)

☐ One ticket for different bus companies

☐ One ticket for bus, rail, and tram

☐ Automatic fare capping (never pay more than the best value fare)

☐ Clear information on all ticket options in one place

☐ Flexible tickets if your plans change

☐ Easy ways to get tickets without a smartphone or internet

☐ None of the above

SEStran Regional Bus Strategy - Public Survey

VISUAL IDENTITY OF THE BUS NETWORK

In South East Scotland, different bus companies and buses working in different areas often look and feel separate. Having the same style of signs, colours, and information at stops and on buses could make it easier to recognise which services work together, helping people use the bus network with more confidence.

26. Have you ever been confused by different brands, signs, or styles of information when choosing which bus/stop to use? (Please select one option)

○ Yes, often

○ Sometimes

○ Rarely

○ Never

27. If all bus operators in your area used the same colours, branding, and information for routes that work together, how helpful would this be for you? (Please select one option)

○ Very helpful

○ Quite helpful

○ Not sure / Neutral

○ Not very helpful

○ Not at all helpful

28. Would this make you more likely to use buses? (Please select one option)

○ Much more likely

○ A little more likely

○ No difference

○ A little less likely

○ Much less likely

○ Not sure

SEStran Regional Bus Strategy - Public Survey

INFORMATION, CUSTOMER SERVICE, AND FEEDBACK

Clear information and customer service make using buses much easier, building people's confidence to travel and improving services. Our research suggests that in South East Scotland, people sometimes find it confusing or difficult to get up-to-date information, contact the right person for help, or know how to give feedback that will be listened to—especially as things can vary between operators and areas.

29. How easy is it for you to find reliable, up-to-date information about bus travel in your area? (Please select one option)

○ Very easy

○ Quite easy

○ Not sure / Neutral

○ Quite difficult

○ Very difficult

30. Where do you usually look for information about buses **before you travel** (routes, times, fares, etc.)? (Please select all that apply)

☐ I don't usually look for information before I travel

☐ Bus operator website

☐ Physical timetables at stops

☐ Journey planning app/website (e.g., Google Maps, Apple Maps, Citymapper)

☐ Traveline Scotland app/website

☐ Printed leaflets or brochures

☐ I ask staff at a bus station or drivers

☐ I telephone a helpline

☐ Other (please specify)

31. If you travel by bus, do you usually check **live travel information** (such as arrivals, delays, or disruptions)? If so, how do you receive them? (Please select all that apply)

☐ I don't usually get live travel information

☐ At-stop live information displays/boards

☐ Traveline Scotland app/website

☐ Bus company app/website

☐ Social media (e.g., X/Twitter, Facebook)

☐ Journey planning app/website (e.g., Google Maps, Apple Maps, Citymapper)

☐ Text or email alerts

☐ Other (please specify)

[_____]

32. If you needed help or wanted to give feedback, how easy would it be to contact customer service and get a useful answer? (Please select one option)

○ Very easy

○ Quite easy

○ Not sure / Neutral

○ Quite difficult

○ Very difficult

○ I would not know how to contact customer service or provide feedback

33. Have you ever tried to contact a bus company's customer service team or provided feedback? If yes, how did you do it? (Please select all that apply)

☐ I have not contacted customer service or given feedback

☐ Phone

☐ Email

☐ Social media (e.g., Twitter, Facebook)

☐ Online chat via website/app

☐ In person at a customer service desk

☐ Feedback form on website/app

☐ Other (please specify)

[_____]

34. If you were to give feedback about bus services, how confident are you that it would be listened to and make a difference? (Please select one option)

○ Very confident

○ Quite confident

○ Not sure / Neutral

○ Not very confident

○ Not at all confident

BUS DRIVERS

Bus drivers do much more than drive—they help keep journeys safe, friendly, and reliable. Most people in South East Scotland are happy with their bus drivers, but experiences can vary and driver shortages sometimes affect services. The way drivers interact with passengers, handle problems, and support those with additional needs can make a real difference to your journey.

35. Has a bus driver's attitude ever affected your decision to use the bus (positively or negatively)? (Please select one option)

○ Yes, encouraged me to use the bus more often

○ Yes, discouraged me from using the bus

○ Yes, both encouraged and discouraged me at different times

○ No, it has not influenced my decision

○ Not sure / Neutral

36. Is there anything you would like to tell us about your experiences with bus drivers, or anything that could improve your experience with them?

SEStran Regional Bus Strategy - Public Survey

BUS STOPS, BUS STATIONS, AND PARK AND RIDES

Bus stops, stations, interchanges, and mobility hubs are key places where people start, end, or change their journeys—connecting with buses and other ways of travelling like trains, cycling, or cars. Well-designed, accessible, and safe sites (with features like shelters, live information, and good lighting) make journeys easier and more attractive. The quality and location of these facilities can influence whether people choose to travel by bus, especially if they need to change between services or modes.

37. Thinking about the bus stops in your area: Overall, how satisfied are you with these facilities? (Please select one option)

◯ Very satisfied

◯ Satisfied

◯ Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied

◯ Dissatisfied

◯ Very dissatisfied

◯ Not sure / Neutral

* 38. What are the top five features you value most at bus stops? (Please select **up to five** options)

☐ Close to my start/destination

☐ Shelter

☐ Seating

☐ Good lighting

☐ Live travel information

☐ Clear signs

☐ Accessibility for wheelchairs, prams, etc

☐ Cycle parking

☐ Walking/cycling links

☐ Cleanliness and maintenance

☐ Safety and security (good lighting, CCTV, emergency help points)

☐ None of the above

39. Thinking about the bus stations in your area: Overall, how satisfied are you with these facilities? (Please select one option)

○ Very satisfied

○ Satisfied

○ Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied

○ Dissatisfied

○ Very dissatisfied

○ Not sure / Neutral

* 40. What are the top five features you value most at bus stations? (Please select **up to five** options)

☐ Close to my start/destination

☐ Indoor waiting area with seating

☐ Toilets

☐ Live travel information

☐ Clear signs

☐ Accessibility for wheelchairs, prams, etc

☐ Shops/cafés/services

☐ Cleanliness and maintenance

☐ Safety/security (e.g. CCTV, good lighting, staff, emergency help points)

☐ Easy connections to other public transport (e.g. rail, trams)

☐ Cycle parking

☐ Car parking

☐ Taxi rank

☐ None of the above

☐ Other (please specify)

_____

* 41. A Park and Ride site lets you park your car or bike and then take a bus for the rest of your journey. Have you ever used a Park and Ride in the South East of Scotland? (Please select one option)

○ Yes, often

○ Yes, occasionally

○ No, but there is one in my area

○ No, there is not one in my area

○ Not sure

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42. Which Park and Ride(s) have you used? (Please select all that apply)

☐ Ingliston Park & Ride (City of Edinburgh)

☐ Hermiston Park & Ride (City of Edinburgh)

☐ Straiton Park & Ride (Midlothian)

☐ Wallyford Park & Ride (East Lothian)

☐ Sheriffhall Park & Ride (Midlothian)

☐ Ferrytoll Park & Ride (Fife)

☐ Halbeath Park & Ride (Fife)

☐ I don't use Park and Ride

☐ Other (please specify)

43. How would you rate your overall experience? (Please select one option)

○ Very positive

○ Positive

○ Neutral

○ Negative

○ Very negative

* 44. What matters most at a Park and Ride for you? (Please select **up to five** options)

☐ Location

☐ Connecting bus frequency

☐ Variety of routes / bus services available

☐ Parking cost

☐ Facilities (waiting/toilets)

☐ Safety/security

☐ Ticket purchase

☐ Live travel information

☐ Electric Vehicle charging

☐ None of the above

☐ Other (please specify)

[   ]

45. What are your reasons for not using these sites?

SEStran Regional Bus Strategy - Public Survey

BUS FLEETS

Bus fleets are essential for providing comfortable, reliable, and sustainable bus services. Modern, clean, and accessible buses make journeys more pleasant and help reduce pollution.

46. How would you rate the overall quality of buses (the vehicles themselves) in your area? (Please select one option)

○ Excellent

○ Good

○ Fair

○ Poor

○ Very poor

○ Not sure / No recent experience

* 47. When travelling by bus, which features are most important to you? (Please select **up to five** options)

☐ Clean and well-kept buses

☐ Easy access (low floors, ramps, wheelchair spaces)

☐ Comfortable seating and good environment

☐ Environmentally friendly (low/zero emissions)

☐ Wi-Fi or USB charging

☐ Reliable and efficient operation

☐ Live travel information on board (audio/visual)

☐ Security and safety (CCTV, lighting)

☐ Space for buggies, luggage, folding bikes

☐ Ability to take bicycles on board

☐ Other (please specify)

☐ None of the above

48. How important is it to you that bus services reduce their environmental impact (e.g., by using electric buses)? (Please select one option)

- ◯ Very important
- ◯ Quite important
- ◯ Neutral / No opinion
- ◯ Not very important
- ◯ Not at all important

49. How would you rate the accessibility of buses currently operating in your area (ramps, step-free access, clear info, space for wheelchairs etc)? (Please select one option)

- ◯ Excellent
- ◯ Good
- ◯ Fair
- ◯ Poor
- ◯ Very poor
- ◯ Not sure / No recent experience

50. Have you noticed any recent changes in bus quality, features, or comfort in your area? (Please select one option)

- ◯ Yes, improvements
- ◯ Yes, reductions in quality
- ◯ Both improvements and reductions
- ◯ No significant changes
- ◯ Not sure

SEStran Regional Bus Strategy - Public Survey

SAFETY, SECURITY, AND INCLUSION

A safe, inclusive, and accessible bus network is vital so that everyone—regardless of age, ability, or background—can travel confidently. Currently, challenges like personal safety concerns (especially at night), harassment, lack of accessibility, unclear information, and high fares can prevent some people from using buses. By tackling these barriers, we can help to ensure public transport is welcoming and practical for all, helping people connect to jobs, services, and their communities.

51. How safe do you feel when using the bus in your area **during the day**?

- ◯ I do not use the bus during the day
- ◯ Very safe
- ◯ Quite safe
- ◯ Neutral
- ◯ Quite unsafe
- ◯ Very unsafe

52. How safe do you feel when using the bus in your area **in the evening or at night**:

- ◯ I do not use the bus in the evening/night
- ◯ Very safe
- ◯ Quite safe
- ◯ Neutral
- ◯ Quite unsafe
- ◯ Very unsafe

53. Which of the following have ever made you feel unsafe or put you off using the bus? (Please select all that apply)

- [ ] I do not use the bus
- [ ] Poor lighting at stops or on the way to/from bus stops
- [ ] Isolated stops or lack of staff
- [ ] Harassment, discrimination, or hate crime
- [ ] Fear of crime or anti-social behaviour
- [ ] Buses or stops not accessible for my needs
- [ ] Lack of clear information or language barriers
- [ ] High cost of travel
- [ ] Pavement or footpath quality getting to stops
- [ ] Other (please specify)

- [ ] None of the above

54. Have you ever experienced or witnessed any of the following while using the bus? (Please select all that apply)

- [ ] Unwanted sexual behaviour
- [ ] Harassment, discrimination, or hate crime
- [ ] Assault, threat, or violence
- [ ] Feeling unable to get help or support when needed
- [ ] Difficulties due to language or information not being accessible
- [ ] Physical barriers (e.g. steps, lack of ramps, poor footpaths)
- [ ] Problems with cost, frequency, or service withdrawal
- [ ] Other (please specify)

- [ ] I have not experienced or witnessed any of these

SEStran Regional Bus Strategy - Public Survey

CUSTOMER CHARTER

A Customer Charter sets out the promises and standards that bus operators make to passengers, so you know what service to expect and what your rights are if things go wrong. Currently, each bus company in South East Scotland has its own charter, which can be confusing for passengers. Creating a single, regional Customer Charter could make things clearer and more consistent for everyone, but it would require overcoming challenges to bring standards into line across all operators.

55. Have you ever read or used a bus Customer Charter? (Please select one option)

○ Yes, I have read or used one

○ I have seen one but never used it

○ No

○ Not sure

56. What should a Customer Charter have to give you confidence in bus services? (Please select all that apply)

☐ I am not interested in a Customer Charter

☐ Clear information about my rights as a passenger

☐ Standards for reliability and punctuality

☐ How to give feedback or make a complaint

☐ Information about refunds, compensation, and lost property

☐ Commitments to support accessibility and inclusion

☐ Commitments to staff training and behaviour

☐ How performance (e.g. reliability) is measured and reported

☐ Standards for vehicle cleanliness and comfort

☐ Other (please specify)

57. How important is it to you that all bus operators have the same Customer Charter, instead of each having their own? (Please select one option)

○ Very important

○ Quite important

○ Not very important

○ Not important at all

○ Not sure / Neutral

SEStran Regional Bus Strategy - Public Survey

SECTION 3: ROUNDUP QUESTIONS

We are close to the end of the survey, please help us round up your thoughts with the following questions.

As a reminder, please do not include names or other information that could identify you or another individual in your responses.

* 58. Thinking about all the topics discussed in the previous sections, please select the five most important improvements for you or your community to improve bus services. (Please select **up to five** options)

☐ More frequent, widely available, and direct bus services

☐ More reliable services with fewer cancellations and delays

☐ More affordable fares

☐ Simpler, more flexible, and better-integrated ticketing

☐ Consistent branding and information across the network (buses, bus stops, signage), where buses work together

☐ Clear, up-to-date information and customer support

☐ Higher standards of bus driver professionalism and helpfulness

☐ Better-designed, safer, and more accessible bus stops and stations

☐ Modern, clean, and accessible buses

☐ Improved safety, security, and inclusion for all passengers

☐ Better measurement and reporting of bus service performance

☐ Clear service standards and commitments through a customer charter

☐ None of the above

59. If you'd like, please tell us why you chose your top priorities, suggest any other ways bus services could be improved, or share the single biggest change you'd like to see.

60. Is there anything else you would like to tell us about bus services, before the survey finishes?

61. How did you hear about this survey? (Please select all that apply)

- [ ] Word of mouth
- [ ] Direct contact from SEStran
- [ ] LinkedIn
- [ ] Facebook
- [ ] Press (newspaper, radio, online news, etc.)
- [ ] SEStran website
- [ ] Instagram
- [ ] Other (please specify)

- [ ] None of the above

SEStran Regional Bus Strategy - Public Survey

SECTION 4: EQUALITIES MONITORING QUESTIONS

The following questions help us understand the diversity of participants and ensure we are reaching all groups and improving equality of access to services. Answering is voluntary; you may select "prefer not to say" or leave answers blank at any time. Please do not include names or other information that could identify you or another individual in your responses.

62. What is your gender? (Please select one option)

◯ Male

◯ Female

◯ Non-binary

◯ Prefer not to say

◯ Prefer to self-describe (please specify)

63. Do you consider yourself to be trans, or have a trans history? This includes anyone whose gender is different from the sex assigned at birth. (Please select one option)

◯ Yes

◯ No

◯ Prefer not to say

64. What is your ethnic group? (Please select one option)

○ White Scottish

○ Other White British

○ White Irish

○ Gypsy/Traveller

○ White Polish

○ Roma

○ Showperson

○ Other White (please specify below)

○ Mixed or multiple ethnic group (please specify below)

○ Pakistani, Pakistani Scottish or Pakistani British

○ Indian, Indian Scottish or Indian British

○ Bangladeshi, Bangladeshi Scottish or Bangladeshi British

○ Chinese, Chinese Scottish or Chinese British

○ Other Asian (please specify below)

○ African, African Scottish or African British

○ Other African (please specify below)

○ Caribbean, Caribbean Scottish or Caribbean British

○ Black, Black Scottish or Black British

○ Other Caribbean or Black (please specify below)

○ Arab, Arab Scottish or Arab British

○ Other Ethnic Group (please specify below)

○ Prefer not to say

Other (please specify)

[   ]

65. Do you have any health conditions or disabilities lasting 12 months or more? If yes, does this limit your day to day activities? (Please select one option)

○ Yes, limited a lot

○ Yes, limited a little

○ No

○ Prefer not to say

66. What religion, religious denomination or body do you belong to, if any? (Please select one option)

○ None

○ Church of Scotland

○ Roman Catholic

○ Other Christian

○ Buddhist

○ Hindu

○ Jewish

○ Muslim

○ Sikh

○ Pagan

○ Prefer not to say

Other religion or body (please specify)

[   ]

67. Which of the following best describes your sexual orientation? (Please select one option)

○ Heterosexual / Straight

○ Gay or Lesbian

○ Bisexual

○ Other sexual orientation

○ Prefer not to say

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Transport Partnership

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Thank You - Please Click Done

Thank you for taking part in our survey, please click 'done' below to submit the survey. Once the survey has been submitted you cannot change your responses.

As a reminder, if you have any questions about the survey please contact Rachael Murphy, Strategy Manager at SEStran by emailing:
rachael.murphy@sestran.gov.uk

Information about the Regional Bus Strategy will be available on the SEStran website later this year.

Non-Councillor Member Recruitment for the Term 2026-2030

1.   **INTRODUCTION**

1.1   The purpose of this report is to inform the Board of the Non-Councillor Member recruitment process for the new term serving from 2026 – 2030.

2.   **BACKGROUND**

2.1   The current term of SEStran's Non-Councillor Members is due to end on 31 March 2026.

2.2   At present there are 2 x vacancies and 7 x serving members. The serving members are:
- Linda Bamford
- Doreen Steele
- Callum Hay
- Simon Hindshaw
- Paul White
- John Scott
- Alistair Couper

3.   **RECRUITMENT AND REAPPOINTMENTS PROCESS**

3.1   The recruitment process is summarised as follows:

3.1.1   The Partnership Director, on behalf of the Chair, will undertake to write to the Non-Councillor Members asking if they wish to be considered for re-appointment for the new term.

3.1.2   Those members who indicate their preference to seek re-appointment will be subject to an appraisal, which will be based on the contribution they have made to the partnership during their tenure.

3.1.3   The appraisal will be carried out by the Partnership Director in consultation with the Chair, following which the successful existing members will be recommended for re-appointment by the Partnership Board. Those members who are not recommended for re-appointment can still re-apply through the open recruitment process.

3.1.4   Following conclusion of the re-appointment and appraisal process, a recruitment exercise will commence to fill the vacancies.

3.1.5   Vacancies will be advertised, and a selection panel will be agreed by the Succession Planning Committee. This panel will likely comprise of the Chair, a Board Member and the Partnership Director. Administrative and HR support will be provided by the Business Manager and HR Adviser.

3.1.6 The anticipated timeline for the recruitment and selection process will be as follows:

- Succession Planning Committee to meet October 2025
- Advertise Vacancies Nov-Dec 2025
- Shortlist Applications Jan 2026
- Interview Jan - Feb 2026
- Selection panel make their recommendations Jan – Feb 2026
- Seek Board/Ministerial Approval for Appointments Feb 2026
- Report on appointments to Partnership Board March 2026

4. RECOMMENDATIONS

The Board is asked to:

4.1 Note the reappointment and recruitment process for the new term of the Non-Councillor Members for 2026-2030, and;

4.2 Note that SEStran will be required to make any appointments in line with duties as stated in The Gender Representation on Public Boards (Scotland) Act 2018.

Angela Chambers
Business Manager
26 September 2025

Policy Implications	None
Financial Implications	None
Equalities Implications	Requirement to comply with the Gender Representation on Public Boards (Scotland) Act 2018 and aim to have 50% of non-executive members who are women.
Climate Change Implications	None

Thistle Assistance Update

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide the Board with an update on progress that has been made on the Thistle Assistance scheme.

2. BACKGROUND

2.1 Thistle Assistance is a free app and card for people to use when they need some additional support using public transport. Both can be personalised to show the support required (for example more time getting to a seat) and are shown to the driver or public transport staff member when boarding.

2.2 It's a national scheme, which is managed by SEStran on behalf of the seven Regional Transport Partnerships (RTP). It has been running since 2002.

2.3 The scheme is clearly referenced in SEStran's Regional Transport Strategy, under the section '*enhancing access to and accessibility of public transport'*. The delivery of the scheme contributes to: '*Deliver improved public transport information in a variety of formats, supported by appropriate wayfinding infrastructure on the transport network*'.

2.4 The scheme is a key element of SEStran's Equalities Outcomes 2025-2029 report. Thistle Assistance was identified as a crucial project to achieve the following outcome in the south east region of Scotland: Improve the experience for people and groups who share protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010 using public transport.

2.5 It is also recognised at a national level by Transport Scotland as part of the Accessible Travel Framework – Delivery Plan 2024-2026, and is outlined in the workstream 1 on Passenger experience.

3. 2024-2025 KEY HIGHLIGHTS

3.1 In 2024/2025, SEStran dedicated additional capacity to run and manage the scheme; work was taken over by one Project officer supported by the Comms and Marketing officer to focus on more targeted and regular promotional initiatives to increase awareness of the scheme among potential users. This has also led to a number of initiatives aiming at improving the scheme.

3.2 A review was undertaken on the comms and marketing materials which led to the following key improvements.

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3.2.1
- The leaflet and the card have been updated to improve readability / accessibility (and references to Covid 19 were removed)
- The Thistle Assistance website has been updated to improve access to the 'request a card' and 'download the app' pages
- New social media graphics have been created, and formats have been adjusted for social media use
- Tracking URLs have been used to better understand how people arrive on the Thistle Assistance's website
- A communications pack has been created and distributed to transport operators, to help them understand the initiative and to support them to share Thistle Assistance messaging through their channels. This includes standard newsletter, website and social media copy, social media assets, a customer facing poster and an updated poster and leaflet for transport staff

3.3 A user survey was designed in collaboration with Transport Scotland and Disability Equality Scotland early 2025 with the aim of gathering information on level of awareness as well as use of the scheme. The survey was out for two weeks in February 2025 and received over 100 responses across Scotland.

3.4 Although the survey could not be directed to existing users, it showed some important points:

3.4.1
- The awareness of the scheme remained limited compared to other support schemes such as the Blue Badge or the National Entitlement Card
- Anecdotal evidence suggested that there was a gap in knowledge and awareness coming from transport operator staff when a user shows the Thistle Assistance card/app, impacting negatively on the overall user experience
- The survey results suggested that there was an opportunity to significantly improve the scheme by working more closely with the transport operators, in particular bus operators to increase awareness of the scheme

3.5 During 2024/25, the take up of the card and app had been low. Historically, the approach had focused on various print and broadcast options, however, given the popularity of digital media, a campaign based on a full digital marketing approach was initiated. This had the added benefit of making it easier to measure the campaign's impact and success.

3.6 The Scotland-wide campaign ran from 21 March to 30 April 2025 and focused on improving awareness and take-up of cards and apps of Thistle Assistance.

3.6.1 Here's a summary of the approach for this campaign:
- Meta (Facebook and Instagram): these were targeted by audience interests and were video and static image ads

- Newspaper websites, targeted by audience interests: these were video ads
- Apple app store
- Google search results (based on key words and search query phrases)

3.6.2 Key results of the campaign: 21 March to 30 April 2025 compared to preceding period (9 February to 20 March 2025):
- Card requests: 3,376 vs 131 (2,477% increase)
- App downloads: 1,784 vs 34 (5,147% increase)

3.7 The results of this marketing activity have been very encouraging, and have informed the plans of 2025/2026, during which we are aiming to deliver another Scotland-wide digital marketing campaign.

3.8 A 'lessons learnt' document was created to identify key areas of improvement, both on the management of the scheme and on the promotional side of things. This is available on request.

4. 2025-2026 PROJECT PLANS

4.1 The learning collected from the past few months, and the data collected have led to the development of a project plan for 25/26.

4.2 The key deliverables are:
- The implementation of small-scale amendments to improve the scheme's management efficiency (I.e. card request form)
- The development and running of a digital marketing campaign followed by a report outlining successes and lessons learnt
- The distribution of a user survey, with a focus on existing users to capture real life experiences and potential impact of the scheme on attitudes and perceptions towards public transport
- The distribution of a survey to transport operators and any other engagement initiatives to better understand current awareness, engagement and promotion of the scheme by operators
- The appointment of a card printer / distributor on a multi-year contract
- The development of a plan for 26/27 reflecting key priorities for future initiatives

4.3 This financial year will see an increased focus on stakeholder engagement to ensure and maintain a good buy-in across the board. A priority will also be on the collection of data (both quantitative and qualitative) to ensure a good understanding of the scheme's efficiency and impact as well as to identify areas of improvement to inform future plans.

4.4 2025/2026 already saw some valuable success with the scheme; the last digital marketing campaign has been nominated in the category 'Campaign of the year' at the National Transport Award 2025. Winners will be announced on the 2nd of October during the award ceremony.

5.   RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1   The Board is asked to:
- Note the content of this report.
- Provide, where appropriate, commentary on the above report.

Sandra Lavergne
Project Officer
26 September 2025

Policy Implications	Thistle Assistance aligns with the objectives of the RTS as well as SEStran's Equalities Outcomes 2025-29 and therefore will help deliver on SEStran's policy objectives.
Financial Implications	None
Equalities Implications	Thistle Assistance is part of SEStran's Equalities Outcomes 2025-29 and should have a positive impact on equalities.
Climate Change Implications	None

SOUTH EAST SCOTLAND TRANSPORT SUMMIT

1.   INTRODUCTION

1.1   The purpose of this report is to update the Board on the progress of the South East Scotland Transport Summit.

2.   BACKGROUND

2.1   This event will mark 20 years of Regional Transport Partnerships in Scotland, following the 2005 Transport Act, and will refocus efforts as we approach 10 years remaining of the Regional Transport Strategy.

2.2   The main purpose of the event is to influence key decision-makers and influencers ahead of the Scottish Parliamentary elections in 2026.

2.3   Over recent years, there has been much discussion about transport governance – the split of responsibilities between national, regional and local levels.

2.4   Recent developments, such as the advent of the People and Place Programme, have demonstrated that Regional Transport Partnerships are ideally placed to deliver cross-boundary programmes where a regional rather than national or local approach provides optimum benefits.

2.5   The summit presents a valuable opportunity to bring this opportunity to life in south east Scotland, by showcasing SEStran's past accomplishments, its present strategy and projects, and the role it can play in supporting future governmental objectives and priorities and tackling regional transport challenges.

3.   MAIN REPORT

3.1   In June, SEStran officers met with the SEStran Chair and Deputy Chairs to discuss the potential of such an event, and to get their initial feedback on the proposed structure and format.

3.2   Following this guidance, officers have secured a venue – Surgeons' Quarter in Edinburgh – and begun inviting key stakeholders.

3.3   Invitations are being sent in batches to ensure that key attendees are given priority and that total numbers are contained within the capacity of the venue.

3.4   The current draft agenda is as follows. This is very much a work in progress and may change before the event.

Welcome and introduction	SEStran Chair

Keynote Speech	Cabinet Secretary
History of RTPs	SEStran Deputy Chair
SEStran past, present and future	SEStran Partnership Director and former directors
Highlights of current SEStran projects	SEStran staff
Launch of Regional Bus Strategy	SEStran Strategy Manager
Workshop on the benefits of a regional approach	All participants
Title to be confirmed	Professor Kate Pangbourne of Leeds University

4.   NEXT STEPS

4.1   • Confirm external speakers and finalise agenda details
       • Continue inviting guests and stakeholders

Rachael Murphy
Strategy Manager
26 September 2025

Policy Implications	Progressing the strategy will deliver opportunities to work more closely with decision makers on realising SEStran policy.
Financial Implications	This work is budgeted for within the SEStran project budget.
Equalities Implications	Equity will be a key theme for staff to draw out throughout the event, particularly when talking about SEStran projects, the bus strategy and the future for SEStran. Accessibility was strongly considered when choosing the venue.
Climate Change Implications	Attendees will be encouraged to travel to the venue sustainably, and the venue has strong public transport connections.

People and Place Monitoring and Evaluation Update

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 The purpose of this paper is to provide the Board with a brief update on progress with monitoring and evaluation (M&E) for the People and Place Programme following the presentation to the last Board meeting, and to present a copy of the final 2024/25 evaluation report

2 202024/25 PEOPLE AND PLACE EVALUATION

2.1 Following the presentation to the Board at its meeting on 20 June, a final 202024/25 programme evaluation was submitted to Transport Scotland in line with their requirements. This report has subsequently been produced in a public version that can be viewed here: https://sestran.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/09/DIGITAL-GoSESTRAN-Evaluation-v1.2.pdf

2.2 As discussed in the presentation, the report demonstrates clear evidence of progress in 202024/25 on 5 of the 6 key indicators, with insufficient evidence to show progress on the final indicator. The report includes a series of recommendations to improve the programme M&E for 202025/26 (see below)

3. 202025/26 PEOPLE AND PLACE EVALUATION

3.1 Significant work has already begun on M&E for 202025/26. A key part of this has been the production of more detailed guidance for projects, that can be tailored by project type, to ensure consistent and high quality data collection. This goes significantly further than the existing Transport Scotland guidance, and will underpin the 202025/26 programme evaluation.

3.2 As part of the 2024/25 evaluation, a series of recommendations were produced. The following table shows current progress and plans against these:

Recommendation	Priority	Current Progress/Plans
Standardise data collection tools and templates	Must do	This has been achieved through the creation of the standard project monitoring guidance which has now been distributed
Introduce outcomes and indicators to measure capacity and capability	Must do	This is part of the brief for consultant support for 2025/26
Require EDI and follow-up data collection	Should do	This has been achieved through the creation of the standard project monitoring guidance which has now been distributed. Evaluation of this is

		included in the brief for consultant support for 2025/26
Improve data quality through training and support	Should do	This is part of the brief for consultant support for 2025/26
Implement a change control and data audit trail	Should do	This has been fully implemented
Develop case studies (testimonials)	Should do	A standard template for this has been created and distributed as part of the wider communications support package
Introduce a centralised digital reporting portal	Could do	A tender exercise for this has recently been completed, with the aim of rolling out for 2026/27
Expand indicator coverage to capture wider impacts	Could do	This has been achieved through the creation of the standard project monitoring guidance which has now been distributed.
Facilitate peer learning and data sharing	Could do	An ongoing series of events is planned to support this. 3 subregional workshops are planned for October, along with more themed workshops for Q4. A local authority delivery group is also proposed to be trialled in Q3.
Value for Money comparison	Could do	In the absence of national guidance, this is not being taken forward at this time, however collection of data that will support this in the future is part of the brief for consultant support for 2025/26

4   RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1   The Partnership Board is asked to note the content of this report

Michael Melton
Programme Manager
26th September 2025

Policy Implications	The People and Place Plan aligns with the objectives of the RTS and therefore will help deliver on SEStran's policy objectives.
Financial Implications	All costs are within the grant award from Transport Scotland, so there is no financial impact on the SEStran core budget. Funding agreements are in place for each grant to ensure funds are appropriately managed.
Equalities Implications	In supporting people to travel actively, the grants should have a positive impact on equalities. Specific elements of the grants have been designed to further support the accessibility of active travel, including a focus on the provision of adaptive bikes and a programme focused on physical barrier removal on pavements. An EqIA has been undertaken on the People and Place Delivery Plan and recommendations from this will be incorporated where possible.
Climate Change Implications	In promoting behaviour change from private cars to active travel, the grants will support the transition to net zero.

Public Services Reform (Scotland) Act 2010 2024/2025

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1   The Regional Transport Partnerships are included in the schedule of the Public Services Reform (Scotland) Act 2010. This requires annual publication of certain information and this report advises the Board of the information to be published.

2. DATA TO BE PUBLISHED

2.1   **Expenditure**

2.1.1   Section 31 (1) and (2) require public bodies to publish as soon as is reasonably practicable after the end of each financial year a statement of any expenditure they have incurred during that financial year on or in connection with the following matters:
- Public relations
- Overseas travel
- Hospitality and entertainment
- External consultancy
- Payments with a value in excess of £25,000
- Members or employees who received remuneration in excess of £150,000.

2.2   SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC GROWTH

2.2.1   Section 32(1)(a) provides that as soon as is reasonably practicable after the end of each financial year each listed public body must publish a statement of the steps it has taken during that financial year to promote and increase sustainable growth through the exercise of its functions. As this requires the publication of a statement it is not sufficient simply to refer to other published material such as the annual report.

2.3   EFFICIENCY, EFFECTIVENESS & ECONOMY

2.3.1   Section 32(1)(b) provides that as soon as is reasonably practicable after the end of each financial year each listed public body must publish a statement of the steps it has taken during that financial year to improve efficiency, effectiveness and economy in the exercise of its functions. Again, this requires the publication of a free standing statement and it is not sufficient simply to refer to other published material such as the annual report.

2.4   The data as described in sections 2.1 to 2.3 of this report is included in appendix 1 of this report and will be published on the SEStran website in accordance with the requirements of the Act.

3.   RECOMMENDATION

3.1   The Board is asked to note the content of the material for publication under the Public Services Reform (Scotland) Act 2010 and detailed in appendix 1 of this report.

Cheryl Fergie
Business Support Officer
September 2025

Appendix 1 – Statement of Compliance with the Public Services Reform (Scotland) Act 2010

Appendix 2 – PSRA Invoice Details

Policy Implications	None
Financial Implications	As detailed in appendix 1.
Race Equalities Implications	None
Gender Equalities Implications	None
Disability Equalities Implications	None
Climate Change Implications	None

Appendix 1 - Statements of Compliance with the Public Services Reform (Scotland) Act 2010 2024/2025

1. BACKGROUND

1.1 Sections 31 and 32 of the Public Services Reform (Scotland) Act 2010 ("the Act") impose duties on Scottish public bodies to publish information on expenditure and certain other matters as soon as is reasonably practicable after the end of each financial year. This statement is produced by the South East of Scotland Transport Partnership (SEStran) to ensure compliance with the requirements of the Act.

1.2 SEStran works hard to be a transparent, responsive, best-value organisation that delivers on its vision for the South East of Scotland's transport network, as outlined in its statutory Regional Transport Strategy.

1.3 SEStran's vision aims to deliver:

"A South-East of Scotland, fully integrated transport system that will be efficient, connected and safe; create inclusive, prosperous and sustainable places to live, work and visit; be affordable and accessible to all, enabling people to be healthier; and delivering the region's contribution to net zero emissions targets."

1.4 SEStran's annual report and accounts for 2024/25 set out the impact of this work and the outcomes achieved, together with associated costs. The draft annual report for 2024/25 was presented to the SEStran Partnership Board in March 2025. The purpose of this PRSA statement is to disclose those costs which are relevant to Section 31(1) and (2) of the Act. A link to this report will be published with the finalised Annual Report.

1.5 Section 31(1) of the 2010 Act requires public bodies to publish as soon as is reasonably practical after the end of each financial year a statement of any expenditure they have incurred during that financial year on or in connection with the following matters:

- Public relations
- Overseas travel
- Hospitality & entertainment
- External consultancy
- Payments more than £25,000.00
- Members or employees who received remuneration in excess of £150,000.00

1.6 Public bodies are required to publish the total amount of expenditure incurred during each financial year on or in connection with each of the categories set

out above, but it is of course open to SEStran to publish a more detailed breakdown of expenditure if they so wish.

2. PUBLIC RELATIONS

2.1   SEStran spent £149,049.95on public relations in 2024/25.

This represents 2.5% of the total expenditure for the year. Of this, £46,267 was for internal staff costs. The majority of the external expenditure was on marketing costs to increase awareness of and support the delivery of SEStran project activity and available services, for example, the Thistle Assistance Programme and the People and Place active travel behaviour change programme.

3. OVERSEAS TRAVEL

3.1   SEStran incurred an expenditure of £0 on overseas travel in 2024/25.

4. HOSPITALITY & ENTERTAINMENT

4.1   SEStran incurred an expenditure of £2780 on hospitality in 2024/25.

This is the equivalent of 0.05% of the total expenditure for the year.

SEStran incurred costs for hosting the Regional Transport Partnership's Chairs meeting, including accommodation and meal expenses.

5. EXTERNAL CONSULTANCY

5.1   SEStran incurred expenditure of £583,424 on external consultancy.

This is the equivalent of 9.6% of the total expenditure for the year. See sections 6.2 & 6.3 below for further detail.

6. PAYMENTS IN EXCESS OF £25,000

6.1   Section 31(3) of the Act places a duty on public bodies to publish the amount, date, payee and subject matter of any payment made during the financial year which has a value in excess of £25,000.

6.2 Throughout 2024/2025 SEStran paid various organisations (excluding consultants) more than £25,000 over several payments. These are listed below:

Payee	Subject Matter	Gross Amount
City of Edinburgh Council	People and Place grant and core costs	**£203,578.93**
Clackmannanshire Council	People and Place grant	**£31,662.00**
Cycling Scotland	People and Place grant and core costs	**£308,014.00**
Cycling UK	People and Place grant	**£296,500.78**
East Lothian Council	People and Place grant	**£58,047.53**
Falkirk Council	People and Place grant and core costs	**£30,008.31**
FEL Scotland	People and Place grant	**£310,796.28**
Greener Kirkaldy	People and Place grant	**£91,993.24**
Hillside Agency	Thistle Assistance and Go E-bike marketing	**£48,405.60**
Journeo Passenger Systems Ltd	Development of real time passenger information infrastructure	**£308,304.29**
Living Streets	People and Place grant	**£68,541.69**
Paths for All	People and Place grant	**£70,395.19**
Republic of Media	GO E-Bike advertising	**£57,659.51**
Scottish Borders Council	People and Place grant	**£245,629.78**
Sustrans	People and Place grant	**£292,896.55**
The Bike Station	People and Place grant	**£179,976.03**
Trapeze	Third party system (Novus FX) used to provide bus real-time information	**£58,312.56**
University of Edinburgh	People and Place grant	**£31,155.80**

Payments were made to City of Edinburgh Council totalling £203,578.93. Of this, £202,204.33 was a People and Place grant, and the remainder was for core costs.

Payments were made to Cycling Scotland totalling £308,014.00. Of this, £307,674 was a People and Place grant, and the remainder was for staff training costs.

Payments were made to Falkirk Council totalling £30,008.31 Of this, £29,900.00 was a People and Place grant, and the remainder was for core costs.

Payments were made to Greener Kirkaldy totalling £91,993.24. Of this, £91,153.24 was a People and Place grant, and the remainder was for Go E-bike project costs.

Payments were made to Hillside Agency totalling £48,405.60 for Thistle Assistance and Do the Ride Thing marketing costs.

Payments were made to Journeo Passenger Systems totalling £308,304.29 for installation of real-time passenger information screens in the region as part of the regional framework agreement.

Payments were made to Republic of Media totalling £57,659.51 for Do the Ride Thing advertising costs.

A payment of £58,312.56 was made to Trapeze for the management, maintenance, and development of the NOVUS FX system for regional real-time real passenger information (under a 3-year contract).

6.3 Throughout 2024/2025 SEStran paid certain consultants more than £25,000 over several payments. These are listed below:

Supplier	Subject Matter	Total Amount	Comments
AECOM	Transport Appraisal	**£31,628.40**	Forth Ports - Detailed Options Appraisal Final Invoice.
Arup	Active Travel Network	**£248,700.42**	Professional Services in relation to the SEStran Strategic Network active travel route design.
Ember Technology Ltd	Mobility as a Service (MAAS)	**£57,960.00**	Delivery of GoSEStran MaaS app
Jacobs	Active Travel Network & People and place	**£78,600.00**	People and Place Programme Development Support
Systra	Bus Strategy Development & Transport Appraisal	**£95,049.23**	Regional Bus Strategy development and addendum to the Newburgh options appraisal report
Tactran		**£39,631.08**	Go SEStran PM costs and TravelKnowHow Scotland regional contribution
Urban Foresight	Regional EV Infrastructure	**£72,308.40**	EV Strategy & Delivery, People & Place Evaluation 24/25

7. MEMBERS OR EMPLOYEES WHO RECEIVE REMUNERATION IN EXCESS OF £150,000

7.1 Section 31(4) of the Act places a duty on public bodies to publish the number of individuals who received remuneration more than £150,000.

7.2 No employee, office holder or other individual involved with SEStran received remuneration more than £150,000 during 2024/25.

8. SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC GROWTH

8.1 Section 32(1)(a) of the Act places a duty on public bodies to publish a statement of the steps it has taken during the financial year to promote and increase sustainable growth through the exercise of its functions.

8.2 SEStran is a statutory body, under the Transport (Scotland) Act 2005 and is tasked with producing a Regional Transport Strategy for the South East of Scotland.

8.3 The following sets out the steps that SEStran has taken in 2024/25 to promote and increase sustainable economic growth in the exercise of its functions. Further information on this and our work is contained in our Audited Annual Accounts and Annual Report for 2024/25.

8.4 SEStran, in collaboration with its partner organisations, plays a pivotal role in fostering sustainable economic growth through the planning and execution of regional transportation enhancements. Additionally, it provides crucial support for transportation services, with key projects like real-time passenger information and Thistle Assistance. SEStran's continuous investment and project implementation initiatives significantly bolster the regional economy. This multifaceted effort encompasses all modes of transportation and is geared towards enhancing connectivity, accessibility, emissions reduction, and offering an appealing, seamless, and dependable travel experience. These facets are fundamental components of sustainable economic advancement.

8.5 The Regional Transport Strategy (RTS), which was approved by Scottish Ministers in March 2023, constitutes a vital statutory mandate for SEStran. SEStran maintains close collaboration with its constituent councils, Transport Scotland, regional growth deals, and other stakeholders to ensure the coordination, efficient implementation, and alignment of transportation policies and programs in the southeast of Scotland with the overarching goal of contributing to sustainable economic growth.

8.6 SEStran's internal staff training and development policies culminate in the cultivation of a highly skilled team, ideally positioned to meet the evolving needs of the economy.

9. EFFICIENCY, EFFECTIVENESS AND ECONOMY

9.1 Section 32(1)(a) of the Act requires public bodies to publish a statement of the steps taken to improve efficiency, effectiveness, and economy in the exercise of their functions.

9.2   The following sets out the steps that South-East of Scotland Regional Transport Partnership (SEStran) has taken in 2024/25 to improve its efficiency, effectiveness, and economy in the exercise of its functions.

9.3   Supporting the principles of public sector reform, SEStran is aware of the overall need to ensure the delivery of public services as efficiently and effectively as possible.

9.4   In relation to the Scottish Government's National Outcome 16: Our public services are high quality, continually improving, efficient and responsive to local people's needs, we are committed to delivering services that are high quality, continually improving, efficient and responsive.

9.5   When purchasing and procuring SEStran have continued to make use of the Public Contracts Scotland (PCS) portal and available public sector frameworks, to maximise best value for money opportunities. It is intended to continue to use available frameworks and PCS for procurement.

9.6   In the current economic climate, and with reduced resources, SEStran will continue to work with stakeholders, partners, contractors and suppliers to ensure effective delivery of strategy, policy and projects that deliver against the RTS and the vision for the transport network of the South East of Scotland.

End of Appendix.

SESTRAN
Public Services Reform (Scotland) Act 2010 Information
Year ended 31st March 2025

1) **Public Relations**   Account code 3531/ 3541

Supplier	External costs - invoiced (net)	Internal Staff Costs	Supplier Total	Comments
Able Magazine Solutions Ltd	£3,495.00			SI-161
			£3,495	
Alliance Print Group	£88.92			23481
Alliance Print Group	£51.30			23687
Alliance Print Group	£96.24			24112
Alliance Print Group	£70.26			24113
Alliance Print Group	£71.37			24144
Alliance Print Group	£25.62			24174
Alliance Print Group	£2,596.00			24509
Alliance Print Group	£113.77			24741
Alliance Print Group	£118.34			24742
Alliance Print Group	£34.77			24777
Alliance Print Group	£54.90			24778
			£3,321	
Alliance Print Ltd	£116.73			23248
			£117	
DC Publishing Ltd	£1,300.00			DCP14864
			£1,300	
Greg Macvean Photography	£200.00			1498
			£200	
Hillside Agency	£2,000.00			INV-3894
Hillside Agency	£31,838.00			INV-3897
Hillside Agency	£1,500.00			INV-3899
Hillside Agency	£5,000.00			INV-3898
Hillside Agency Ltd	£1,710.00			INV-3959
Hillside Agency Ltd	£190.00			INV-3964
Hillside Agency Ltd	£1,055.00			INV-3970
			£43,293	
I G Photography Ltd	£3,000.00			INVOICE PP PROJECT
			£3,000	
Internal Staff Costs		£46,267.00		
			£46,267.00	
Republic of Media	£12,999.85			24180
Republic of Media	£35,056.88			024191
			£48,057	

Total   **£102,782.95**   **£46,267.00**   **£149,049.95**

SESTRAN
Public Services Reform (Scotland) Act 2010 Information
Year ended 31st March 2025

2) Overseas Travel Account code 2821

Reason	Origin / Destination	Travel Costs	Subsistence	Accommodation	Comments	Cost to SEStran
						0.00
						0.00
						0.00
						0.00
						0.00

Total 0.00 0.00 0.00 0.00

SESTRAN
Public Services Reform (Scotland) Act 2010 Information
Year ended 31st March 2025

3) **Hospitality & Entertainment**   **Account code 3849**   3)   **Hospitality**
description

Supplier	Project / Service	Net Amount	Comments	EU Contribution	Cost to SEStran
Balbirnie House	CORE	1,390.40	Balbirnie House - accommodation & meal costs for RTP Chairs (3rd & 4th September 2024)	0.00	1,390.40
Balbirnie House	CORE	1,390.40	Balbirnie House - accommodation & meal costs for RTP Chairs (3rd & 4th September 2024)	0.00	1,390.40
		2,780.80		**Total**	**2,780.80**

SESTRAN
Public Services Reform (Scotland) Act 2010 Information
Year ended 31st March 2025

4) External Consultancy   Account code 4841

Supplier	Project / Service	Net Amount	Supplier Total	Comments
AECOM	Transport Appraisal	£26,357.00		Forth Ports - Detailed Options Appraisal Final Invoice.
			£26,357.00	
Andrew Ferguson	Project Consultancy Support	£2,800.00		Project Consultancy Support
Andrew Ferguson	Project Consultancy Support	£2,000.00		Project Consultancy Support
Andrew Ferguson	Project Consultancy Support	£2,000.00		Project Consultancy Support
Andrew Ferguson	Project Consultancy Support	£2,000.00		Project Consultancy Support
Andrew Ferguson	Project Consultancy Support	£2,000.00		Project Consultancy Support
Andrew Ferguson	Project Consultancy Support	£1,600.00		Project Consultancy Support
Andrew Ferguson	Project Consultancy Support	£1,600.00		Project Consultancy Support
Andrew Ferguson	Project Consultancy Support	£1,600.00		Project Consultancy Support
Andrew Ferguson	Project Consultancy Support	£1,400.00		Project Consultancy Support
Andrew Ferguson	Project Consultancy Support	£1,280.00		Project Consultancy Support
Andrew Ferguson	Project Consultancy Support	£1,200.00		Project Consultancy Support
Andrew Ferguson	Project Consultancy Support	£1,200.00		Project Consultancy Support
Andrew Ferguson	Project Consultancy Support	£600.00		Project Consultancy Support
			£21,280.00	
ARUP	Active Travel Network	£86,500.00		Professional Services in relation to the SEStran Strategic Network active travel route design.
ARUP	Active Travel Network	£100,750.35		Professional Services in relation to the SEStran Strategic Network active travel route design.
ARUP	Active Travel Network	£10,000.00		Professional Services in relation to the SEStran Strategic Network active travel route design.
ARUP	Active Travel Network	£10,000.00		Professional Services in relation to the SEStran Strategic Network active travel route design.
			£207,250.35	
Dundee Cycle Hire Centre Ltd	People & Plaes - Capital Exp	936.49		Various E-Bike Services and Remedial Works
			936.49	
Ember Technology Ltd	Mobility as a Servce (MAAS)	£23,250.00		Delivery of Enable Platform Services Including Hosting, Support of Website & Apps
Ember Technology Ltd	Mobility as a Servce (MAAS)	£11,625.00		Delivery of Enable Platform Services Including Hosting, Support of Website & Apps (3 Months, ending on 31st December 2024)
Ember Technology Ltd	Mobility as a Servce (MAAS)	£1,800.00		National Planner Journey Planner Bugs
Ember Technology Ltd	Mobility as a Servce (MAAS)	£11,625.00		Application Support and Hosting Jan, Feb & March
			£48,300.00	
Frank Rankin	CORE	£650.00		Micrsoft 365 Review - April - June 2024
			£650.00	
Gordon Electrical Limited	Active Travel Network	£5,155.56		Installation of Traffic Survey Camera
			£5,155.56	
Greener Kirkcaldy	Go e-BIKE	£700.00		Bike Sessions in Fife for CLEAR Buckhaven
			£700.00	
Hillside Agency Ltd	Thustle Assistance	£175.00		Thistle Assistance Artwork Update
			£175.00	
Jacobs UK Ltd	People & Place	£25,500.00		People and Place 24/25 Programme Development Support
Jacobs UK Ltd	People & Place	£40,000.00		People and Place 25/26 Programme Development Support
			£65,500.00	
Journeo	RTPI Regional Framework	£4,848.50		Invoice cancelled
Journeo	RTPI Regional Framework	-£4,848.50		Invoice cancelled
			£0.00	
Philippa Barber	Go e-BIKE	£400.00		Go E Bike cycle training
Philippa Barber	Go e-BIKE	£66.00		Go E Bike cycle training
Philippa Barber	Go e-BIKE	£416.20		Go E Bike cycle training
Philippa Barber	Go e-BIKE	£330.00		Go E Bike cycle training
Philippa Barber	Go e-BIKE	£489.20		Go E Bike cycle training
Philippa Barber	Go e-BIKE	£152.00		Go E Bike cycle training
			£1,853.40	
Sam Moody	Go e-BIKE	£210.00		Go E Bike cycle training
Sam Moody	Go e-BIKE	£140.00		Go E Bike cycle training
			£350.00	
Systra	Bus Strategy Development	£6,346.15		Inception Report, Stakeholder Engagement Strategy, Study Programme
Systra	Bus Strategy Development	£12,692.31		Development of the draft strategy, consultation, and initial options developmen
Systra	Bus Strategy Development	£12,692.31		Case of change draft report
Systra	Bus Strategy Development	£25,384.62		Development of the case for change final report
Systra	Bus Strategy Development	£12,692.31		Case for change final report
Systra	Transport Appraisal	£9,400.00		Produce an addendum to the newburgh detailed options appraisal report incluuding responses to transport soctlands comments
			£79,207.70	
Tactran	People & Places - Revenue EXP	£9,861.00		Travel Know How Scotland
Tactran	People & Places - Revenue EXP	£7,634.00		Travel Know How Scotland
Tactran	Mobility as a Servce (MAAS)	£7,701.43		MaaS Project Officer Costs ; Oct - Dec 24
Tactran	People & Places - Revenue EXP	£7,109.00		Travel Know How Scotland
			£32,305.43	
The Routing Company	Mobility as a Servce (MAAS)	£600.00		Pingo Monthly DDRT trial costs
			£600.00	
Urban Foresight	People & Places - Revenue EXP	£17,892.00		People and Place Evaluation 24/25 Inception costs
Urban Foresight	Regional EV Infrastructure	£10,000.00		EV Strategy & Delivery Plan – Phase 2 - 3rd invoice (40% of contract value)
Urban Foresight	Regional EV Infrastructure	£10,000.00		EV Strategy & Delivery Plan – Phase 2 - 2nd invoice (40% of contract value)
Urban Foresight	People & Places - Revenue EXP	£22,365.00		People and Place Evaluation 24/25 2nd invoice - 50% of contract value
			£60,257.00	
UrbanTide Ltd	People & Places - Revenue EXP	£15,200.00		People and Place Monitoring Dashboard
			£15,200.00	
Velogik	Go e-BIKE	£5,000.00		GO-E-Bike & Forth Bike - Fleet audit, Collection/storage/inspection.
			£5,000.00	
Vibrantly Revive	People & Places - Revenue EXP	£600.00		Meeting, Planning and agenda preperation
Vibrantly Revive	Transport Appraisal	£2,930.60		Meeting, Planning and agenda preperation Cost for Graphic Illustrator
Vibrantly Revive	People & Places - Revenue EXP	£1,710.00		Meeting, Preperation & Walking route assessment. Meeting facilitation and writeup
			£5,240.60	
West Lothian Bike Library	Go e-BIKE	£449.93		Bike accessories
West Lothian Bike Library	Go e-BIKE	£534.04		GPS Tracker Renewal
			£983.97	
West Lothian Bike Library CIC	People & Plaes - Capital Exp	£5,691.50		Delivery of GO E-Bike project
			£5,691.50	
Yunex Ltd	People & Places - Revenue EXP	430.00		Site Survey Works for traffic count camera - Haddington
			£430.00	
Total		£583,424.00	£583,424.00	

Public Services Reform (Scotland) Act 2010 Information
Year ended 31st March 2025

5)   Payments in Excess of £25,000 (including VAT)

Payee	Commodity / Service Description	Payment Date	Gross Amount	Supplier Total
AECOM	Transport Appraisal	01/05/2024	£31,628.40	
				31,628.40
ARUP	Active Travel Network	23/12/2024	£12,000.00	
ARUP	Active Travel Network	31/01/2025	£12,000.00	
ARUP	Active Travel Network	01/05/2024	£120,900.42	
ARUP	Active Travel Network	17/04/2024	£103,800.00	
				248,700.42
Clackmannanshire Council	People & Place Grant	NOT SHOWING ON FRONTEIR	£5,000.00	
Clackmannanshire Council	People & Place Grant	NOT SHOWING ON FRONTEIR	£14,249.00	
Clackmannanshire Council	People & Place Grant	NO ADDITIONAL INFO AVAILABLE	£12,242.97	
Clackmannanshire Council	People & Place Grant	NOT SHOWING ON FRONTEIR	£170.03	
				31,662.00
City of Edinburgh Council	People & Place Grant	13/01/2025	£68,689.87	
City of Edinburgh Council	People & Place Grant	13/01/2025	£99,271.31	
City of Edinburgh Council	People & Place Grant	22/07/2024	£34,243.15	
City of Edinburgh Council	CORE	30/09/2024	£97.00	
City of Edinburgh Council	CORE	09/07/2025	£368.00	
City of Edinburgh Council	CORE	09/07/2024	£81.60	
City of Edinburgh Council	CORE	04/04/2024	£552.00	
				203,302.93
Cycling Scotland	People & Place Grant	12/02/2025	-£14,808.00	
Cycling Scotland	People & Place Grant	12/02/2025	£23,491.00	
Cycling Scotland	People & Place Grant	12/02/2025	116,151.56	
Cycling Scotland	People & Place Grant	18/11/2024	£48,936.00	
Cycling Scotland	People & Place Grant	18/11/2024	£491.00	
Cycling Scotland	People & Place Grant	NO ADDITIONAL INFO AVAILABLE	£38,797.00	
Cycling Scotland	People & Place Grant	NO ADDITIONAL INFO AVAILABLE	£94,399.00	
Cycling Scotland	People & Place Grant	15/08/2024	£76,941.00	
Cycling Scotland	People & Place Grant	15/08/2024	£38,936.00	
Cycling Scotland	People & Place Grant	15/08/2024	£491.00	
Cycling Scotland	CORE	07/08/2024	£340.00	
				308,014.00
Cycling UK	People & Place Grant	10/02/2025	£34,635.30	
Cycling UK	People & Place Grant	10/02/2025	£76,490.66	
Cycling UK	People & Place Grant	10/02/2025	£99,854.69	
Cycling UK	People & Place Grant	26/11/2024	£36,319.99	SHOWING UNDER 92093
Cycling UK	People & Place Grant	13/08/2024	£30,191.14	
Cycling UK	People & Place Grant	NOT SHOWING ON FRONTEIR	£19,009.00	
				296,500.78
East Lothian Council	People & Place Grant	06/03/2025	£16,047.00	
East Lothian Council	People & Place Grant	06/03/2025	£5,055.68	
East Lothian Council	People & Place Grant	13/11/2024	£31,944.85	
East Lothian Council	People & Place Grant	13/11/2024	£5,000.00	
				58,047.53
Ember Technology Ltd	Mobility as a Service (MAAS)	01/05/2024	£27,900.00	
Ember Technology Ltd	Mobility as a Service (MAAS)	28/02/2025	£13,950.00	
Ember Technology Ltd	Mobility as a Service (MAAS)	10/02/2025	£2,160.00	
Ember Technology Ltd	Mobility as a Service (MAAS)	04/10/2024	£13,950.00	
				57,960.00
Falkirk Council	People & Place Grant	06/03/2025	£2,100.00	
Falkirk Council	People & Place Grant	08/11/2024	£27,800.00	
Falkirk Council	CORE	24/04/2024	£108.31	
				30,008.31
FEL Scotland	People & Place Grant	04/12/2024	£140,413.19	
FEL Scotland	People & Place Grant	04/12/2024	£10,401.58	
FEL Scotland	People & Place Grant	04/12/2024	£84,182.33	
FEL Scotland	People & Place Grant	04/12/2024	£73.07	

FEL Scotland	People & Place Grant	15/08/2024	£14,000.00	
FEL Scotland	People & Place Grant	15/08/2024	£37,836.53	
FEL Scotland	People & Place Grant	28/03/2025	£17,466.13	
FEL Scotland	People & Place Grant	28/03/2025	£2,086.81	
FEL Scotland	People & Place Grant	24/02/2025	-£10,290.23	
FEL Scotland	People & Place Grant	24/02/2025	£14,626.87	
				310,796.28
Greener Kirkcaldy	People & Place Grant	06/03/2025	£13,198.72	
Greener Kirkcaldy	People & Place Grant	30/12/2024	£33,943.27	
Greener Kirkcaldy	People & Place Grant	30/12/2024	£753.23	
Greener Kirkcaldy	People & Place Grant	12/12/2024	£4,727.22	
Greener Kirkcaldy	People & Place Grant	12/12/2024	£11,078.91	
Greener Kirkcaldy	People & Place Grant	07/08/2024	£17,419.51	
Greener Kirkcaldy	People & Place Grant	07/08/2024	£10,032.38	
Greener Kirkcaldy	GO E-Bike	16/04/2024	£840.00	
				91,993.24
Hillside Agency	Thistle Assistance	11/04/2024	£6,000.00	
Hillside Agency	CORE	NO PAYMENT INFO	£1,800.00	
Hillside Agency	GO E-Bike	NO PAYMENT INFO	£38,205.60	
Hillside Agency	Sustainable Travel Awareness	NO PAYMENT INFO	£2,400.00	
				48,405.60
Jacobs UK Ltd	People & Places - Revenue EXP	NO ADDITIONAL INFO AVAILABLE	£48,000.00	
Jacobs UK Ltd	Active Travel Network	NO ADDITIONAL INFO AVAILABLE	£30,600.00	
				78,600.00
Journeo Passenger Systems Ltd		19/04/2024	£8,280.00	
Journeo Passenger Systems Ltd		19/04/2024	£28,458.00	
Journeo Passenger Systems Ltd		19/04/2024	£37,944.00	
Journeo Passenger Systems Ltd		19/04/2024	£42,370.80	
Journeo Passenger Systems Ltd		25/11/2024	£2,226.89	
Journeo Passenger Systems Ltd		02/10/2024	£106,243.20	
Journeo Passenger Systems Ltd		Correction	-£5,818.20	
Journeo Passenger Systems Ltd		17/09/2024	£11,636.40	
Journeo Passenger Systems Ltd		Correction	£5,818.20	
Journeo Passenger Systems Ltd		23/07/2024	£71,145.00	
				£308,304.29
Living Streets	People & Place Grant	28/02/2025	£27,976.69	
Living Streets	People & Place Grant	18/11/2024	£31,396.00	
Living Streets	People & Place Grant	13/08/2024	£9,169.00	
				68,541.69
Paths for All	People & Place Grant	10/02/2024	£24,988.92	
Paths for All	People & Place Grant	10/02/2024	£7,653.66	
Paths for All	People & Place Grant	08/11/2024	£10,752.60	
Paths for All	People & Place Grant	08/11/2024	£21,154.01	
Paths for All	People & Place Grant	15/08/2024	£5,846.00	
				70,395.19
Republic of Media	GO E-Bike	NO ADDITIONAL INFO AVAILABLE	£42,061.47	
Republic of Media	GO E-Bike	NO ADDITIONAL INFO AVAILABLE	£15,598.04	
				57,659.51
Scottish Borders Council	People & Place Grant	14/02/2025	£37,924.78	
Scottish Borders Council	People & Place Grant	14/02/2025	£43,765.00	
Scottish Borders Council	People & Place Grant	17/10/2024	£82,500.00	
Scottish Borders Council	People & Place Grant	17/10/2024	£81,440.00	
				245,629.78
Sustrans	People & Place Grant	06/03/2025	£19,181.16	
Sustrans	People & Place Grant	15/03/2025	£15,476.47	
Sustrans	People & Place Grant	15/03/2025	£101,746.33	
Sustrans	People & Place Grant	06/03/2025	£20,000.00	
Sustrans	People & Place Grant	12/11/2024	£26,532.91	
Sustrans	People & Place Grant	12/11/2024	£49,557.49	
Sustrans	People & Place Grant	12/11/2024	£10,505.44	
Sustrans	People & Place Grant	04/09/2024	£32,897.61	
Sustrans	People & Place Grant	04/09/2024	£16,999.14	

				£292,896.55
Systra	Transport Appraisal	22/04/2024	£11,280.00	
Systra	Bus Strategy Development	18/12/2024	£15,230.77	
Systra	Bus Strategy Development	10/10/2024	£30,461.54	
Systra	Bus Strategy Development	16/07/2024	£15,230.77	
Systra	Bus Strategy Development	18/06/2024	£15,230.77	
Systra	Bus Strategy Development	23/05/2024	£7,615.38	
				£95,049.23
Tactran	People & Places - Revenue EXP	NO ADDITIONAL INFO AVAILABLE	£7,109.00	
Tactran	Mobility as a Service (MAAS)	17/02/2025	£7,701.43	
Tactran	People & Places - Revenue EXP	05/11/2024	£7,634.00	
Tactran	Mobility as a Service (MAAS)	30/10/2024	£7,135.65	
Tactran	People & Places - Revenue EXP	NO ADDITIONAL INFO AVAILABLE	£9,861.00	
Tactran	CORE	24/07/2024	£190.00	
				£39,631.08
The Bike Station	People & Place Grant	30/01/2025	£24,179.85	
The Bike Station	People & Place Grant	26/02/2025	£38,166.63	
The Bike Station	People & Place Grant	11/12/2024	£30,780.69	
The Bike Station	People & Place Grant	13/08/2024	£32,610.31	
The Bike Station	People & Place Grant	04/12/2024	£30,743.04	
The Bike Station	People & Place Grant	13/08/2024	£23,495.51	
				£179,976.03
Trapeze Group (UK) Ltd	CORE	NO ADDITIONAL INFO AVAILABLE	£58,312.56	
				£58,312.56
University of Edinburgh	People & Place Grant	People & Places - Revenue EXP	£6,653.00	
University of Edinburgh	People & Place Grant	People & Places - Revenue EXP	£24,502.80	
				£31,155.80
Urban Foresight	People & Places - Revenue EXP	28/03/2025	£26,838.00	
Urban Foresight	Regional EV Infrastructure	13/02/2025	£12,000.00	
Urban Foresight	Regional EV Infrastructure	15/01/2025	£12,000.00	
Urban Foresight	People & Places - Revenue EXP	31/12/2024	£21,470.40	
				£72,308.40

Total   3,315,479.60   3,315,479.60

Consultation responses between June and September 2025

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 The purpose of this report is to update Members on SEStran's response to consultations between June and September of this year.

1.2 In terms of the List of Officer Powers, para 3.14, there was insufficient time to bring the consultations to the Board before their closing dates.

1.3 The responses form appendices 1 and 2 of the report. A brief summary is provided below.

2. RESPONSES

2.1 Transport Scotland Scottish Bus Open Data 21st June 2025
SEStran views the Scottish Government's Bus Open Data consultation as a positive move toward enhancing public transport. By requiring the release of real-time and static data by bus operators—like fares, timetables, routes, and accessibility—the initiative supports digital transformation and aligns with the Transport (Scotland) Act 2019 and SEStran RTS, aiming to improve transparency, accessibility, and passenger experience.

2.2 Public Transport Ticketing Block Extension (online submission)
The UK Secretary of State for Business and Trade has accepted the Competition and Markets Authority's recommendation to extend the Public Transport Ticketing Schemes Block Exemption (PTTSBE) indefinitely, removing its scheduled expiry date of 28 February 2026. An amendment will also be made to the definition of "connecting service" in Article 3 to clarify how the exemption applies to trunk bus services, which operate both long-distance and local routes. Additionally, the revised Order will include a provision requiring the PTTSBE to be reviewed every five years from its commencement date. No other changes were proposed.

Policy Rationale

Competition law aims to prevent anti-competitive agreements (e.g., price-fixing, market division). However, ticketing schemes can offer consumer benefits that outweigh potential competition concerns. The block exemption simplifies compliance for operators and supports integrated public transport.

Scope and Application

The legislation extends to and applies across the entire United Kingdom. It is intended to support sustainable and efficient public transport by facilitating cooperation among operators, which is in alignment with the RTS.

2.3   Public Health Scotland Strategy 13th August 2025
        Public Health Scotland consulted on its strategy for 2025–2035 to help shape the organisation's future direction in public health. The consultation:

- Gathered input from stakeholders across Scotland
- Explored priorities for improving public health outcomes over the next decade
- Identified challenges and opportunities in the public health landscape
- Informed the development of policies, programs, and initiatives aimed at building healthier communities

SEStran recognises significant potential for collaboration with Public Health Scotland (PHS) in advancing shared objectives around health equity, accessibility, and sustainable mobility. A key area for joint working is the development of SEStran's emerging Transport to Health Strategy, which seeks to address barriers faced by individuals in accessing healthcare services due to transport limitations.

3.   **RECOMMENDATIONS**

3.1   It is recommended that Members note the content of the report and its appendices.

Keith Fisken
Senior Partnership Manager
26th September 2025

Appendix 1: Consultation Response – Scottish Bus Open Data
Appendix 2: Consultation Response – Public Health Scotland Strategy

Policy Implications	There could be implications for future iterations of the RTS, dependent on further actions by those consulting.
Financial Implications	None.
Equalities Implications	None.
Climate Change Implications	None.

June 2025

Response to the Scottish Bus Open Data Consultation[1] (March 2025)

The South East of Scotland Transport Partnership (SEStran) is a Statutory Partnership of the Councils of City of Edinburgh, Clackmannanshire, East Lothian, Falkirk, Fife, Midlothian, Scottish Borders and West Lothian.

The Scottish Government's consultation on Bus Open Data (BOD) in SEStran's view, represents a commendable step toward improving transparency, accessibility, and passenger experience in public transport. By mandating the publication of real-time and static data—such as fares, timetables, routes, and accessibility features—the initiative aligns with broader digital transformation goals and the Transport (Scotland) Act 2019.

Strengths

Clear Rationale and Legislative Backing: The consultation is well-grounded in legislation and policy, particularly the 2019 Act, which provides a solid legal framework for mandating open data. The document articulates a clear vision for how BOD can enhance journey planning and increase public transport usage.

Inclusivity of Stakeholders: The consultation seeks input from a wide range of stakeholders, including operators, passengers, and technical experts. This inclusive approach is essential for ensuring that the resulting regulations are both practical and user focused.

Alignment with UK-Wide Standards: The proposal to align with existing UK data standards (e.g. TransXChange, NeTEx) is a pragmatic move that could facilitate interoperability and reduce duplication of effort for operators working across borders.

Areas for Improvement

Implementation Feasibility and Support: While the consultation outlines what data should be published and in what format, it lacks detail on how smaller or rural operators—who may lack technical capacity—will be supported. Without adequate funding or technical assistance, there is a risk of uneven implementation.

Enforcement and Compliance: The document briefly mentions compliance and enforcement but does not elaborate on mechanisms for monitoring or penalising non-compliance and encourage operator compliance. A more robust framework would be necessary to ensure consistent data quality and availability.

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[1] https://consult.gov.scot/transport-scotland/scottish-bus-open-data-consultation/

Passenger-Centric Design: Although the consultation invites user views, it could go further in embedding user experience principles into the design of data outputs. For example, how will accessibility data be presented to visually impaired users? Will there be multilingual support?

Data Privacy and Commercial Sensitivity: While the document states that BOD excludes personal and commercially sensitive data, it does not fully address concerns operators may have about competitive disadvantage. A clearer articulation of data boundaries and protections would help build trust.

The Scottish Bus Open Data Consultation is a positive initiative with the potential to significantly improve public transport accessibility and efficiency. However, its success will depend on how well it addresses implementation challenges, supports smaller operators, and ensures that the data is genuinely useful to passengers. A more detailed roadmap, including funding, enforcement, and user experience considerations, would strengthen the proposal.

Lessons from England's Implementation of Bus Open Data

England's BODS, introduced under the Bus Services Act 2017, aimed to standardise and centralise the publication of bus timetable, fare, and real-time location data. While the initiative has brought benefits, several implementation issues have emerged:

Inconsistent Data Quality and Coverage
- Issue: Despite the legal requirement, data quality and completeness vary significantly between operators and regions
- Recommendation for Scotland: Introduce robust quality assurance mechanisms and provide clear data standards with validation tools to ensure consistency across all operators

Technical Barriers for Smaller Operators
- Issue: Smaller and rural operators in England have struggled with the technical and financial burden of compliance
- Recommendation: Scotland should offer centralised support services, such as shared data publishing platforms or grants for software procurement, to reduce the burden on smaller operators

Limited Passenger Awareness and Use
- Issue: While data is available, public awareness and use of apps powered by BODS data remain limited outside major cities
- Recommendation: Develop and invest further in public-facing journey planning tools like Traveline and awareness campaigns to ensure the data translates into real passenger benefits

Fragmented Stakeholder Engagement
- Issue: Some English local authorities and operators felt excluded from early design and decision-making processes

- Recommendation: Scotland should maintain ongoing, structured engagement with all stakeholders—including passengers, operators, and tech developers—throughout the implementation process

Enforcement and Compliance Gaps

- Issue: Enforcement of data publication requirements has been inconsistent, with limited penalties for non-compliance
- Recommendation: Establish a clear enforcement framework with defined penalties and incentives to encourage compliance

Data Management Recommendations

Centralised Data Portal
A national open data portal (like England's BODS platform) should be established to host and validate data from all operators.
SEStran could propose a regional mirror or API gateway to support local integration and resilience, building on the existing regional systems that already exist and supports and enhances national platforms like Traveline.

Data Validation and Quality Assurance
Implement automated validation tools for TXC, SIRI, and NeTEx data before publication.
Provide feedback dashboards for operators to monitor data quality and compliance.

Update Frequency and Version Control
Static data (e.g. timetables, fares): Updated at least every 28 days or when changes occur.
Real-time data: Updated every 30 seconds to 1 minute.
Use version control to track changes and support auditing.

Operator Support and Onboarding
Provide technical toolkits, templates, and training for operators—especially SMEs and rural providers.
Consider a shared data publishing platform for smaller operators lacking in-house capability.

Data Licensing and Access
All data should be published under an Open Government Licence (OGL) or equivalent to encourage third-party innovation.
Ensure clear metadata and documentation accompany each dataset.

Linking the BODs Consultation to SEStran's Regional Transport Strategy[2]

Enhancing Regional Bus Strategy Delivery
SEStran is currently developing a Regional Bus Strategy to improve service quality, integration, and accessibility. The BODs framework—by mandating the publication of

[2] https://sestran.gov.uk/sestran-2035-regional-transport-strategy/

standardised data on timetables, fares, and accessibility—can directly support this strategy by:

- Enabling real-time service monitoring
- Supporting data-driven planning for underserved areas
- Facilitating multi-operator journey planning, especially across council boundaries.

Supporting Rural and Peripheral Connectivity
SEStran's region includes rural areas like the Scottish Borders and Clackmannanshire, where bus services are often infrequent or fragmented. Open data can:

- Help identify gaps in service provision
- Enable community-led transport solutions (e.g. DDRT) by providing access to live data
- Improve transport to health planning by integrating with NHS and local authority systems

Building on Digital Innovation (e.g. GoSEStran)
Although the GoSEStran MaaS pilot was discontinued, it demonstrated the potential of digital platforms to integrate transport services. The BODs framework can:

- Provide the data backbone for future MaaS or journey planning tools
- Ensure interoperability with UK-wide platforms, avoiding duplication of effort
- Encourage third-party innovation by making data openly available

Addressing Known Implementation Challenges
SEStran can use its regional coordination role to:

- Support smaller operators with technical and financial resources
- Coordinate data quality assurance across local authorities
- Engage stakeholders early to ensure the BODs framework meets local needs

The BODs consultation is not only aligned with SEStran's RTPI ambitions—it is a critical enabler. By mandating open, standardised, and high-quality data, BODs provide the foundation for a scalable, inclusive, and integrated RTPI system across the South East of Scotland. This will enhance passenger confidence, reduce wait times, and improve accessibility—especially in rural and underserved communities.

The BODs consultation is not just a compliance exercise—it's a strategic enabler for SEStran's goals around sustainable, inclusive, and digitally connected transport. By aligning BODs implementation with regional priorities, SEStran can ensure that open data delivers real value for passengers, operators, and planners alike.

ITEM B2 APPX 2

Shaping our strategy: 2025-35

PHS consultation response

1. Opportunities for Collaboration

SEStran recognises significant potential for collaboration with Public Health Scotland (PHS) in advancing shared objectives around health equity, accessibility, and sustainable mobility. A key area for joint working is the development of SEStran's emerging Transport to Health Strategy, which seeks to address barriers faced by individuals in accessing healthcare services due to transport limitations.

PHS's expertise in public health data, health inequalities, and community engagement would be invaluable in shaping this strategy. Collaborative opportunities include:

- Integrating health intelligence into SEStran's transport planning tools and decision-making frameworks.

- Co-hosting stakeholder engagement sessions to ensure lived experience informs policy.

- Where collaborative working is appropriate, supporting the expansion and facilitation of the Transport to Health Learning Network, which provides a platform for cross-sector dialogue and innovation.

2. Challenges and Barriers

Achieving the ambitions outlined in PHS's strategic vision will require overcoming several systemic and operational challenges:

- Fragmentation of responsibilities and funding across transport and health sectors can hinder coordinated action and long-term planning.

- Resource constraints within local authorities and health boards may limit capacity to engage in regional initiatives or pilot new service models.

- Data sharing and integration between transport and health systems presents both technical and governance challenges, particularly around privacy and interoperability.

- Cultural and institutional silos may impede the development of shared language and priorities between sectors.

Addressing these barriers will require sustained commitment to partnership working, supported by national leadership and policy alignment.

3. PHS's National Role: Adding Value

Public Health Scotland is well-positioned to enhance SEStran's work through its national remit and analytical capabilities. Specific contributions could include:

- Provision of detailed public health intelligence to inform transport planning, particularly in identifying and addressing transport-related health inequalities.

- Open data and clear pathways to anonymised data which could inform transport policy and specifically Transport to Health strategizing.

- Development of evaluation frameworks that measure the health impacts of transport interventions, enabling SEStran to demonstrate value and secure investment.

- Advocacy at the national level for transport as a determinant of health, helping to embed health outcomes within transport policy and funding decisions.

By acting as a strategic partner and evidence provider, PHS can help ensure that transport initiatives contribute meaningfully to public health goals.

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4. Strengthening Collaboration

To further develop and strengthen collaborative working, PHS may wish to consider the following approaches:

- Facilitating joint training and capacity-building initiatives to foster mutual understanding and shared priorities across sectors.

- Supporting co-production with communities, particularly those experiencing transport disadvantage, to ensure that interventions are inclusive and responsive to need.

Such measures would help build trust, enhance coordination, and accelerate the delivery of integrated solutions.

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5. Maintaining Strategic Engagement

To ensure continued alignment and effective delivery of shared objectives, SEStran recommends the following mechanisms for ongoing engagement with PHS:

- Regular participation in the Transport to Health events led by RTPs, which serves as a key forum for cross-sector collaboration.

- Joint involvement in delivery planning workshops, particularly those related to SEStran's Regional Transport Strategy and associated project prioritisation.

These actions will help maintain momentum, foster strategic alignment, and ensure that health considerations remain central to transport planning and delivery.

<u>**Human Resources Policy Review**</u>

1.   **INTRODUCTION**

1.1   The purpose of this report is to present to the Board a summary of the new and revised HR policies which were approved by the Performance and Audit Committee at their meeting of 12 September 2025.

1.2   Members should note that staff will be provided with training on the new and revised policies, and that a review of the general wording of policies will be discussed with the SEStran HR Adviser.

BACKGROUND

2.1   The organisational HR policies have been reviewed by Jenny Simpson, the partnership's HR adviser. HR support services are provided by Falkirk Council through our existing service level agreement. This agreement will be subject to review before May 2026.

3.   **SEXUAL HARRASSMENT POLICY**

3.1   The Worker Protection (Amendment of Equality Act 2010) Act 2023, places a legal duty on employers to proactively take reasonable steps to prevent sexual harassment in the workplace.

3.2   The Act sets out new responsibilities for employers. This means employers must take preventative measures to protect employees from harassment in the workplace by colleagues and also third parties such as clients and customers.

3.3   It also places enhanced accountability on employers as tribunals can increase compensation for affected individuals by up to 25% if a breach is found.

3.4   The policy sets out SEStran's commitment to a working environment that is free from sexual harassment. It includes a definition of sexual harassment, including examples of behaviours that may constitute sexual harassment. The policy sets out how an employee can report sexual harassment and how such a report would be handled.

3.5   **Equal Opportunities & Dignity at Work Policy** – a minor change has been made to reference the Sexual Harassment Policy.

4.   **HR POLICY CHANGES**

4.1   A review of SEStran's policies was carried out and the following policies were identified as requiring revision.

- Flexible Working Policy
- Family Leave Policy
- Recruitment Policy

The following is a summary of the changes made to those policies:

4.1.1 **Flexible Working Policy**
Changes have been made in line with the Flexible Working Bill. These include changes to timescales relating to the process and eligibility for applying for flexible working.

Guidance has also been added on making a reasonable adjustment request for employees with disabilities.

4.1.2 **Family Leave Policy**
Changes have been made in line with legislation. These include changes to maternity and adoption

4.1.3 **Recruitment Policy**
Updated guidance is provided on eligibility to work in the UK checks, including changes in how biometric residence permits are treated.

5. FUTURE UPDATES

5.1 Members should note that the Anti-Bribery policy and procedures will be reviewed in the near future and any proposed amendments will be subject of a future report to the Performance and Audit Committee.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 It is recommended that the Partnership notes the contents of this report.

Angela Chambers
Business Manager
September 2025

Policy Implications	As outlined in the report
Financial Implications	None
Equalities Implications	None
Climate Change Implications	None

Risk Register

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide the Partnership Board with its quarterly update on SEStran's corporate risk register.

1.2 The Board should note that the draft version of the Risk Register was considered by the Performance and Audit Committee at its meeting on 12 September 2025.

2. BACKGROUND

2.1 The Performance and Audit Committee, at its meeting in November 2021 approved the SEStran Risk Management Framework Policy This policy supports the management of the overall risk process within the organisation, including its governance arrangements.

2.3 The latest version of the risk register can be found at **Appendix 1** of this report.

3. MAIN REPORT

3.1 This report focuses on the 3 main current strategic risks, based on the total risk scores shown in the strategic risk register, which is included as an appendix to the report. These risks have not changed since the report to the P&A Committee meeting on 6 June 2025.

3.2 **A Potential Change to Transport Governance**

Transport governance defines the roles and responsibilities of Transport Scotland, the seven Regional Transport Partnerships (RTPs), 32 local authorities, and selected partners in shaping Scotland's transport landscape.

Recent discussions and independent reports have consistently advocated for Transport Scotland to delegate more of its workload to organisations better positioned to address regional and local priorities. These entities, with their deeper understanding of specific transport needs, may be better equipped to prioritise and deliver projects effectively within their respective areas.

For the Partnership, this shift presents both challenges and opportunities. The recent transfer of People and Place responsibilities underscores Transport Scotland's support for a regional approach to certain transport functions, reflecting its confidence in RTPs. Building on this momentum, SEStran is actively engaging with Transport Scotland to explore additional areas where it can contribute meaningfully. However, as new governance arrangements take shape, there is a risk that RTPs' influence could be

diluted, potentially limiting their ability to drive regional transport priorities effectively.

Furthermore, Transport Scotland intends to review transport governance in the near future, subject to resource availability. RTPs, along with COSLA and SCOTS, are expected to participate in a working group that will report to the Cabinet Secretary for Transport.

3.3 **Funding Reductions**

Transport Scotland's annual grant remained unchanged for over a decade before being reduced by 5% in 2024/25, reflecting wider Scottish Government budget cuts. This reduced funding level has continued into 2025/26, with a real risk of further reductions in 2026/27 and beyond, potentially affecting the Partnership's core operational costs.

SEStran maintains ongoing engagement with Transport Scotland to ensure its work is recognised and valued. Efforts focus on demonstrating the broader impact SEStran could achieve with increased funding.

Council requisitions have declined by 10% over the past decade. In response, Transport Scotland has encouraged RTPs to seek increases. No decision has been made on the approach to 2026/27, but a separate update to this meeting explores the possibility of submitting a report to the December meeting of the Partnership Board in December this year seeking an increase to Council Requisitions.

Project funding has historically accounted for up to 50% of SEStran's total income but is typically announced mid-financial year, excluding it from budget planning. Due to ongoing fiscal pressures, no such funding was allocated in 2024/25, and availability remains unlikely for 2025/26.

European Union funding ceased entirely in 2023/24 following the UK's exit from the EU. However, UK organisations remain eligible to bid for Horizon Europe funding. SEStran is actively collaborating with UK and EU partners to explore these opportunities.

3.4 **Cyber Security**

Public sector entities are increasingly being targeted by cyber-attacks and data breaches, posing risks to sensitive information and service continuity.

To support its cybersecurity defences, SEStran's Information Technology (IT) service provider oversees all aspects of IT support, including cyber protection. This includes implementing technological defences against attacks and delivering staff training to enhance awareness of social engineering tactics and threats via common communication channels such as email, SMS, phishing, and vishing.

SEStran undergoes an annual **Cyber Essentials Plus** audit, maintaining full accreditation. Additionally, it receives daily threat intelligence updates and weekly vulnerability assessments from the Scottish and National Cyber Security Centres. As part of its IT service contract, SEStran also benefits from monthly in-person consultations with an IT consultant or engineer to ensure ongoing security enhancements.

4. **RECOMMENDATIONS**

4.1   The Partnership is asked to comment on the contents of the report.

Angela Chambers
Business Manager

Appendix 1: SEStran Risk Register

Policy Implications	Policies have been reviewed and updated.
Financial Implications	As highlighted in the register.
Equalities Implications	None
Climate Change Implications	None

Risk Number	Risk Category	Risk Detail	Gross Risk Assessment			Planned Response/Mitigation	Net Risk Assessment			Risk After Mitigation	Date and Owner	Risk Appetite		Action Required
			Probability	Impact	Risk Score		Probability	Impact	Risk Score					
R001 1.1	Strategic	**Regional Governance** Transport Scotland review of regional transport governance arrangements could result in changes to functions of RTPs. This could present either a risk or an opportunity to SEStran.	4 Probable	4 Major	16 High	The joint RTPs have submitted a refreshed Develop to Deliver report to TS and COSLA in 2024. TS currently are looking for resource to restart the review of regional governance. Discussions being held with TS on review of regional governance. Response to consultation on Regional Economic Partnerships provides another opportunity to shape debate on RTP roles going forward. Continue to input as SEStran as well as through Joint RTPs	4 Probable	4 Major	16 High	**High** **Treat**	Review at end of September 2025 Partnership Director	Low	Med	⬇
R001 1.2	Strategic	**Regional Governance** Lack of clarity on role of non statutory REP/ESES City Region Deal groupings	4 Probable	3 Possible	12 Medium	A Concordat has been established and is functioning effectively between SEStran and the ESESCRD. This agreement commits both parties to collaborate openly and transparently to support land use planning and economic growth across the region. The benefits of this partnership are already evident, with the regional electric vehicle charging strategy and the RTS Delivery Plan development being two key examples. The Partnership will continue to work with partners and stakeholders at Scottish and UK government levels to promote the benefits of regional partnership delivery. Response to REP consultation (see above) will assist building partnerships at regional level.	2 Unlikely	3 Moderate	9 Medium	**Medium** **Tolerate**	Review at end of Dec 2025 Partnership Director	Low	Med	⬌

Ref	Category	Risk	L		I		Score	Rating	Mitigation	L		I		Score	Rating	Response	Review / Owner	Rating	Rating	Trend
RO01 1.3	Strategic	**Pandemic / Epidemic:** Interruption of normal service/inability to deliver functions. Financial impact of crisis on sources of funding.	3	Possible	4	Major	12	Medium	Adhere to Government restrictions, rules or guidance. Regular communication with Transport Scotland and consituent councils officials to guide any operational changes. Ensure that all staff are trained on the Business Continuity Plan, and that it is reviewed regularly. Maintain current functions that can be delivered within working guidance. Working from home arrangements now tried, tested and effective.	3	Possible	3	Moderate	9	Medium	**Medium** **Tolerate**	Review at end of September 2025 Partnership Director	Low	Med	↔
RO01 1.4	Strategic	**Political/Govt Change** There is a risk that a change in government could lead to changes to RTPs/Regional Governance	3	Possible	4	Major	12	Medium	Continued engagement with all political parties and agencies. Partnership Director to offer meetings with MSP Transport Spokesperson from each scottish political party.	3	Possible	3	Moderate	9	Medium	**Medium** **Tolerate**	Review at end of September 2025 Partnership Director	Low	Med	↔
R002 2.0	Financial	**Financial:** Significant deviation from budgeted spend	2	Unlikely	3	Moderate	6	Low	The Financial Rules do not permit spending (whether revenue or capital) to exceed available budget. Budget and spend is monitored on a monthly basis by SEStran officers, using financial information provided by CEC through the Partnership's Financial Services Service Level Agreement with CEC and supported by qualified accounting staff of CEC. Action is taken by Partnership officers to develop alternative savings measures, including options for development of contingency arrangements, if required and subject to approval by the Partnership. The Partnership's Financial Rules require reporting of financial performances to the Partnership Board on a quarterly basis. Transport (Scotland) Act 2019 includes section on RTPs carrying reserves.	1	Remote	2	Minor	2	Low	**Low** **Tolerate**	September 2025 Partnership Director	Low	Med	↔

Ref	Category	Risk	Likelihood		Impact		Score		Mitigation	Likelihood		Impact		Score		Risk Appetite	Review / Owner			Trend
R002 2.1	Financial	The approved budget for 2025/26 makes provision for a pay award of up to 3%.	5	Highly Probable	3	Moderate	15	High	Prudent planning assumption with ongoing monitoring of public sector pay negotiations. Ongoing monitoring and review of all costs and forecasts during 2025/26. As the 2025/26 pay award of 4% is higher than the 3% budgeted provision, forecasts for 2025/26 have been reviewed to identify measures to mitigate the additional cost of £7,600.	2	Unlikely	3	Moderate	6	Low	Medium Tolerate	September 2025 Partnership Director	Low	Med	↔
R002 2.2	Financial	Staff recharges - externally funded projects: The approved budget assumes that £149,000 of staff time can be recharged to Projects. There is a risk this may not be achievable.	3	Possible	3	Moderate	9	Medium	Any shortfall in employee cost recharges will be offset by a corresponding reduction in Projects Budget expenditure. Other funding sources will continue to be pursued.	3	Possible	3	Moderate	9	Medium	Medium Tolerate	September 2025 Partnership Director	Low	Med	↔
R002 2.3	Financial	Inflation: There is a risk that the indicative budget does not adequately cover price inflation and increasing demand for services.	4	Probable	4	Major	16	High	When setting the revenue budget, allowance was made for specific known price inflation. Budgets adjusted in line with current cost forecasts. Ongoing monitoring and review of all costs and forecasts during 2025/26. In preparing estimates for 2026/27 and beyond, the Partnership will review all cost estimates to determine if it will be necessary to make a case to increase council contributions.	3	Possible	3	Moderate	9	Medium	Medium Tolerate	September 2025 Partnership Director	Low	Med	↔

Ref	Category	Risk	L		I		Score		Mitigation	L		I		Score		Response	Review / Owner			Trend
R002 2.4	Financial	Delays in payment of external grants results in additional short-term borrowing costs.	3	Possible	3	Moderate	9		SEStran grant claims for projects are submitted in compliance with grant funding requirements to ensure minimal delay in payment. Ongoing monitoring of cash flow is undertaken to manage exposure to additional short-term borrowing costs. Grant submission procedures in place, along with financial planning.	3	Possible	3	Moderate	9	Medium	**Medium** **Tolerate**	September 2025 Partnership Director	Low	Med	↔
R002 2.5	Financial	Sources of additional income to the Partnership may become constrained in the current economic climate and/or due to changes in operating arrangements.	4	Probable	4	Major	16	High	Revenue budget for 2025/26 developed to take account of most likely level of external income. Continue to explore alternative funding options Lobby/bid for additional funds	3	Possible	4	Major	12	Medium	**Medium** **Treat**	September 2025 Partnership Director	Low	Med	⬇
R002 2.6	Financial	Funding reductions: Future reductions in core funding from Scottish Government and/or council requisitions. This could result in difficulty in delivering statutory obligations/duties.	3	Possible	4	Major	12	Medium	The Partnership will continue to source and develop external funding. Manage organisation in accordance with available funding but ability of organisation to deliver RTS objectives will inevitably be dictated by available funding. Engagement/advocating with SG/TS/constituent councils to maintain/increase funding Working with other RTPs to influence SG review of allocation of funding	3	Possible	4	Major	12	Medium	**Medium** **Tolerate**	September 2025 Partnership Director	Low	Med	↔

Ref	Category	Risk	L		I		Score		Mitigation	L		I		Score		Rating / Response	Review / Owner			Trend
R002 2.7	Financial	The funding position of the staff pension fund could lead to increases in the employers pension contribution	4	Probable	3	Moderate	12	Medium	Following Lothian Pension Fund's Triennial Actuarial Review in 2023, Partnership employer pension fund contribution rates are now confirmed at 26.8% until 31 March 2027. Financial planning assumptions have been updated and included in the revenue budget for 2025/26 and indicative budget for 2026/27 approved by the Partnership Board on 14th March 2025.	4	Probable	3	Moderate	12	Medium	Medium Tolerate	September 2025 Partnership Director	Low	Med	⬌
R002 2.8	Financial	Current staffing levels cannot be maintained due to funding constraints and the Partnership incurs staff release costs	3	Possible	4	Major	12	Medium	The Partnership continues to seek additional sources of funding for activities aligned to the Partnership's objectives to supplement resources. Recruitment control measures in place. Additional resources can be managed through consultancy as required. People and Place Programme has increased financial flexibilty.	2	Unlikely	4	Major	8	Medium	Medium Tolerate	September 2025 Partnership Director	Low	Med	⬌
R002 2.9	Financial	**Funding/Grant Awards:** The timing of some funding applications and grant awards do not align with the financial year, resulting in an inability to spend allocated funding within prescribed timescales	4	Probable	3	Moderate	12	Medium	As part of the ongoing business planning process the Partnership will continue to develop and introduce where appropriate a number of suitable on the shelf schemes. All potential schemes will be subject to detailed impact assessments to ensure impacts on the Partnership's core activities are minimised or mitigated. Regular budget monitoring and reports to the Partnership Board.	3	Possible	3	Moderate	9	Medium	Medium Treat	September 2025 Partnership Director	Low	Med	⬇

Ref	Category	Risk	Score	Likelihood	Score	Impact	Total	Rating	Controls	Score	Likelihood	Score	Impact	Total	Rating	Response	Review
R003 3.0	Reputational	**Project Management:** Project incomplete or of poor quality Late Delivery	3	Possible	4	Major	12	Medium	All project progress reported to the Projects Team monthly and the Project and Strategy Delivery Oversight Subgroup quarterly. Minutes of PaSDOS and the full project report are also taken to P&A Committee quarterly for additional oversight. Management action taken as required.	2	Unlikely	3	Moderate	6	Low	**Low** **Tolerate**	Review at end March 2026 Programme Manager
R003 3.1	Reputational	**Reputation:** Regard by the public and stakeholders. Negative or inaccurate media coverage leading to misrepresentation of SEStran position	3	Possible	3	Moderate	9	Medium	Quick response to negative or inaccurate coverage managed by Communications & Marketing Officer, Proactive profile and reputation management via social media, website and press releases. Partnership staff and Board Members continue to promote and advocate activities via speaking, writing or wider networking Continue to work closely with regional partners Board members regulary updated on SEStran work successes and issues. Agreed approach to media position set out in Standing Orders.	2	Unlikely	3	Moderate	6	Low	**Low** **Tolerate**	Review end of September 2025 Partnership Director

For R003 3.0: Low | Med (with direction arrow)

For R003 3.1: Low | Med (with direction arrow)

Risk	Category	Risk	L		I		Score	Rating	Mitigation	L		I		Score	Rating	Response	Review			Trend
R003 3.2	Reputational	**Project Management:** Potential insolvency of 3rd party supplier	3	Possible	4	Major	12	Medium	Improved supplier viability checks before award, renewal or modification of contracts or grants now in place. Individual risks and mitigations to be developed for any contract or grant over an agreed threshhold. Where appropriate, Government frameworks will be utilised. Full review of procurement procedures to be carried out by is nearing completion by Legal Advisers. Staff training on new procedures to be developed.	2	Unlikely	4	Major	8	Medium	**Medium** **Treat**	Review at end of September 2025 Partnership Director	Low	Med	⬇
R005 5.0	External	**Third party Service Level Agreements:** Failure or inadequacy of service	2	Unlikely	2	Minor	4	Low	Service Level Agreements in place for Financial Services, HR and Insurance services. Reviewed annually by senior officers. Subject to independent audit scrutiny.	2	Unlikely	2	Minor	4	Low	**Low** **Tolerate**	Review at end of 2025 Partnership Director	Low	Med	↔
R005 5.1	External	**Contract Management:** Failure to manage contracts leads to under performance and failure to obtain best value and delivery from contractual relationship.	3	Possible	4	Major	12	Medium	Conditions of contract reviewed, including Contract Standing Orders. This work will shape a new Procurement Strategy and Manual which is being developed by Anderson Strathern. Ensure contract documentation sound and up to date. Ensure contracts are adequately managed. Business propriety/credit/analytic criteria to be written in to documentation. Contract management process to be included as part of full procurement review.	2	Unlikely	3	Moderate	6	Low	**Low** **Tolerate**	Review at end of September 2025 Partnership Director	Low	Med	↔

Ref	Category	Risk	L		I		Score		Mitigation	L		I		Score		Response	Review / Owner			Trend
R005 5.2	External	**Grants:** Failure to adhere to grant conditions could result in grants being withheld or reclaimed, impacting the SEStran budget	4	Probable	4	Major	16	High	Ensure that grant conditions are understood before application is submitted, that relevant team members are briefed on grant conditions, and that adequate controls are in place to ensure that all steps and approvals are documented. Grant standing orders Also refer to risk 2.9. Successful management of risk 5.2, reduces likelihood of risk 2.9	2	Unlikely	4	Major	8	Medium	Medium Treat	Review at end of September 2025 Partnership Director	Low	Med	↓
R006 6.0	Legal and Regulatory	**Statutory Duties:** Failure to adhere to duties described in legislation and related documentation	3	Possible	4	Major	12	Medium	Regular monitoring and programming of statutory duties is undertaken by the Partnership Director, Senior Partnership Manager and Business Manager. Audited by third parties. Officers to carry out a review of compliance with Public Sector Equality Duty. Horizon scanning of consultations which may lead to new statutory responsibilities.	2	Unlikely	4	Major	8	Medium	Treat	Review at end September 2025 Partnership Director	Low	Low	↔
R007 7.0	Specific Operational	**People and Place Plan:** Funding changes result in programme not continuing regionally beyond 2026/27	3	Possible	3	Moderate	9	Medium	Engage regularly with Transport Scotland. Ensure outcomes and outputs from the programme delivery are captured to evidence efficacy of regional approach. With the election in early 2026, the impact of this on P&P is unknown and so likelihood of this has been upgraded to possible despite the mitigations.	3	Possible	3	Moderate	9	Medium	Low Tolerate	March 2026 Programme Manager	Low	Med	↔
R008 8.0	System and Technology	**Digital/IT:** Server failure Comms failure Website breach Resulting in loss of service to business operations	3	Possible	4	Major	12	Medium	Regular review of the Management Plan for Business Continuity. IT/Website maintained under contract. Both proactively managed by third parties. IT hardware/software/licences upgraded at regular intervals. Contracted IT consultants deliver IT services. Website contract includes security updates. Robust Information Security Policy in place with regular monitoring reports. GDPR compliant and Cyber Essentials Plus Accreditation maintained.	1	Remote	4	Major	4	Low	Low Tolerate	Ongoing Business Manager	Low	Med	↔

Ref	Category	Risk	L		I		Score		Controls / Mitigation	L		I		Score		Response	Review / Owner			Trend
R008 8.1	System and Technology	**Cyber Security:** Public sector entities are prime targets for cyberattacks and data breaches, which can compromise sensitive information and disrupt services.	3	Possible	4	Major	12	Medium	Annual Cyber Essentials Plus audit and accreditation awarded. In receipt of daily threats and weekly vulnerability emails from the Scottish/National Cyber Security Centre. Regular Staff training and exercises. Monthly in person visit by IT Consultant/Engineer under contracted services provision.	3	Possible	3	Moderate	9	Medium	**Medium** **Treat**	Review Dec 2025 Business Manager	Low	Med	↓
R009 9.0	People	**HR:** Non-compliance with emloyment and/or data privacy laws may result in poor repuation as an employer, difficulty in attracting skilled resource and greater probability of litigation and / or financial penalties	3	Possible	3	Moderate	9	Medium	SLA in place until May 2026 with Falkirk Council to provide specialist HR advice as required and is under regular review. Legal advice is provided, when required, through a framework contract, which is in place until August 2027	1	Remote	3	Moderate	3	Low	**Low** **Tolerate**	Review at end March 2026 Partnership Director	Low	Low	↔
R009 9.1	People	Inadequate measures in place to facilitate staff health, safety and well-being during contingency arrangements or future office arrangements.	3	Possible	4	Major	12	Medium	Regular review of appropriate policies. Carry out appropriate assessments of office equipment and working arrangements, following landlords guidance in relation to access to the office. Risk Management Framework approved by P&A Committee. Liaise with HR Adviser, SG facilities team. Hybrid Working Policy implemented to facilitate transition arrangements to normal working arrangements. An ongoing risk remains for future pandemics and future widespread disease or other outbreaks. Measures will be adjusted in accordance with government advice.	2	Unlikely	3	Moderate	6	Low	**Low** **Tolerate**	Review at end September-2025 Partnership Director (Subject to SG advice)	Low	Low	↔

Ref	Category	Risk	L		I		Score		Mitigation	L		I		Score		Appetite	Review	Current	Target	Trend
R009 9.2	People	Inadequate measures in place to facilitate staff health, safety and well-being during working from home arrangements.	3	Possible	4	Major	12	Medium	Appropriate policies are reviewed and updated. Risk assessments of staff personal home working arrangements have been completed and will be subject to regular review. Risk Management Framework approved by P&A Committee. Business Continuity Plan reviewed. Liaise with HR Adviser. Review transition arrangements to normal working arrangements at appropriate time. Hybrid Working Policy implemented and working well. An ongoing risk remains for future pandemics and future widespread disease or other outbreaks. Measures will be adjusted in accordance with government advice and legislation.	2	Unlikely	3	Moderate	6	Low	Low Tolerate	Review at end September-2025 Partnership Director (Subject to SG advice)	Low	Low	↔
R009 9.3	People	Loss of key personnel may lead to inability to deliver strategy, projects and/or operations	3	Possible	3	Moderate	9	Medium	Recruitment Policy in place. Development of existing staff through performance appraisal. Staff training Work programme will be monitored and redistributed as necessary.	3	Possible	1	Insignificant	3	Low	Low Tolerate	Review at end September-2025 Partnership Director	Low	Low	↔
R009 9.4	People	**Climate Change** Staff are unable to access the office more frequently due to increase in adverse weather events.	3	Possible	3	Moderate	9	Medium	Home working policy in place and procedures for inability to access the office outlined in the SEStran Business Continuity Plan (Jan 2024). Train team in BCP, and review regularly.	3	Possible	2	Minor	6	Low	Low Tolerate	Review at end September-2025 Partnership Director	Low	Low	↔

Risk Number	Risk Detail	Risk Category	Gross Risk Assessment				Planned Response/Mitigation	Net Risk Assessment					Risk After Mitigation/Appetite for Risk	Date and Owner			
			Probabilit		Impact	Risk Score		Probabilit		Impact		Risk Score					
	Restricted ability to undertake RTS re-write: Inadequate senior staff resourcing available due to continued absence of Partnership Director	Strategic	4 Probable		3 Moderate	12 Medium	Resolve absence as soon as possible and appoint external resources as required.	2 Unlikely		2 Minor		4 Low	Partnership Director appointed May 2019. Funds identified for RTS re-write	June 2019 CLOSED			
	Accommodation: Occupancy Agreeement with SG due for renewal February 2019. SG may not renew and alternative premises required at market rates.	Financial	3 Possible		3 Moderate	9 Medium	A notice period of 12 months must be served by each party under the current occupancy agreement. Occupancy Agreement renewed until February 2022.	3 Possible		3 Moderate		9 Medium		June 2019 CLOSED			
	ECOMM: Agreement to commit to ECOMM on the basis of being cost neutral. Income depends on number of delegates attending conference.	Financial	3 Possible		3 Moderate	9 Medium	SEStran withdrew offer to host ECOMM due to uncertaintiy over Brexit and subsequent impact on attendance at the conference.	3 Possible		2 Minor		6 Low		June 2019 CLOSED			
	Following the outcome of the EU Referendum, the Partnership is unable to access EU funding.	Financial	5 Highly Probable		3 Moderate	15 High	The Partnership continues to seek alternative funding sources to progress knowledge exchange/transfer.	4 Probable		3 Moderate		12 Medium	Medium Tolerate: Adapt expenditure accordingly Currently involved in 5 EU projects, the completion of which are underwritten by the UK Treasury.	June 2021 CLOSED			
	Governance: Succession Planning Business Continuity	Governance	3 Possible		3 Moderate	9 Medium	Governance Scheme contains adequate provision to deal with senior officer absence. Staff structure and Business Continuity Plan in place. Senior Partnership Manager appointed.	2 Unlikely		2 Minor		4 Low	Low Tolerate	CLOSED Partnership Director			
	Policy Appraisal: Poor Quality Lack of consultation	Strategic	1 Remote		3 Moderate	3 Low	Advised by Government of relevant policy changes and Partnership Director and Officers regularly looking out for further policies and responding accordingly. Consultative forums also enable greater visibility and integration of local policies into regional strategy. Make full use of online consultancy options.	1 Remote		2 Minor		2 Low	Low. Partnership staff also continue to monitor their networks for relevant policy discussions. Draft RTS approved for statutory consultation. Tolerate	CLOSED Partnership Director	Low	Med	↔
	Regional Transport Strategy: Introduction of new RTS. Delay in approval by ministers. Delayed introduction of the new strategy.	Strategic	3 Possible		2 Minor	6 Low	Regular comms with Transport Scotland at all stages in the development of the RTS.	1 Remote		2 Minor		2 Low	Low Tolerate	28 March 2023 Jim Stewart CLOSED	Low	Med	↔
	Newly Appointed Board. Risk of lack of continuity and loss of expertise due to high turnover in members for the new term of office.	Governance	3 Possible		3 Moderate	9 Medium	Ensure that full training and support is provided to the new Board in 2022 to enable strategic decisons to be made. A Regular schedule of meetings of the Succession Planning Committee.	2 Unlikely		2 Minor		4 Low	Low Skills audit will identify future training requirements Option to appoint Board Observers to supplement areas of expertise Partnership Director 1:1 meetings with Board Members Tolerate	Ongoing Partnership Director CLOSED	Low	Med	↔
	Other Funding Sources: Reduced access to EU project funding and lack of replacement funding from UK Government	Financial	5 Highly Probable		3 Moderate	15 High	The Partnership has sought to engage in as many relevant EU projects and funds as it can whilst UK authorities are allowed to access these funds. This should mitigate the short-term impact of any EU Exit negotiated and implemented. The Partnership has a proven track record in securing funding for relevant projects from the UK and other partners. It is anticipated that this will continue. Horizon projects being pursued.	5 Highly Probable		2 Minor		10 Medium	Medium: The risk remains as there is significant uncertainty around the immediate and medium (3-5year) horizon for access to funds. Other funding applications will be made when available. There has been no confirmation from UK Government on participation in EU funded programmes, like Horizon. Advocate for access to UK replacement funds. Explore further ongoing calls for Horizon programme when available. Treat	CLOSED Partnership Director	Low	Med	⬇

Risk Description and Impacts Table

Ref	Type of Risk	Description	Impact
R001	Strategic	Inability to design and / or implement a strategic plan or strategy for SEStran.	Lack of clarity regarding future direction and structure of SEStran impacting quality and alignment of strategic decisions
R002	Financial	Inability to perform financial planning; deliver an annual balanced budget; manage cash flows; and confirm ongoing adequacy of reserves	SEStran is unable to continue to deliver in line with strategic objectives; inability to meet financial targets; adverse external audit opinion; adverse reputational consequences
R003	Reputational	Adverse publicity because of decisions taken and / or inappropriate provision of sensitive strategic, commercial and / or operational information to external parties	Significant adverse impact to SEStran's reputation in the public domain
R004	Governance	Inability of management and members to effectively manage and scrutinise performance, and take appropriate strategic, financial and operational decisions	Poor performance is not identified, and decisions are not aligned with strategic direction
R005	External	Inability to effectively manage SEStran's most significant supplier and partnership relationships	Inability to deliver strategy and major projects within budget and achieve best value
R006	Legal / regulatory	Delivery of services and decisions are not aligned with applicable legal and regulatory requirements	Regulatory censure and penalties; legal claims; financial consequences
R007	Specific Operational	Inability to deliver projects and programmes effectively, on time and within budget	Inability to deliver projects; achieve service improvements; and deliver savings targets
R008	System and technology	Potential failure of cyber defences; network security; application security; and physical security and operational arrangements	Inability to use systems to support services; loss of data and information; regulatory and legislative breaches; and reputational consequences
R009	People	Employees and / or citizens suffer unnecessary injury and / or harm	Legal; financial; and reputational consequences
R010	New Project Income	Inability to attract new projects to fill the funding gap left by diminishing EU projects/Brexit	Inadequate funding streams and lack of innovation.

Risk Impact

Likelihood	Severity		Risk Score	
1 Remote	1 Insignificant		1	Low Risk
2 Unlikely	2 Minor		2	
3 Possible	3 Moderate		3	
4 Probable	4 Major		4	
5 Highly Probable	5 Catastrophic		5	
			6	
			8	Medium Risk
			9	
			10	
			12	
			15	High Risk
			16	
			20	
			25	

At Risk
Strategic
Financial
Reputational
System and Technology
Governance
Specific Operational
External
Legal and Regulatory
People
New Project Income

Impact				
Descriptor	Score	Health and Safety Impact	Impact on Service and Reputation	Financial Impact
Insignificant	1	No injury or no apparent injury.	No impact on service or reputation. Complaint unlikely, litigation risk remote.	Loss/costs up to £5000.
Minor	2	Minor injury (First Aid on Site)	Slight impact on service and/or reputation. Complaint possible. Litigation possible.	Loss/costs between £5000 and £50,000.
Moderate	3	Reportable injury	Some service distruption. Potential for adverse publicity, avoidable with careful handling. Complaint expected. Litigation probable.	Loss/costs between £50,000 and £500,000
Major	4	Major injury (reportable) or permanent incapacity	Service disrupted. Adverse publicity not avoidable (local media). Complaint expected. Litigation expected.	Loss/costs between £500,000 and £5,000,000.
Catastrophic	5	Death	Service interrupted for significant time. Adverse publicity not avoidable (national media interest.) Major litigation expected. Resignation of senior management/directors.	Theft/loss over £5,000,000

Impact					
Catastrophic	5	10	15	20	25
Major	4	8	12	16	20
Moderate	3	6	9	12	15
Minor	2	4	6	8	10
Insignificant	1	2	3	4	5
Likelihood	Remote	Unlikely	Possible	Probable	Highly Probable

Likelihood		
Descriptor	Score	Example
Remote	1	May only occur in exeptional circumstances.
Unlikely	2	Expected to occur in a few circumstances.
Possible	3	Expected to occur in some circumstances.
Probable	4	Expected to occur in many circumstances.
Highly Probable	5	Expected to occur frequently and in most circumstances.

Risk Appetite

Risk Rating	Net Risk Assessment	Risk Appetite Response
High	15-25	Unacceptable level of risk exposure which requires action to be taken urgently.
Medium	7-14	Acceptable level of risk but one which requires action and active monitoring to ensure risk exposure is reduced
Low	1-6	Acceptable level of risk based on the operation of normal controls. In some cases, it may be acceptable for no mitigating action to be taken.

Risk Response

There are four categories of risk response:

Terminate: risk avoidance – where the proposed activity is outwith the current risk appetite level;

Treat: risk reduction – where proactive action is taken to reduce the likelihood or impact of an event occurring or limiting the consequences should it occur

Transfer: risk transfer – where the liability for the consequences is transferred to an external organisation in full or part (e.g. insurance cover)

Tolerate: where certain risks are accepted

Risk Appetite Target Scores

Risk Description	From	To	Commentary
Strategic	Low	Medium	SEStran has a low to medium appetite in relation to its strategic risks and aims to ensure effective delivery of its commitments in line with agreed timescales. Strategic delivery is monitored through ongoing reporting processes and governance processes.
Financial	Low	Medium	SEStran has a low to medium appetite in relation to financial risk and may be prepared to accept some risk, subject to: · setting and achieving an annual balanced revenue budget, in line with legislative requirements · maintaining an unallocated general reserve fund, in line with legislative requirements Financial risk is set out in SEStran's Governance Scheme.
Reputational	Low	Medium	SEStran is prepared to tolerate a low to medium level of occasional isolated reputational damage. Media response protocols are set out in the Governance Scheme.
System and Technology	Low	Medium	SEStran has a low to medium appetite in relation to system and technology risk. The risk appetite will vary depending on the nature, significance and criticality of systems used, and the services they support. Risks are managed through ongoing use of inbuilt technology, security controls, encryption, data loss prevention, firewalls and vulnerability scanning, plus a range of security protocols and procedures. SEStran has achieved Cyber Essentials Plus accreditation.
Governance	Low	Low	SEStran has a low appetite in relation to governance and decision making. The partnership's governance arrangements are detailed in the Governance Scheme. No officer or member may knowingly take or recommend decisions or actions which breach legislation.
Specific Operational	Low	Medium	SEStran has a low to medium appetite in relation to specific operational risks. The Partnership Director and Management Team are expected to design, implement and maintain appropriate programme, project management and governance controls to manage these risks.
External (Suppliers/contractors/partnerships)	Low	Medium	SEStran has a low to medium appetite in relation to external risks. The appetite will vary depending on the criticality of the service or third-party support. SEStran has an established procurement process, supported by the Contract Standing Orders and use of Public Contract Scotland frameworks.
Legal and Regulatory	Low	Low	SEStran aims to fully comply with all applicable regulatory and legislative requirements. No officer or member may knowingly take or recommend decisions or actions which breach the law.
People	Low	Low	SEStran recognises that accidents can occur because of unknown and/or unplanned events and has an appetite to fully comply with all relevant health and safety requirements to minimise any health and safety risks that could potentially result in loss of life or injury.
New Project Income	Medium	High	SEStran has a medium to high appetite in relation to attracting new projects to enable innovation and attract new funding streams. SEStran has an established procurement process, supported by the Contract Standing Orders and use of Public Contract Scotland frameworks. Financial risk is set out in SEStran's Governance Scheme.

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PROJECTS AND STRATEGY PERFORMANCE REPORT

1   INTRODUCTION

1.1   This report, as previously presented to the Project and Strategy Oversight Subgroup (PaSDOS) and the Performance and Audit committee updates the Board on the performance of the Partnership's strategy and project workstreams in Quarter 1 of 25/26.

2   PROJECTS AND STRATEGY Q1 REPORT

2.1   Appendix 1 gives a breakdown of progress of each project within Q1, including against budget and milestones. Unlike in previous versions of this report, the risk register and issues log has not been included, and was separately reported to PaSDOS.

2.2   Generally, projects are on timeframe. 4 projects currently have minor delays, and 1 project is reporting a small projected overspend. 25% of milestones are currently complete and 7% are delayed, with the remainder on track.

2.3   Some key project and strategy updates over the quarter include:
- A 6-week promotional campaign was carried out for Thistle Assistance concluding in April. The campaign has been extremely successful and has contributed to increasing awareness of the scheme as well as increasing its uptake; it saw a total of 3,376 cards requested (up 2,477%) and 1,784 apps downloaded (up 5,147%).
- The Transport to Health engagement plan and literature review were completed and published. The literature review has been well received and was presented to our Shared Learning Network and the SEStran Board. Transport Scotland have also included it in their report to the National Transport Strategy 2 Board.
- Preparations for the *SEStran at 20* event have progressed, with a provisional date set and a draft agenda in development.
- The feedback from operators, authorities and other stakeholders to our regional bus strategy draft policies was assessed for feasibility and a tightened list of survey questions produced for the public consultation exercise that commenced in July.

2.4   **People and Place**

The key project progress under the 5 themes (plus access to cycles and the community grant fund) has been as follows:

- As part of our **access to cycles** programme, cycle storage schemes across most LAs have begun gathering details of sites to be delivered this year. City of Edinburgh Council's secure residential cycle parking scheme has been successfully handed over to a new supplier following a tender process in 24/25. Clackmannanshire Council have set up their e-Bike library for council

staff to use for work journeys – in the first week of the scheme 2 of the 6 bikes have already been used. The Wee Bike Library in Edinburgh have added 105 bikes in the quarter which have all been loaned out, plus 4 cargo bikes, of which 3 are now on loan. The Cycle Access Fund run by Cycling UK has been starting up again for 25/26, with 20 applications approved so far and application assessments ongoing. The FEL Scotland e-Bike Library has sustained high levels of engagement in Q1 with 107 rentals - 54% of respondents used their loan to cycle to work; 59% said they used the e-Bike in place of a car/van

- With **schools and young people**, Fife Council purchased 210 new bike helmets to go with new and existing Bikeability fleet. The Bike Station in Edinburgh delivered 44 cycling sessions in schools (242 attendances), 7 adult cycling workshops (8 attendances), 11 Maintenance sessions (47 attendances), 1 Dr Bike at Tynecastle High School. From the hands up surveys carried out: 100% enjoyed the sessions, and 83% said they're more confident cycling. Sustrans' I Bike delivery was continued as per 24/25 up to the end of the school term in all funded schools, with a wide range of activity across the region. During the 2025 Big Walk and Wheel (24th March – 4th April) SEStran schools achieved: 137,639 total journeys in 101 participating schools - 104,579 were walked/wheeled, 15,058 cycled, and 16,254 scooted.

- Under the **workplaces** theme, 32 teams of East Lothian Council staff (approx. 160 individuals/3.5% of the workforce) participated in Paths for All Step Count Challenge. Following issues with e-Bike storage in council premises, Midlothian Council are in discussions with insurance for the introduction of a locker that stores and charges the batteries. Travel Know How have completed onboarding with NHS Fife and Fife College, and have continued work from 24/25 with an NHS Lothian staff survey, as well as having discussions with Scottish Enterprise about other sites. Greener Kirkcaldy's work with NHS Fife at Victoria Hospital has had a very positive start to 25/26 with good engagement from NHS Staff for eBike rentals and from both NHS Staff and members of the public for community-based activities in the Kirkcaldy and Dunfermline areas.

- **Accessibility and inclusion** has a range of projects, which includes work in East Lothian, Fife, and the Scottish Borders continuing with the street audits that were begun in 24/25 to develop packages of works for delivery this year, including surfacing, dropped kerbs, tactile paving, bollard and guardrail improvements. Midlothian are progressing the final naming and design of their active travel mascot for production to start. FEL have had a positive first meeting with NHS Rheumatology clinicians, and referrals have spiked through May and June. GPS trackers have been installed in each of these bikes to understand how and when e-Bikes are used and the information will be shared with the clinical team who are hoping to develop the project beyond its current scale and secure multiyear funding for a larger study.

- Work around **capacity and capability building** has included our shared learning event with Local Authority partners at the end of April - this gave the opportunity to look back at 24/25 delivery and look ahead to 25/26, as well as

taking some time to think about monitoring and evaluation for 25/26 projects. There were 17 attendees with all 8 LAs represented - 15 completed a feedback survey and of those 67% thought the event was excellent, and 33% felt it was good, with 93% finding the content relevant. The initial version of the Falkirk Behaviour Change Strategy drafted and submitted for feedback. The community readiness survey questions for this were drawn up and interviews with community representatives were conducted and each community scored using the Community Readiness model. The Programme Evaluation report for 24/25 has been finalised and will be published late July / early August. One of the recommendations suggests developing standardised data collection tools and templates to better assess the programme's impact against outcomes and so we've been working to develop a M&E guidance to allow funded organisations to follow a more structured and standardised monitoring approach.

- On **sustainable transport** projects, Clackmannanshire Council have progressed discussions to provide a bus service to Falkirk Community Hospital. The Clackmannanshire Eye Health Transport Scheme initiative will collaborate with NHS Forth Valley to establish a one day per week service to FCH from Clackmannanshire, for patients who cannot access this service using public transport. East Lothian Council have installed 300 bus stop QR codes to access real time Traveline information for specific bus stops. Locations for the CoMoUK pop up mobility hub have been agreed and they are liaising with local groups to plan events in first stop in Granton.

- Our 15 **community projects** have been commencing, with a common theme across most projects of preparing for delivery and liaising with partners prior to delivery beginning fully in Q2. SCORE Scotland have had a good start to their project, with Dr Bikes, led walks and cycles, and cycle training for women and children being well attended. Porty Community Energy's bike library remains well-used, with 131 loans in three months, including cargo and electric bikes, and they have recruited a summer worker to promote cycling and lead outreach at local festivals. Walk It in the Scottish Borders delivered indoor walking classes across four locations over 12 weeks as well as taster sessions in care homes and community events, including a session for 63 attendees at a Borders Wheels celebration. Bikes for Refugees distributed 126 bikes to refugees/asylum seekers. The eBikes for Borderers project had positive feedback were participants praised the project's accessibility, health benefits, and environmental impact which underscored the value of free access, social benefits, and the opportunity to trial e-bikes before committing to purchase.

2.5 The processing of quarter 1 grant claims is mostly completed, with the overall claim amount largely aligning with forecasts.

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3   COMMUNICATIONS AND MARKETING UPDATE

3.1   Communications and marketing achievements include:
- Monthly newsletters and blog posts produced and distributed
- Regular posts on LinkedIn, leading to increased engagement and followers. This included a weekly 'spotlight on' series to introduce our team.
- Our Thistle Assistance digital campaign continued leading to 3,376 cards being requested (up 2,477%) and 1,784 downloads of the app (up 5,147%).
- Our Thistle Assistance digital awareness campaign being shortlisted for Campaign of the Year in the National Transport Awards.
- Three factsheets produced on our work: SEStran in numbers, buses and Thistle Assistance.
- Beginning our SEStran at 20 work, including creating a celebratory version of our logo.
- Promoting our transport to health literature review.
- Updating the home page of our website and create new pages for different areas of our work.
- Writing our 2024/25 Annual Report.

4   OTHER AREAS OF WORK

4.1   Monthly attendance at Winchburgh Station Steering Group and South of Scotland EV Steering group. Attended the Falkirk and Clackmannanshire community planning partnerships.

4.2   Responded to the following consultations:
- Scottish Fire & Rescue Service Statutory Consultation; Scottish Fire & Rescue Service Strategic Plan 2025-28
- City of Edinburgh Council Supplementary Guidance (SG) on Developer Contributions and Infrastructure Delivery
- City of Edinburgh Council City Plan 2040
- A Just Transition for Transport Scottish Government
- Community Wealth Building Bill Scotland
- Climate change duties - draft statutory guidance for public bodies: consultation

5   RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1   The Board is asked to discuss and note the contents of this report

Michael Melton
Programme Manager
26th September 2025

Appendix 1: 25/26 Q1 Projects and Strategy Report

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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.

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Budget	Income	Expenditure	SEStran Spend
Original Budget	£70,500.00	£534,500.00	£464,000.00
Current Budget	£70,500.00	£539,550.00	£469,050.00
Current Actual	£0.00	£21,470.29	
Current Remaining	£70,500.00	£518,079.71	
Predicted Future Spend	£70,500.00	£512,679.71	
Predicted total spend	£70,500.00	£534,150.00	£463,650.00
Predicted Variance	£0.00	£5,400.00	£5,400.00

	Count	Current Exp Budget	% Exp Budget
Major Delay	0	£0	0.0%
Minor Delay	4	£226,000	41.9%
On Target	10	£313,550	58.1%
Underspend >£5k	0	£0	0.0%
Underspend <£5k	0	£0	0.0%
On Budget	13	£502,500	93.1%
Overspend <£5k	1	£37,050	6.9%
Overspend >£5k	0	£0	0.0%
Total	14	£539,550	

Projects Programme and Financial Summary										
Project	Finance Status	Change Since Last Quarter	Programme Status	Change Since Last Quarter	Current Inc Budget	Current Inc Prediction	Current Inc Variance	Current Exp Budget	Current Exp Prediction	Current Exp Variance
Multi Modal Interchanges	On Budget		Minor Delay		£35,000	£35,000	£0	£100,000	£100,000	£0
Freight Strategy Delivery	On Budget		On Target		£0	£0	£0	£50,000	£50,000	£0
Regional Cycle Network	On Budget		Minor Delay		£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0
RTPI & Ticketing	On Budget		On Target		£11,500	£11,500	£0	£21,500	£21,500	£0
Regional Bus Strategy	On Budget		Minor Delay		£0	£0	£0	£71,000	£71,000	£0
RTS Delivery Plan	On Budget		Minor Delay		£0	£0	£0	£55,000	£55,000	£0
SEStran at Twenty	On Budget		On Target		£0	£0	£0	£40,000	£34,600	£5,400
Rail Strategy	On Budget		On Target		£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0
Data Strategy	On Budget		On Target		£0	£0	£0	£50,000	£50,000	£0
Thistle Assistance	Overspend <£5k		On Target		£24,000	£24,000	£0	£37,050	£37,050	£0
Transport to Health Strategy	On Budget		On Target		£0	£0	£0	£60,000	£60,000	£0
Regional Bike Share	On Budget		On Target		£0	£0	£0	£25,000	£25,000	£0
Sustainable Travel Awareness	On Budget		On Target		£0	£0	£0	£10,000	£10,000	£0
Project Consultancy Support	On Budget		On Target		£0	£0	£0	£20,000	£20,000	£0
Total					£70,500	£70,500	£0	£539,550	£534,150	£5,400

Project Name	Multi Modal Interchanges
Current Exp Budget	£100,000
Project Code	
SEStran Lead	Rachael Murphy
SEStran Manager	Keith Fisken
Project Partners	All 8 Local Authorities
Lead Partner	SEStran
Last Updated	31/07/2025

Finance Status

On Budget

Programme Status

Minor Delay

Budget	Income	Expenditure	SEStran Spend
Original Budget	£35,000.00	£100,000.00	£65,000.00
Current Budget	£35,000.00	£100,000.00	£65,000.00
Current Actual	£0.00	£0.00	
Current Remaining	£35,000.00	£100,000.00	
Predicted Future Spend	£35,000.00	£100,000.00	
Predicted total spend	£35,000.00	£100,000.00	£65,000.00
Predicted Variance	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00

Milestone Status	Count	Percentage
On Track	6	86%
Delayed	0	0%
Overdue	0	0%
Complete	1	14%

Source of Any Income: People and Place grant

Project Summary

Working in line with the Regional Bus Strategy, and strategies developed in 2020, this study will develop recommendations for hub sites in the SEStran region. This will be further developed in Q3 based on the outcomes of the bus strategy and once we have located counters to collect data at key sites.

RTS Actions	Project Objectives	Project Outcomes
•Deliver the eight pilot multi-modal mobility hubs as defined in the SEStran Mobility Hub study	Deliver improved integration Understand local demands for multi-modal hubs and the most appropriate solutions Work with partners to ensure best practice	Refreshed interchange strategy Understanding of the current landscape Awareness of local authority interchange work

Milestones

Name	Due Date	Revised Date	Completed Date	Status	Last Updated
Complete procurement to appoint consultant	27/08/25			On Track	
Review authorities' preferred sites from RTSDP or LDPs	27/06/25		27/06/25	Complete	31/07/25
Assess Bus Strategy outcomes and feed these into Interchange Study	30/09/25			On Track	
Meet with partners to understand other mobility hub work and how it interacts with the regional picture	19/12/25			On Track	
Update board on consultants' findings	19/12/25			On Track	
Map out regional progress and next steps for 26/28	31/03/26			On Track	
Review hub opportunities available via PPP funding	31/03/26			On Track	

Q1 Project Progress and RAG status update

The project has been stalled by being included in the Bus Infrastructure Funding bid, taken forward by CEC on behalf of the bus alliance.
Nonetheless, we have completed the brief, so it's ready to go as soon as we know the quantum of funding available. All future milestones may need to be adjusted once the funding position is clearer. Happily, we will most likely receive the public consultation of the bus strategy before much more progress is achieved, and that should help us understand public priorities.

Q1 Objectives & RTS Actions Progress

Q2 Project Progress and RAG status update

Q2 Objectives & RTS Actions Progress

Q3 Project Progress and RAG status update

Q3 Objectives & RTS Actions Progress

Q4 Project Progress and RAG status update

Q4 Objectives & RTS Actions Progress

Project Name	Freight Strategy Delivery
Current Exp Budget	£50,000
Project Code	
SEStran Lead	Keith Fisken
SEStran Manager	Keith Fisken
Project Partners	Falkirk, CEC, Fife, MoD, Forth Ports
Lead Partner	SEStran
Last Updated	01/08/2025

Finance Status

On Budget

Programme Status

On Target

Budget	Income	Expenditure	SEStran Spend
Original Budget	£0.00	£50,000.00	£50,000.00
Current Budget	£0.00	£50,000.00	£50,000.00
Current Actual	£0.00	£0.00	
Current Remaining	£0.00	£50,000.00	
Predicted Future Spend	£0.00	£50,000.00	
Predicted total spend	£0.00	£50,000.00	£50,000.00
Predicted Variance	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00

Milestone Status	Count	Percentage
On Track	6	75%
Delayed	0	0%
Overdue	0	0%
Complete	2	25%

Source of Any Income: n/a

Project Summary

By continuing our work on freight, we will build local authority capacity and knowledge.

We expect our role to become more one of support and promotion, but will stay responsive to opportunities as they arise.

RTS Actions	Project Objectives	Project Outcomes
Work with partners to identify, through the further development of the SEStran Freight Strategy, locations where gauge clearances should be increased to enable new and enhanced rail freight services to operate in the region Further develop proposals for new rail freight services, including a potential multi-user freight train running from Grangemouth Explore innovative approaches to movement of freight, tram, passenger trains, drones etc.	Improved local authority awareness and capability - Freight included in LDPs & LTS Freight strategy refresh	Updated regional freight strategy Inform Forth Green Free Port transport plan - supporting Alloa to Rosyth corridor Business case development for test projects

Milestones

Name	Due Date	Revised Date	Completed Date	Status	Last Updated
Strategy planning and research: review current strategy	30/06/25		29/06/25	Complete	01/08/25
Review Logistics and freight forum - explore how it can be more effective	30/06/25		29/06/25	Complete	01/08/25
Strategy development (draft) - objectives and goals Stakeholder engagement	30/09/25			On Track	
Create timeline and route-map	31/12/25			On Track	
Test pilots identified	31/12/25			On Track	
Funding exploration	31/03/26			On Track	
Develop business cases where appropriate	31/03/26			On Track	
Finalise strategy and publish	31/03/26			On Track	

Q1 Project Progress and RAG status update	Q1 Objectives & RTS Actions Progress
Review of pre-existing work and outline plan for future work drafted Funding bids entered and results awaited Freight appearing as ket theme of RTSDP work, so planning of freight specific workshop underway Met with Green Freeport infrastructure group & MoD to discuss potentail transport options	

Q2 Project Progress and RAG status update	Q2 Objectives & RTS Actions Progress

Q3 Project Progress and RAG status update	Q3 Objectives & RTS Actions Progress

Q4 Project Progress and RAG status update	Q4 Objectives & RTS Actions Progress

Project Name	Regional Cycle Network
Current Exp Budget	£0
Project Code	92082
SEStran Lead	Beth Harley-Jepson
SEStran Manager	Michael Melton
Project Partners	All 8 Local Authorities
Lead Partner	SEStran
Last Updated	05/08/2025

Finance Status
On Budget
Programme Status
Minor Delay

Budget	Income	Expenditure	SEStran Spend
Original Budget	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00
Current Budget	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00
Current Actual	£0.00	£0.00	
Current Remaining	£0.00	£0.00	
Predicted Future Spend	£0.00	£0.00	
Predicted total spend	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00
Predicted Variance	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00

Milestone Status	Count	Percentage
On Track	3	50%
Delayed	2	33%
Overdue	0	0%
Complete	1	17%

Source of Any Income: n/a

Project Summary

Mapping of the regional cycle network to provide and single source of information on existing infrastructure and future plans. The project will involve the collation of data form Local Authorities and help identify gaps in the current and proposed network and support Local Authorities to work collaboratively on connecting cross boundary routes. This will not involve the design/delivery of infrastructure projects.

RTS Actions	Project Objectives	Project Outcomes
• Progress the delivery of the SEStran Strategic Network and broader cross boundary networks with partners. Develop further phases of this network to ensure a long-term pipeline of investment • Review destinations served by the active travel network to identify gaps and locations where cross-boundary schemes may be required to ensure an integrated, high quality network exists	• Develop a uniform approach to mapping cycling infrastructure across the region • Create a shared mapping resource that can be accessed by all Local Authorities • Work with Local Authorities to identify opportunities to support cross boundary connections • Create a story map to highlight the extent of the existing network	• Creation of a baseline map of the existing cycle network • Identify gaps in current mapping data • Support the development of a unified approach to mapping cycle infrastructure • Mapping resource for current and future cycle network across the region

Q1 Project Progress and RAG status update	Q1 Objectives & RTS Actions Progress
Held meeting with CEC to discuss development of a Regional Cycle Network and developing a consistent approach to mapping of infrastructure.	Identified a preferred uniform approach to mapping infrastructure that aligns with Sustrans approach.

Q2 Project Progress and RAG status update	Q2 Objectives & RTS Actions Progress
Propose to take to the RTSDP grouping to secure senior buy-in to the approach.	

Q3 Project Progress and RAG status update	Q3 Objectives & RTS Actions Progress

Q4 Project Progress and RAG status update	Q4 Objectives & RTS Actions Progress

Milestones

Name	Due Date	Revised Date	Completed Date	Status	Last Updated
Complete review of data gathered in 24/25 as part of P&P	31/05/25		28/07/25	Complete	05/08/25
Meet with each LA to refine scope of works	30/06/25	31/10/25		Delayed	05/08/25
Complete data collection	31/08/25	30/09/25		Delayed	05/08/25
Complete regional network map	02/01/26			On Track	
Share outcomes with LAs and agree next steps	28/02/26			On Track	
Complete public facing version of map	31/03/26			On Track	

Project Name	RTPI & Ticketing
Current Exp Budget	£21,500
Project Code	92019
SEStran Lead	Rebecca Smith
SEStran Manager	Keith Fisken
Project Partners	7 Local Authorities plus Stirling Council (not inc ELC)
Lead Partner	SEStran
Last Updated	31/07/2025

Finance Status

On Budget

Programme Status

On Target

Budget	Income	Expenditure	SEStran Spend
Original Budget	£11,500.00	£21,500.00	£10,000.00
Current Budget	£11,500.00	£21,500.00	£10,000.00
Current Actual	£0.00	£0.00	
Current Remaining	£11,500.00	£21,500.00	
Predicted Future Spend	£11,500.00	£21,500.00	
Predicted total spend	£11,500.00	£21,500.00	£10,000.00
Predicted Variance	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00

Milestone Status	Count	Percentage
On Track	4	100%
Delayed	0	0%
Overdue	0	0%
Complete	0	0%

Source of Any Income: Scotrail and Local Authorities

Project Summary

SEStran currently work on two projects supporting real time passenger information available across the region:
1. Purchase and maintenance of around 160 indoor RTPI PCs and screens placed in public buildings (hospitals, Council buildings etc.)
2. A framework which enables LAs to purchase and maintain RTPI screens for the regional bus network as well as using the Novus FX system to update information timetables and services

RTS Actions	Project Objectives	Project Outcomes
• Introduce Real Time Passenger Information for public transport services through mobile applications, stations and stops and across all parts of the region Deliver integrated ticketing systems, potentially incorporating far capping, which can be used across all modes of public transport and operators, taking into account the digital provision differences in urban and rural areas	• To increase the real time public transport information available across the region To improve the quality of information available via RTPI and app platforms across the region To champion for ticketing options which supports accessible multi-mode journeys	• More screens being online for users of the public transport network Information being trusted by the public as reliable and up-to-date Encourage smart ticketing to be trialled and improved across the region Link with other RTPs/ LAs to increase economies of scale for RTPI infrastructure and customer support

Milestones

Name	Due Date	Revised Date	Completed Date	Status	Last Updated
Contact all organisations with screens offline	30/09/25			On Track	16/06/2025
Complete 25/26 audit review of screens	31/03/26			On Track	16/06/2025
RTPI SEStran Area Meetings with supplier (Quarterly)	31/03/26			On Track	16/06/2025
Complete asset tagging of screens	31/08/25			On Track	31/07/2025

Q1 Project Progress and RAG status update	Q1 Objectives & RTS Actions Progress
Asset register tagging progress - EL screens tagged and issues raised with provider Journeo - on track Meeting with Journeo to monitor SLA and screen issues Added new requested locations for indoor screens to list (from RM's Transport to Health work)	3 screens back online to provide RTPI information in various public sector buildings - screens online now at 56%

Q2 Project Progress and RAG status update	Q2 Objectives & RTS Actions Progress
Meetings with new locations - charity sector and NHS sites. Potential for digital widget to be set up to provide PT information without the PC and screen infrastructure.	

Q3 Project Progress and RAG status update	Q3 Objectives & RTS Actions Progress

Q4 Project Progress and RAG status update	Q4 Objectives & RTS Actions Progress

Project Name	Regional Bus Strategy
Current Exp Budget	£71,000
Project Code	92087
SEStran Lead	Rachael Murphy
SEStran Manager	Keith Fisken
Project Partners	All 8 Local Authorities
Lead Partner	SEStran
Last Updated	05/08/2025

Finance Status

On Budget

Programme Status

Minor Delay

Budget	Income	Expenditure	SEStran Spend
Original Budget	£0.00	£71,000.00	£71,000.00
Current Budget	£0.00	£71,000.00	£71,000.00
Current Actual	£0.00	£0.00	
Current Remaining	£0.00	£71,000.00	
Predicted Future Spend	£0.00	£71,000.00	
Predicted total spend	£0.00	£71,000.00	£71,000.00
Predicted Variance	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00

Milestone Status	Count	Percentage
On Track	1	25%
Delayed	1	25%
Overdue	0	0%
Complete	2	50%

Source of Any Income: n/a

Project Summary

The RTS sees the bus network at the heart of the region's public transport system, building alongside the National Transport Strategy (NTS2).

Almost half (47%) of residents across the South East of Scotland used a bus service at least once a month in 2019 and patronage is building back. At SEStran's June Partnership Board Meeting, the Towards a World Class Bus Service paper begun the process of shaping a Regional Bus Strategy for the South East of Scotland.

RTS Actions	Project Objectives	Project Outcomes
• Undertake a Regional Bus Connectivity study for non-Edinburgh travel to identify settlement pairs where travel demand is high and bus services are poor, as a means to promoting new routes and connectivity (in partnership with other policies) •Undertake a Regional Bus Priority study which will identify regional, cross-boundary, quality bus corridors and key bus priority interventions to reduce bus journey times and improve bus journey time reliability where Edinburgh is likely to be a focus •Deliver the bus priority interventions funded by Transport Scotland's Bus Partnership Fund and subsequently identified by the Regional Bus Priority study •Review the bus powers detailed in the Transport (Scotland) Act 2019 and identify if they could be implemented across all or parts of the region within an integrated strategy to enhance the bus network	To continue strategic progress from 24/25 To engage partners/ public in bus opportunities To build consensus around the best path forward	Worked up options, based on case for change and review of policies. Work Package 3: Appraisal of Delivery Options Work Package 4: Consultation on the Draft Strategy Work Package 5: Finalise Strategy

Q1 Project Progress and RAG status update	Q1 Objectives & RTS Actions Progress
Whilst progress and engagement have been strong, members of the board, including the chair, have suggested that pushing the completion date of the strategy out would allow more review time after the public consultation. As such, milestones have been adjusted.	SEStran staff reviewed the draft policies which had been considered by the board/ working group from Integrated Mobility Forum/ operators and local authorities. The policies had been ranked against their reception with these audiences, as well as their deliverability. A shorter list of questions is being compiled to form the public consultation.

Q2 Project Progress and RAG status update	Q2 Objectives & RTS Actions Progress
The public consultation has been published and is receiving significant attention. To boost engagement, we have advertised on Facebook and Instagram, produced a press release and comms pack and video content for LinkedIn. After two days, 360 people have filled in the survey.	The consultation is underway with specific comms for each LA in hope of regional equity Reception has been enthused and should provide a strong basis from which to launch the strategy.

Q3 Project Progress and RAG status update	Q3 Objectives & RTS Actions Progress

Q4 Project Progress and RAG status update	Q4 Objectives & RTS Actions Progress

Milestones

Name	Due Date	Revised Date	Completed Date	Status	Last Updated
Completion of Work Package 3 (Appraisal of Delivery Options)	27/06/25		12/05/25	Complete	05/08/25
Completion of Work Package 4 (Public Consultation Questions on the Draft Strategy)	27/06/25		18/07/25	Complete	05/08/25
Public consultation closes	25/08/25			On Track	05/08/25
Publication of final strategy	30/09/25	04/12/25		Delayed	05/08/25

Project Name	RTS Delivery Plan
Current Exp Budget	£55,000
Project Code	92042
SEStran Lead	Rachael Murphy
SEStran Manager	Keith Fisken
Project Partners	All 8 Local Authorities
Lead Partner	SEStran
Last Updated	05/08/2025

Finance Status
On Budget

Programme Status
Minor Delay

Budget	Income	Expenditure	SEStran Spend
Original Budget	£0.00	£55,000.00	£55,000.00
Current Budget	£0.00	£55,000.00	£55,000.00
Current Actual	£0.00	£0.00	
Current Remaining	£0.00	£55,000.00	
Predicted Future Spend	£0.00	£55,000.00	
Predicted total spend	£0.00	£55,000.00	£55,000.00
Predicted Variance	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00

Milestone Status	Count	Percentage
On Track	8	80%
Delayed	1	10%
Overdue	0	0%
Complete	1	10%

Source of Any Income: n/a

Project Summary

Building on the ESESCRD and SEStran Concordat, this delivery plan will highlight projects Local Authorities want to develop that exemplify the themes and objectives of the RTS. By identifying these opportunities, we can make best use of CRD and SEStran efforts and actively pursue funding for these.

RTS Actions	Project Objectives	Project Outcomes
Partner councils work with SEStran through the statutory planning processes to implement RTS policies with regards to major developments	Identifies strategically important infrastructure and integration projects Identify priority projects to be delivered in the next 10 years. Identify priority projects to be developed further. Monitoring & Evaluation Plan Maintenance of an up-to-date matrix of projects in the region	Up to date and useful tool with local authorities project proposals GIS mapping to view projects on boundaries and their potential link-ups PowerBI tool, to quickly assess projects against chosen criteria like RTS or RPF them

Milestones

Name	Due Date	Revised Date	Completed Date	Status	Last Updated
Complete assessment projects that were not included in STPR2	30/08/25			On Track	05/08/25
Complete first draft consultancy scope	31/03/25		07/01/25	Complete	05/08/25
Determine procurement route	30/06/25	31/08/25		Delayed	05/08/25
Complete review of Matrix Analysis and sense check outputs	30/11/25			On Track	05/08/25
Complete assessments and recommend appropriate development route for each projects	31/03/26			On Track	05/08/25
Complete assessment of the cost of project development and provide overall estimate	31/03/26			On Track	05/08/25
Finalise Monitoring & Evaluation Criteria	31/03/26			On Track	05/08/25
Finalise Funding Strategy	31/03/26			On Track	05/08/25
Finalise delivery programme	31/03/26			On Track	05/08/25
Steering Group Gateway Review	31/03/26			On Track	05/08/25

Q1 Project Progress and RAG status update	Q1 Objectives & RTS Actions Progress
Progress on the delivery plan has been stalled whilst SEStran and City Region Deal seek clarity on the STPR2 Delivery Plan commitments as any changes to the priorities identified in STPR2 will need to be assessed and priorities through the RTS Delivery Plan matrix before the project can move to the next stage.	Progress on the delivery plan has been stalled whilst SEStran and City Region Deal seek clarity on the STPR2 Delivery Plan commitments as any changes to the priorities identified in STPR2 will need to be assessed and priorities through the RTS Delivery Plan matrix before the project can move to the next stage.

Q2 Project Progress and RAG status update	Q2 Objectives & RTS Actions Progress

Q3 Project Progress and RAG status update	Q3 Objectives & RTS Actions Progress

Q4 Project Progress and RAG status update	Q4 Objectives & RTS Actions Progress

Project Name	SEStran at Twenty
Current Exp Budget	£40,000
Project Code	
SEStran Lead	Rachael Murphy
SEStran Manager	Keith Fisken
Project Partners	LAs, TS,
Lead Partner	SEStran
Last Updated	05/08/2025

Finance Status

On Budget

Programme Status

On Target

Budget	Income	Expenditure	SEStran Spend
Original Budget	£0.00	£40,000.00	£40,000.00
Current Budget	£0.00	£40,000.00	£40,000.00
Current Actual	£0.00	£5,400.00	
Current Remaining	£0.00	£34,600.00	
Predicted Future Spend	£0.00	£29,200.00	
Predicted total spend	£0.00	£34,600.00	£34,600.00
Predicted Variance	£0.00	£5,400.00	£5,400.00

Milestone Status	Count	Percentage
On Track	3	50%
Delayed	1	17%
Overdue	0	0%
Complete	2	33%

Source of Any Income: n/a

Project Summary

Having been founded in 2005, RTPs have existed for two decades, an anniversary that should be celebrated.

We plan to celebrate this milestone with events and a re-publication of the RTS vision.

RTS Actions	Project Objectives	Project Outcomes
N/A	To celebrate the milestone of our RTS To engage stakeholders and make new connections Display the vision that guides our RTS in a more engaging way	Event series, perhaps linked to board meetings Final, major event Rich picture version of RTS vision

Milestones

Name	Due Date	Revised Date	Completed Date	Status	Last Updated
Three factsheets on specific topics.	31/03/26			On Track	05/08/25
Publish 2024/25 Annual Report.	27/06/25		22/07/25	Complete	05/08/25
Complete vision brief	30/08/25			On Track	05/08/25
Send the Save the Date to key invitees	27/06/25	13/08/25		Delayed	05/08/25
Procure designers for vision work	30/08/25			On Track	05/08/25
Book event space for celebration	27/06/25		01/08/25	Complete	05/08/25

Q1 Project Progress and RAG status update

We have produced three newsletters, blog posts, factsheets.
The annual report is nearly complete
A provisional date has been sent for a celebration event (Dec 4 2025)
Chair have been updated on suggested agenda
SEStran at 20 Teams backgrounds created

Q1 Objectives & RTS Actions Progress

Q2 Project Progress and RAG status update

Q2 Objectives & RTS Actions Progress

Q3 Project Progress and RAG status update

Q3 Objectives & RTS Actions Progress

Q4 Project Progress and RAG status update

Q4 Objectives & RTS Actions Progress

Project Name	Rail Strategy
Current Exp Budget	£0
Project Code	92047
SEStran Lead	Keith Fisken
SEStran Manager	Keith Fisken
Project Partners	tbc
Lead Partner	tbc
Last Updated	05/08/2025

Finance Status

On Budget

Programme Status

On Target

Budget	Income	Expenditure	SEStran Spend
Original Budget	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00
Current Budget	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00
Current Actual	£0.00	£0.00	
Current Remaining	£0.00	£0.00	
Predicted Future Spend	£0.00	£0.00	
Predicted total spend	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00
Predicted Variance	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00

Milestone Status	Count	Percentage
On Track	4	67%
Delayed	1	17%
Overdue	0	0%
Complete	1	17%

Source of Any Income: n/a

Project Summary

The rail network (comprising 'conventional' heavy rail and light rail/tram) plays a key role linking up the region, as well as providing connectivity to external locations. The region has benefitted from the construction of the Borders Railway which opened in September 2015., Levenmouth rail line and Reston & East Liston stations in 2024.

RTS Actions	Project Objectives	Project Outcomes
Work with Transport Scotland and Network Rail to deliver new rail infrastructure in the region, where appraisal and business case development has demonstrated its merits Opportunities should be explored with partners to introduce new services, including more direct links across the region, national boundaries and cross-city connections	Improved strategic engagement with key stakeholders	Regional agreement on approach to rail List of supported fundable projects Improved integration with other modes Long term - new infrastructure?

Q1 Project Progress and RAG status update

Review of RTS rail chapters completed with rail operators/ NR
Conversations underway with NR about better data sharing

Q1 Objectives & RTS Actions Progress

Q2 Project Progress and RAG status update

Q2 Objectives & RTS Actions Progress

Q3 Project Progress and RAG status update

Q3 Objectives & RTS Actions Progress

Q4 Project Progress and RAG status update

Q4 Objectives & RTS Actions Progress

Milestones

Name	Due Date	Revised Date	Completed Date	Status	Last Updated
Deliver 1st meeting of the Regional rail group	30/06/25	30/08/25		Delayed	05/08/25
Strategy planning and research	30/06/25		06/07/25	Complete	05/08/25
Deliver 2nd meeting of Regional Rail Group	30/09/25			On Track	
Strategy development (draft) - objectives and goals Stakeholder engagement	31/12/25			On Track	
Deliver 3rd meeting of Regioanl Rail Group	31/12/25			On Track	
Deliver 4th meeting of Regioanl Rail Group	31/03/26			On Track	

Project Name	Data Paper
Current Exp Budget	£50,000
Project Code	
SEStran Lead	Rachael Murphy
SEStran Manager	Keith Fisken
Project Partners	WFM
Lead Partner	SEStran
Last Updated	05/08/2025

Finance Status

On Budget

Programme Status

On Target

Budget	Income	Expenditure	SEStran Spend
Original Budget	£0.00	£50,000.00	£50,000.00
Current Budget	£0.00	£50,000.00	£50,000.00
Current Actual	£0.00	£0.00	
Current Remaining	£0.00	£50,000.00	
Predicted Future Spend	£0.00	£50,000.00	
Predicted total spend	£0.00	£50,000.00	£50,000.00
Predicted Variance	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00

Milestone Status	Count	Percentage
On Track	4	44%
Delayed	0	0%
Overdue	0	0%
Complete	5	56%

Source of Any Income: n/a

Project Summary

We will build an understanding of how our local authorities, other RTPs, Transport Scotland, and partner organisations like ESESCRD think about mapping and data challenges and opportunities.

RTS Actions	Project Objectives	Project Outcomes
Drawing on the findings of the monitoring reports, revisit the RTS when the post-pandemic picture has stabilised to determine any policy adjustments required to reflect the 'new normal' circumstances	To understand what partner organisations do around mapping and data To build internal skill set on GIS, and associated data/ mapping products To consider what we can learn from open data sources and how it could impact our work.	Discovery Paper on Data and Mapping Inventory of data and mapping resources and capacity within the organisation

Q1 Project Progress and RAG status update	Q1 Objectives & RTS Actions Progress
We are meeting the milestones attached to this project, and are now working in Miro to understand more about what we already have access to/ would need to pay for.	We have: - compiled a list of questions to answer - contacted Transport Scotland about their data strategy - begun data Miro board for organisation -met with UT's leads on data - begun analysis of RCN

Q2 Project Progress and RAG status update	Q2 Objectives & RTS Actions Progress

Q3 Project Progress and RAG status update	Q3 Objectives & RTS Actions Progress

Q4 Project Progress and RAG status update	Q4 Objectives & RTS Actions Progress

Milestones

Name	Due Date	Revised Date	Completed Date	Status	Last Updated
Meet with Transport Scotland to understand their emerging data strategy's methodology	27/06/25		30/04/25	Complete	05/08/25
Compile data and mapping capacity list	27/06/25		30/05/25	Complete	05/08/25
Complete list of questions to form basis of paper	27/06/25		30/05/25	Complete	05/08/25
Meet UrbanTide's to discuss their work in this area	27/06/25		27/06/25	Complete	05/08/25
Complete evaluation of RCN as active project already using mapping	27/06/25		20/06/25	Complete	05/08/25
Undertake audit of local authorities' mapping and data policies	30/09/25			On Track	05/08/25
Establish data and mapping gaps list	30/09/25			On Track	05/08/25
Begin discovery plan drafting	19/12/25			On Track	05/08/25
Present recommendations paper to board	31/03/26			On Track	05/08/25

Project Name	Thistle Assistance
Current Exp Budget	£37,050
Project Code	92077
SEStran Lead	Sandra Lavergne
SEStran Manager	Michael Melton
Project Partners	All RTPs
Lead Partner	SEStran
Last Updated	01/08/2025

Finance Status

Overspend <£5k

Programme Status

On Target

Budget	Income	Expenditure	SEStran Spend
Original Budget	£24,000.00	£32,000.00	£8,000.00
Current Budget	£24,000.00	£37,050.00	£13,050.00
Current Actual	£0.00	£11,422.29	
Current Remaining	£24,000.00	£25,627.71	
Predicted Future Spend	£24,000.00	£25,627.71	
Predicted total spend	£24,000.00	£37,050.00	£13,050.00
Predicted Variance	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00

Milestone Status	Count	Percentage
On Track	14	70%
Delayed	0	0%
Overdue	0	0%
Complete	6	30%

Source of Any Income: Other RTPs

Project Summary

Thistle Assistance (card and app) is a national scheme that provides support to users that may face additional barriers to access public transport. It eases the communication between users and transport staff to make the experience more accessible and enjoyable.

RTS Actions	Project Objectives	Project Outcomes
Deliver improved public transport information in a variety of formats, supported by appropriate wayfinding infrastructure on the transport network,	Increase distribution of the Thistle Assistance programme Raise awareness of the scheme nationally and locally Increase engagement with transport providers	Improve the journey experience in public transport for people with disabilities and mobility challenges. Improve feeling of safety for people with disability and mobility challenges when taking public transport. Contribute to making public transport seen as more accessible by people with disability and mobility challenges, Thistle Assistance embedded into transport providers' staff induction and training programme.

Q1 Project Progress and RAG status update

The digital campaign delivered with Republic of Media ran for 6 weeks and was completed at the end of April 2025. The learning will help shape the next campaign, which is aimed to be delivered from September/October for 2 to 3 months, budget dependent.
This campaign has been shortlisted as part of the National Transport Awards in the Campaign of the year category. Winners will be announced in October 2025.
5,000 cards / leaflets were ordered from current supplier to meet high demand during promotional campaign.
All RTPs have been contacted to share highlights of 24/25.
Meeting held with TS on 28/05/2025 to discuss progress to date.
Printing and card distribution supplier appointed.

Q1 Objectives & RTS Actions Progress

The digital campaign has been extremely successful and has contributed to increasing awareness of the scheme as well as increasing its uptake; it saw a total of 3,376 cards requested (up 2,477%) requested and 1,784 apps downloaded (up 5,147%).
The project plan has been revised based on the lessons learned from the campaign and previous initiatives.

Q2 Project Progress and RAG status update

Meeting held with Age Scotland to discuss potential opportunity for them to promote the scheme.
Card request form amended based on Lessons learnt.
Meeting with all RTPs to be held in Aug/Sept to discuss current plans and potential further financial investments.

Q2 Objectives & RTS Actions Progress

Q3 Objectives & RTS Actions Progress

Q4 Project Progress and RAG status update

Q4 Objectives & RTS Actions Progress

Milestones

Name	Due Date	Revised Date	Completed Date	Status	Last Updated
App quarterly maintenance Q1	30/06/25		05/05/25	Complete	30/07/25
Printing brief circulated to 3 potential suppliers	01/06/25		08/05/25	Complete	30/07/25
Printing supplier appointed	30/06/25		09/06/25	Complete	30/07/25
Provide key updates to the Board	20/06/25		20/06/25	Complete	30/07/25
POD laying out plans for 25/26 approved and signed off	30/09/25		01/08/25	Complete	30/07/25
First RTP Thistle Assistance meeting	30/09/25			On Track	30/07/25
Update privacy policy prior to any new marketing initiative	30/09/25			On Track	30/07/25
App quarterly maintenance Q2	30/09/25		03/07/25	Complete	30/07/25
Update card request form prior to any new marketing initiative	30/09/25			On Track	30/07/25
Plan next digital marketing campaign	30/09/25			On Track	30/07/25
Transport operator survey created and distributed	30/09/25			On Track	30/07/25
App quarterly maintenance Q3	19/12/25			On Track	30/07/25
Results from transport operator survey collected and analysed	19/12/25			On Track	30/07/25
Digital marketing campaign done	19/12/25			On Track	30/07/25
User survey created and distributed	19/12/25			On Track	30/07/25
Procurement exercise started to appoint a printer/distributor on a multi-year contract	19/12/25			On Track	30/07/25
App quarterly maintenance Q4	31/03/26			On Track	30/07/25
User survey analysed	31/03/26			On Track	30/07/25
High level project plan for 26/27 based on all data collected and recommendations	31/03/26			On Track	30/07/25
Procurement exercise finalised with a supplier appointed	31/03/26			On Track	30/07/25

Project Name	Transport to Health Strategy
Current Exp Budget	£60,000
Project Code	92062
SEStran Lead	Rachael Murphy
SEStran Manager	Keith Fisken
Project Partners	NHS Boards
Lead Partner	SEStran
Last Updated	05/08/2025

Finance Status

On Budget

Programme Status

On Target

Budget	Income	Expenditure	SEStran Spend
Original Budget	£0.00	£60,000.00	£60,000.00
Current Budget	£0.00	£60,000.00	£60,000.00
Current Actual	£0.00	£0.00	
Current Remaining	£0.00	£60,000.00	
Predicted Future Spend	£0.00	£60,000.00	
Predicted total spend	£0.00	£60,000.00	£60,000.00
Predicted Variance	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00

Milestone Status	Count	Percentage
On Track	7	54%
Delayed	0	0%
Overdue	0	0%
Complete	6	46%

Source of Any Income: n/a

Project Summary

We started engagement with our region's four Health Boards and established a learning network creating a space for sharing knowledge and experience. Building on this, we've co-hosted an event with Public Health Scotland on Health and Sustainable Transport.
Given the importance of this work, and many complex aspects, we have opted to develop a strategy for the region on Transport to Health.

RTS Actions	Project Objectives	Project Outcomes
Support the delivery of bus services and infrastructure measures which ensure access to healthcare for all	Reduce barriers on access to health services in the region Continue collaborative work with key stakeholders in the health sector and beyond Integrate TtH into other areas of work led by SEStran	Gain a better understanding of existing projects / available data in the TtH sector in the region and beyond Try and assess the overall current spend in TtH and how to maximise impact Develop a case for change Maintain regular contacts and engagement with Health Boards and key stakeholders

Milestones

Name	Due Date	Revised Date	Completed Date	Status	Last Updated
Sign off Lit Review	27/06/25		28/04/25	Complete	05/08/25
Sign off Engagement Plan	27/06/25		28/04/25	Complete	05/08/25
1st Draft PID	27/06/25		26/05/25	Complete	05/08/25
1st Draft TOR	27/06/25		26/05/25	Complete	05/08/25
Present docs to HBs	27/06/25		02/06/25	Complete	05/08/25
Work with DES to rerun TtH survey	27/06/25		20/06/25	Complete	05/08/25
Identify other key stakeholders	30/09/25			On Track	
Webinar for equalities/ other stakeholders?	30/09/25			On Track	
Pursue work on Case for Change (how to identify potential solutions?)	19/12/25			On Track	
Pursue engagement via Learning network	19/12/25			On Track	
Review effectiveness of Learning network and identify potential improvements	19/12/25			On Track	
Presentation draft Case for Change at Q4 Board	31/03/26			On Track	
Identify key actions for 26/27	31/03/26			On Track	

Q1 Project Progress and RAG status update	Q1 Objectives & RTS Actions Progress
We are progressing well against delivery of the strategy. Challenges remain around health board capacity to engage with the work. As such, we are going in person to meet each board over the summer months to review the PID and TOR documents with them and understand any challenges specific to their geographies or partners.	Engagement Plan and Literature Review completed and published. We have produced a first draft of our PID and TOR documents for internal review These have been shared with the healthboards for their comment. We have presented the Literature Review to our Shared Learning Network and our board, taking note of suggested structure for future strategy production. TS have included it in their reporting on the NTS2

Q2 Project Progress and RAG status update	Q2 Objectives & RTS Actions Progress

Q3 Project Progress and RAG status update	Q3 Objectives & RTS Actions Progress

Q4 Project Progress and RAG status update	Q4 Objectives & RTS Actions Progress

Project Name	Regional Bike Share
Current Exp Budget	£25,000
Project Code	92076
SEStran Lead	Beth Harley-Jepson
SEStran Manager	Michael Melton
Project Partners	Local cycling organisations
Lead Partner	SEStran
Last Updated	05/08/2025

Finance Status

On Budget

Programme Status

On Target

Budget	Income	Expenditure	SEStran Spend
Original Budget	£0.00	£25,000.00	£25,000.00
Current Budget	£0.00	£25,000.00	£25,000.00
Current Actual	£0.00	£2,488.00	
Current Remaining	£0.00	£22,512.00	
Predicted Future Spend	£0.00	£22,512.00	
Predicted total spend	£0.00	£25,000.00	£25,000.00
Predicted Variance	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00

Milestone Status	Count	Percentage
On Track	4	80%
Delayed	1	20%
Overdue	0	0%
Complete	0	0%

Source of Any Income: n/a

Project Summary

This project will support access to cycles in the region by promoting opportunities for public bike share, connecting up existing community bike share projects and supporting the delivery of access to cycles projects. This project will continue to provide support to the existing go e-bike project locations where SEStran has assets. This will include support with training, maintenance and networking across the region. The e-bike employer trial will be continued, focusing on NHS sites in tandem with work through TravelKnowHow.

RTS Actions	Project Objectives	Project Outcomes
• Identify locations where implementation of shared mobility solutions could be beneficial and reduce the level of 'forced' car ownership • Expand the provision of bike-sharing initiatives across the region	• Installation of a Brompton cycle hire unit and provision of 8 hire bikes in Haymarket Station or alternative site • Increase awareness and access to e-bikes as an option for commuting to work through three e-bike employer trials • Increase access to e-bikes to the public through supporting training and e-bike loans for community groups • Carry out promotion of existing Brompton lockers at QMU and Sherrifhall P&R	• More people are enabled to choose cycling as a trasnport mode • More people have the opportuniy to trial an e-bike and choose to switch to cycling for more of their journeys

Q1 Project Progress and RAG status update	Q1 Objectives & RTS Actions Progress
Employer trial has started in St Johns hospital for a 4 week period. Future locations are being explored in Midlothian and Edinburgh. We have several times attempted to receive confirmation from Scotrail about placement of a Brompton locker at Haymarket without receiving a response. If reponse not recieved by end of August, will explore whether there are any viable alternative locations.	Continuation of trial at St Johns, engaging 20+ staff members in utilising an e-bike for commuting journeys. Engaged with QMU to organise promotion of Brompton locker to students returning/starting in September. Ongoing support to existing community groups to engage in training.

Q2 Project Progress and RAG status update	Q2 Objectives & RTS Actions Progress

Q3 Project Progress and RAG status update	Q3 Objectives & RTS Actions Progress

Q4 Project Progress and RAG status update	Q4 Objectives & RTS Actions Progress

Milestones

Name	Due Date	Revised Date	Completed Date	Status	Last Updated
Complete three employer e-bike trials at NHS sites	31/03/26			On Track	
Secure confirmation of Brompton locker location	30/06/25	31/08/25		Delayed	05/08/25
Support training sessions for e-bike groups	31/03/26			On Track	
Collect case studies from e-bike loans	30/09/25			On Track	
Carry out promotion of existing Brompton lockers	01/09/25			On Track	

People and Place Grant Awards

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 The purpose of this paper is to report variations to the 2025/26 SEStran People and Place grant awards to the Board.

2 GRANT AWARDS

2.1 As per the Grant Standing Orders, a variation to the 2025/26 People and Place grant award has been reviewed and approved by the Partnership Director since the previous Board meeting. All awards were under the delegation limit for approval by the Partnership Director.

2.2 Appendix 1 shows a list of grant award variations from those values reported to the Board at its last meeting. Also included is a short explanation of the reasons for each variation.

3 RECOMMENDATIONS

3.1 The Partnership Board is asked to note the content of this report and the variation to the 2025/26 SEStran People and Place grant awards at Appendix 1.

Michael Melton
Programme Manager
26th September 2025

Appendix 1: SEStran People and Place Plan 2025/2026 – variations to grant awards

Policy Implications	The People and Place Plan aligns with the objectives of the RTS and therefore will help deliver on SEStran's policy objectives.
Financial Implications	All costs are within the grant award from Transport Scotland, so there is no financial impact on the SEStran core budget. Funding agreements are in place for each grant to ensure funds are appropriately managed.
Equalities Implications	In supporting people to travel actively, the grants should have a positive impact on equalities. Specific elements of the grants have been designed to further support the accessibility of active travel, including a focus on the provision of

	adaptive bikes and a programme focused on physical barrier removal on pavements. An EqIA has been undertaken on the People and Place Delivery Plan and recommendations from this will be incorporated where possible.
Climate Change Implications	In promoting behaviour change from private cars to active travel, the grants will support the transition to net zero.

SEStran People and Place Plan 2025/26 – variations to grant awards **APPX 1**

Local Authorities grant award variations

Local Authority	Previous Award	New Award	Reason for change
West Lothian	£121,900	£122,695.64	Award increased by £795.64 due to equivalent underspend on 24/25 grant that was carried over to Q1 25/26.

CONTRACT REGISTER

1   INTRODUCTION

1.1   This report, as previously noted by the Performance and Audit Committee on 12th September, presents the Partnership's contract register to the Board for noting in line with a commitment to transparency in procurement.

2   REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

2.1   As per the Contract Standing Orders, the Partnership Director will arrange for all contracts accepted with an estimated value exceeding £50,000 (or such lower amount as agreed with the Partnership Director) to be publicly displayed on the Partnership's externally facing website. This will be in the form of a Register of Contracts awarded and will contain the following information:
- the date the contract was awarded;
- the name of the contractor(s) the contract has been awarded to;
- the subject matter of the contract;
- the estimated value of the contract;
- the start date of the contract;
- the end date of the contract (excluding contract extensions). If the date is not provided, a description of the circumstances when the contract will end; and
- the duration of any contract extension periods.

Information can be withheld if disclosing information would: impede law enforcement; be contrary to public interest; prejudice commercial interests of any person; or prejudice fair competition between suppliers.

2.2   In addition to this, the Performance and Audit Committee has the following powers that relate to procurement:
- To scrutinise any matter relating to the Partnership having regard to the Partnership's responsibility for Best Value and continuous improvement.
- Reviewing with management the adequacy of the following matters:-
  - internal control systems;
  - policies and practices to ensure compliance with relevant statutes, directions, guidance and policies;
  - financial information presented to the Partnership;
  - risk assessment arrangements and procedures.

3   CONTRACT REGISTER

3.1   An extract from the contract register showing all contracts that are currently live, or have been live in the 6 months since the register was last reviewed by this Committee on 28th February 2025, and are over the value of £50,000 is shown at Appendix 1.

3.2   There are 9 contracts on the register, to a total value of £1,509,676, which are the same 9 contracts as were on list in February 2025. Members should note that some

of these contracts, and in turn their costs, run over multiple years. Of these contracts, 4 came to an end on 31st March 2025, and an additional 1 has since concluded, leaving only 4 of these contracts still live.

3.3   All contracts noted on the contract register have been awarded in line with SEStran's Contract Standing Orders.

4   RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1   The Board is asked to review and note the Contract Register as attached at Appendix 1

Michael Melton
Programme Manager
26th September 2025

Appendix 1: SEStran Contract Register Extract

Policy Implications	There is no policy implication arising from this report.
Financial Implications	There is no financial implication arising from this report.
Equalities Implications	There are no adverse equalities implications arising from this report.
Climate Change Implications	There are no negative climate change implications arising from this report.

Date Awarded	SEStran Contract Ref	Name of contractor	Subject matter	Est Contract Value (exc VAT)	Contract Start Date	Contract End Date	If no end date, now will the contract end	Duration of any extensions
01/04/2022	SEStran Novus FX Contract	Trapeze	RPTI	£147,400.00	01/04/2022	31/03/2025		4 months
11/11/2022	SEStran-22/23-04P	Vivacity	Multi-modal Transport Monitoring Sensors/Cameras	£213,614.00	11/11/2022	31/05/2029		
02/03/2023	SEStran-22/23-01A	One StopIT	IT services	£95,984.16	02/03/2023	02/03/2027		
10/05/2023	SEStran-23/24-01P	Ember (Fuse until 19/2/24)	Go SEStran - Delivery of Enable platform services.	£216,110.00	01/07/2023	31/03/2025		12 monhts
21/06/2023	SEStran-23/24-02P EV Positioning Statement & Strategy	Urban Foresight	Electric Vehicle Strategy - Consultancy Support	£50,000.00	21/06/2023	31/03/2024		12 months
08/08/2023	SEStran 24/25 - SEStran Strategic Network - Stages 1-2	Arup	SEStran Strategic Network - Consultancy Design Support	£484,249.08	08/08/2023	31/01/2027		
15/12/2023	SEStran 23/34 03P	Brompton Bike Hire Ltd	Folding bike hire stations	£113,564.00	15/12/2023	15/12/2028		
02/02/2024	Regional Bus Strategy SEStran/RBS/Systra01	Systra	Regional Bus Strategy- Consultancy support	£126,923.09	02/02/2024	n/a	On completion of Regional Bus Strategy	
31/05/2024	SEStran 24/25 - 01P	Jacobs	People and Place - Consultancy support	£61,831.80	31/05/2024	31/03/2025		

SEStran STAKEHOLDERS LIAISON GROUP

Virtual Meeting via Microsoft Teams on Wednesday 3rd September at 2pm

PRESENT:	Name	Organisation Title
	Brian Butler BB (Chair)	SEStran
	Nikki Boath NB	SEStran
	Rachael Murphy RM	SEStran
	Sandra Lavergne SL	SEStran
	Adam Watson AW	Falkirk Council
	Jamie Robertson JR	City of Edinburgh Council
	John Mitchell JM	Fife Council
	Lesley Deans LD	Clackmannanshire Council
	Nicola Gill NG	West Lothian Council

Action by

1. **WELCOME AND APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

   BB opened the meeting. Apologies were submitted on behalf of Gordon Brown and Peter Forsyth.

2. **MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING**

   This was the first meeting of the group and therefore there were no minutes or matters arising.

3. **STAKEHOLDER LIAISON GROUP TERMS OF REFERENCE**

   BB outlined the proposed Terms of Reference for this Group:

   - For all Group members to consider and feedback on Board reports

   - For each Council to share information on emerging strategies, plans and reports

   - Meeting dates changed so that emerging Board reports can be considered prior to submission to the Board

- Will be augmented by quarterly 1-2-1 meetings between SEStran and Council officers, roughly halfway between Board meetings

BB explained that as this is not a statutory meeting, no quorum is required.

Decision

The Terms of Reference for the Group were agreed.

4. **DRAFT PARTNERSHIP BOARD AGENDA AND MAIN REPORTS**

BB outlined the Partnership Board Agenda which takes place on 26 September 2025.

PARTNERSHIP DIRECTOR UPDATE:

COSLA PAPER – POPULATION REBALANCE PAPER

BB will draft a balanced response. JR explained that CEC will also be sending a separate response to COSLA. **BB**

(a) COUNCIL REQUISITIONS

BB explained the reasons for the proposal to increase Council Requisitions in 2026/27.

Discussion followed in which BB explained that SEStran are unsure if the Transport Scotland Grant Award will increase or decrease for next year. Transport Scotland suggested that all RTPs write to their respective Councils regarding Council Requisition increases. BB mentioned that SEStran have applied to Innovation Funds but not yet heard if the applications have been successful.

LD enquired if salary costs would be capitalised through Innovation Funds and therefore the Councils contributions would decrease. BB responded that nothing is currently being capitalised.

JR invited LD to discuss cross boundary work. **JR/LD**

BB stressed that no decisions were needed to be made immediately.

Decision

Group members to discuss this internally and raise questions prior to the Board meeting. Group to feedback before the Partnership Board meeting or through their respective elected members at the meeting.

**(b) REGIONAL TRANSPORT STRATEGY DELIVERY PLAN –
MASS TRANSIT PROGRAMME**

BB provided a background summary. BB stressed that the scope
has not yet been agreed.

A discussion followed about what will be included within the scope.
BB highlighted that LA responses are being collated currently and will
be discussed at the next Mass Transit meeting on 15th September.
BB emphasised that the paper being presented to the Board may
differ from the discussion held at this SLG meeting as a result of LA
responses.

Decision

Review the overarching Strategic Business Case. Define the scope,   **ALL**
find out what is included in Mass Transit and define the programme.

(c) REGIONAL BUS STRATEGY – PUBLIC CONSULTATION

RM provided an overview and highlighted that there had been an
excellent response to the public consultation.

(d) SOUTH EAST OF SCOTLAND TRANSPORT SUMMIT

RM provided the details of the summit which takes place on 4th
December 2025 and confirmed that the Cabinet Secretary has
accepted her invite to speak at the event.

Decision

Group members were asked to encourage colleagues to RSVP as
soon as possible.

(e)THISTLE ASSISTANCE UPDATE

SL outlined the background, highlights, reflections and future plans
for Thistle Assistance Card Scheme.

5.   COUNCIL UPDATES

BIF Awards

All confirmed that they have received BIF awards confirmation.

West Lothian

- West Lothian will be presenting a paper to West Lothian PDSP
  and Council Executive.on the outcome of a Transport Review. NG

confirmed that West Lothian are currently working with Ewan Doyle in relation to Workforce Mobility.

NG to share Transport review report with LD.

<div align="right">**NG**</div>

Falkirk Council

- Undertaking a review of subsided public transport services for safeguarding.

- Developing a new parking strategy.

BB encouraged AW to contact Ewan Doyle to use data for the purpose of subsidised public transport services.

City of Edinburgh Council

- Launched Tram consultation and closes on 17/12/25

- Relaunched Cycle Hire Scheme

- LEZ has been in place for 1 year. A paper will be taken to the Transport & Environment Committee regarding LEZ performance.

- Transit/Visitor Levy will be in place by July 2026. Transport & Environment Committee in November will establish what revenue will be apportioned to transport sector

- Complete Tier 2 ATIF bids

Clackmannanshire Council

- LTS - aiming to start early next year

- Active Travel Strategy public consultation is underway

Fife Council

- Work around Leven area is ongoing

- Pavement Parking Ban in place from 1st September

AOB

No AOB.

7.	**DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

WEDNESDAY 12 NOVEMBER 2025