

## **SESTRAN BUSINESS PLAN 2026/27**

### **1 INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 This report provides the partnership with an update on the 2026/27 Business Plan.

### **2 BACKGROUND**

- 2.1 The Business Plan for 2026/27 is being developed to take into account SEStran's wider strategy for next year, as well as seeking to support the mitigations of key corporate risks and opportunities around the impact of regionalisation, political change, and changes to the split of responsibilities between national, regional and local levels.
- 2.2 The Plan will be structured differently from previous years and seeks to link our corporate strategy and approach for the year to national, regional and local objectives. It also demonstrates the impact that we are having and will continue to have in each of our partner local authority areas.
- 2.3 Costs for this portfolio of programmes will be included in the budget for 2026/27, which is presented as Item A3(a) on this agenda.
- 2.4 As in 2025/26, oversight of delivery of the business plan will rest with the Performance and Audit Strategy and Delivery Oversight Group (PaSDOS) and ongoing reporting to the Performance and Audit Committee and the Partnership Board.
- 2.5 Given the increasing scale and complexity of the programmes we are delivering, a more programmatic approach will be taken to planning and managing projects from inception to closure and beyond (i.e. making sure that projects continue to deliver the targeted benefits after they have closed). From this year, our in-house approach to project lifecycle management will be supported by the introduction of project management software. This will facilitate closer monitoring and management of project milestones, resources, costs, risks, issues and dependencies.

### **3 BUSINESS PLAN 2026/27**

- 3.1 The proposed Business Plan for 2026/27 is structured around a number of key programmes which are designed to balance delivery of the Regional Transport Strategy with available budget and regional and local priorities. A dedicated page will be added for each local authority partner. This will show how SEStran has supported delivery against local priorities and how our future project portfolio will continue to deliver. It will also demonstrate the value that each partner has derived from SEStran partnership.

- 3.2 The key programmes for 2026/27 are:
- People and Place Programme
  - SEStran
  - Transport to Employment
  - Transport to Health
  - Regional Bus Action Plan
- 3.3 The People and Place programme will be delivered in line with the proposals agreed by the Board at its last meeting on 5<sup>th</sup> December 2025 and the previously agreed People and Place Delivery Plan. A further update is also being provided as Item A6a on this agenda.
- 3.4 The SEStran project will see work that commenced in 2025/26 on developing proposals for mass transit schemes in south east Scotland continue to complete the strategic business case. An update on the project is provided as Item A6b on this agenda.
- 3.5 Transport Scotland has provided funding for a year one year programme designed to help to eradicate child poverty by tackling the transport barriers to employment and education. Planning is currently at an early stage but the work could include Demand Responsive Transport schemes to link people to employment or education, providing training on sustainable transport schemes to open up new job opportunities, or helping people to access healthcare appointments in order to get them back to work more quickly. More information on Transport to Employment is provided at Item A6c on this agenda.
- 3.6 The Transport to Healthcare (TtH) programme Case for Change (CfC) is being sought at Item A6d on this agenda. Approval of the CfC will lead to the development of a TtH strategy designed to tackle the transport barriers that stop people from accessing the healthcare they need, where and when they need it.
- 3.7 Following on from the publication of the Regional Bus Strategy at the SEStran at Twenty event in December 2025, the Regional Bus Action Plan (RBAP) will be finalised in April 2026, and delivery of prioritised actions will begin immediately. This programme will also incorporate ongoing delivery of two operational workstreams: Real Time Passenger Information and Thistle Assistance. An update on RBAP will be provided to the Partnership Board meeting in June 2026.

#### **4. KEY RISKS**

- 4.1 Delivery of the Business Plan will be subject to a number of key risks including:
- Change of government following the election in May 2026
  - Change of role and / or responsibility following the Transport Scotland review of the split between national, regional and local levels – although any changes are likely to be subsequent to 2026/27
  - Changes to funding as a result of the election or of the Scottish government facing additional financial challenges

- 4.2 Late confirmation of funding presents SEStran and the organisations we fund with challenges such as losing key members of staff due to the uncertainty, and a reduction in the time available to plan and implement projects. The risks this year are higher than usual due to a potential change in government and the time required to realign budgets with altered priorities, although it is understood that Transport Scotland has planned for this and is aiming to accelerate the usual confirmation process.
- 4.3 All risks, opportunities and issues are managed through the Corporate Risk Register of individual project risk registers as appropriate.
- 4.4 The draft Business Plan 2026/27 will be presented to Partnership Board on 19 June 2026 for approval.

## **5 CONCLUSION**

- 5.1 The Business Plan for 2026/27 is being developed in a period of increased uncertainty, including the potential for changes in government following the May 2026 election and the ongoing risk of late confirmation of funding. As set out earlier in this report, delays in funding decisions can have a direct impact on SEStran's ability to plan effectively, retain staff, and support delivery partners to mobilise projects at pace.
- 5.2 Delegating authority to the Partnership Director to finalise and publish the Business Plan will allow the organisation to respond quickly once funding positions are confirmed and to incorporate any necessary refinements without delay. This includes completing partner-specific pages and making minor updates to ensure the Plan accurately reflects agreed priorities and available resources.
- 5.3 This approach reduces the risk of slippage at the start of the financial year, supports timely programme delivery, and provides partners and stakeholders with a clear and up-to-date statement of SEStran's commitments for 2026/27, while remaining fully aligned with the decisions and direction set by the Board.

## **6 RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 6.1 The Board is asked to:
  - 6.1.1 Note the contents of this report.
  - 6.1.2 Delegate authority to the Partnership Director to finalise and publish the Business Plan, including the addition of a dedicated page for each partner authority, as outlined in paragraph 3.1.
  - 6.1.3 Note that a copy of the finalised Business Plan will be presented to the next board meeting for noting.

Michael Melton  
**Programme Manager**  
13th March 2026

Policy Implications	Outlined project work contributes to the objectives identified within the SEStran Regional Transport Strategy.
Financial Implications	Projects and strategy work will be delivered within SEStran's existing budget or through grants like People and Place.
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.