

# SEStran Partnership Board Minutes

10.00am, Friday, 13 March 2026

Dean of Guild Court Room, City Chambers, Edinburgh, and Microsoft Teams

<u>Present</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>Organisation Title</u>
	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 Scott Harrison	Clackmannanshire Council
	Cllr Derek Glen	Fife Council
	Cllr Ian Cameron	Fife Council
	Cllr James Leslie	Fife Council
	Cllr Russell Imrie (Vice Chair)	Midlothian Council
	Cllr Colin Cassidy	Midlothian Council
	Cllr Jenny Linehan	Scottish Borders Council
	Callum Hay	Non-Councillor Member
	Alistair Couper	Non-Councillor Member
	John Scott	Non-Councillor Member
	Paul White	Non-Councillor Member

<u>In Attendance</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>Organisation Title</u>
	Andrew Rose (Clerk)	City of Edinburgh Council
	John Connerty	City of Edinburgh Council
	Jamie Robertson	City of Edinburgh Council
	John Connarty	City of Edinburgh Council
	Andy Nicol	City of Edinburgh Council
	Ian King	East Lothian Council
	John Mitchell	Fife Council
	Anna Herriman	Midlothian Council
	Claire Colquhoun	Urban Foresight
	Angela Chambers	SEStran
	Sandra Lavergne	SEStran
	Michael Melton	SEStran
	Rebecca Smith	SEStran
	Andrew Ferguson	SEStran
	Alisdair Brown	SEStran
	Stuart Turnbull	SEStran

<b><u>Apologies for Absence</u></b>	<b><u>Name</u></b>	<b><u>Organisation Title</u></b>
	Cllr John McMillan (Vice Chair)	East Lothian Council
	Cllr Sanne Dijkstra-Downie (Vice Chair)	City of Edinburgh Council
	Cllr Margaret Anslow	Falkirk Council
	Linda Bamford	Non-Councillor Member
	Doreen Steele	Non-Councillor Member
	Brian Butler	Partnership Director

## **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.

## **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.

## **A1. Minutes**

---

### **Decision**

- 1) That the minute of the SEStran Partnership Board of 5 December 2025 be approved as a correct record.
- 2) That the minute of the SEStran Performance and Audit Committee of 27 February 2026 be approved as a correct record.

## **A2. Partnership Director's Update**

---

In the absence of the Partnership Director, the Chair provided a brief update on a number of matters which she considered of interest to the Board, namely (a) that Ewan Doyle has been appointed as Senior Partnership Manager following the departure of Keith Fiskien, and (b) that she had attended a meeting earlier that week for chairs of the Regional Partnership Boards which had been a very positive event with everyone willing to work collaboratively and that, in light of the considerable upcoming challenges, all partnerships appear to be well placed to deal with these.

## **A3. (a) Finance Officer's Report**

---

The Board considered a report by the Treasurer providing an update on the financial planning performance of the Partnership's Core and Projects budgets for 2025/26, in accordance with its Financial Regulations. The report also presented an analysis of financial performance to the end of December 2025.

### **Decision**

- 1) That the balanced forecast for the Core revenue budget for 2025/26 be noted.

- 2) That the forecast underspend of £70,000 on the Projects budget be noted and that the actual underspend will be confirmed at the financial year-end and carried forward to 2026/27.

(Reference – Report by the Treasurer, submitted)

### **(b) Revenue Budget 2026/27 and Indicative Financial Plan 2027/28 to 2028/29**

---

The Board considered a report by the Treasurer presenting a proposed Partnership budget for 2026/27 for approval and an indicative balanced financial plan for 2027/28 to 2028/29 for noting. The report also advised that an update on the proposed budget had been considered by the Performance and Audit Committee on 27th February 2026. The Board was asked to note that the proposed budget had been updated following the subsequent confirmation of additional funding of £2.588m in 2026/27 under the Transport to Employment programme.

#### **Decision**

- 1) That the proposed Core budget of £983,000 for 2026/27, as detailed in Appendix 1 to the report, be approved.
- 2) That the proposed People and Place and Transport to Employment programme budgets for 2026/27, as detailed in Appendix 2 to the report, be approved.
- 3) That the indicative balanced financial plan for 2027/28 and 2028/29 be noted and that this will be subject to ongoing development and reporting.
- 4) That it be noted that the proposed budgets are subject to a number of risks and that all income and expenditure of the Partnership will continue to be monitored closely with updates reported to each Partnership meeting.

(Reference – Report by the Treasurer, submitted)

### **(c) Annual Treasury Management Strategy**

---

The Board considered a report by the Treasurer proposing a Treasury Management Strategy for 2026/27, details of which were summarised in the report and, in more detail, in Appendix 1 to the report. The report also highlighted that the Strategy had been reviewed by the Partnership's Performance and Audit Committee on 27 February 2026.

During consideration of this matter the Board was informed that at the meeting of the Performance and Audit Committee on 27 February 2026 a Treasury Management Briefing had been requested, and it was confirmed that this would be arranged.

#### **Decision**

That the continuation of the current arrangement, as detailed in Appendix 1 to the report, be approved.

(Reference – Report by the Treasurer, submitted)

## **A4. Regional Governance Report**

---

The Board considered a report by the SEStran Consultant which provided an update on further work that had been undertaken on potential regional governance models and functions, following the report to the December 2025 meeting of the Board.

### **Decision**

- 1) That the report be noted.
- 2) That the Partnership Director be authorised to engage to the fullest extent possible with the Transport Scotland review.
- 3) That the Partnership Director be authorised to engage to the fullest extent possible with the four growth deals in the SEStran region to pursue alignment on regional governance models for transport and associated functions.
- 4) That the ongoing inter-regional transport partnership discussions via regional transport partnership leads and chairs forums be noted.
- 5) That it be noted that a future paper on the corporate strategy will introduce proposals for SEStran's position in the governance framework.

(Reference – Report by the SEStran Consultant, submitted)

## **A5. Non-Councillor Member Appointments**

---

The Board considered a report by the Business Manager presenting an update on the appointments of Non-Councillor Members and seeking endorsement of the selection panel's recommendations, which had been approved by the Cabinet Secretary for Transport. The report indicated that the term of office for the appointments is 1 April 2026 to 31 March 2030. Detail was given of the Non-Councillor members who had recently resigned from the Board or had indicated that they do not wish to serve for another term, namely Dr. Doreen Steele, Kate Sherry and Geoff Duke. Finally, the report provided an update on the reappointment of existing Non-Councillor Members, namely Linda Bamford, Alastair Couper, Callum Hay, Simon Hindshaw, John Scott and Paul White.

During consideration of this matter the Chair indicated that Linda Bamford was currently seriously unwell and expressed, on behalf of the Board, best wishes to Linda and the hope that she would quickly recover.

### **Decision**

That the appointment of Mailys Garden, Clara Walker and Sally Wyke, and re-appointment of Linda Bamford, Alistair Couper, Callum Hay, Simon Hindshaw, John Scott and Paul White as Non-Councillor Members of the Board for the period 1 April 2026 to 30 March 2030 be endorsed.

(Reference – Report by the Business Manager, submitted)

## **A6. Business Plan 2026-2027**

---

The Board received a report by the Programme Manager providing an update on the 2026/27 Business Plan, outlining that it was being developed to take into account SEStran's wider strategy the following year, as well as seeking to support the mitigations of key corporate risks and opportunities. The report highlighted that the Plan would be structured differently from previous years, including the addition of a dedicated page for each authority partner, and explained the rationale for these changes.

### **Decision**

- 1) That the content of the report be noted.
- 2) That authority be delegated 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 of the report.
- 3) That it be noted that a copy of the finalised Business Plan would be presented to the next meeting of the Board.

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

## **A6. (a) People and Place**

---

The Board considered a report by the Programme Manager providing an update on planning for People and Place in 2026/27 alongside reporting on grant variances for 2025/26 that have arisen since the last meeting of the Board.

During consideration of this item, discussion took place on the rationale for awarding monies to FEL Scotland rather than appropriate local authorities, with it being advised to the Board that capacity restraints at the respective councils was the major driver.

### **Decision**

- 1) That the 2025/26 grant award variances, as detailed in Appendix 1 to the report, be noted.
- 2) That the setting of the grant fund values by the Partnership Director, as set out in paragraph 3.3 of the report, be noted.
- 3) That the proposed grant awards for 2026/27, as shown in Appendix 2 to the report, be noted.
- 4) That the grant award of £55,000 to FEL Scotland, as detailed in Section 4 of the report, be approved.

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

## **A6. (b) SEStran**

---

The Board considered a report by the SEStran Consultant which informed the Board that SEStran continued to work with partner authorities, the Edinburgh and South East Scotland City Region team, Transport Scotland and Network Rail to develop a Programme Strategic Business Case for an integrated regional transport network, which has the working title of SEStran.

The report also provided a project update up to the end of February 2026.

Finally, the report outlined a proposed governance structure for the project, together with a narrative on the requirement for additional funding to enable the project to continue with the proposal that any local authority partners that wished to be involved in the project be required to contribute a portion of the balance.

### **Decision**

- 1) That the proposal to seek funding from local authority partners to complete the Strategic Business Case be endorsed.
- 2) That the proposed governance structure be endorsed.

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

## **A6. (c) Transport to Employment**

---

The Board received a report by the Programme Manager providing an update on a new funding stream from Transport Scotland to regional transport partnerships for 2026/27 entitled Transport to Employment. The primary focus of the funding is improving transport to employment (both increasing transport options and reducing transport costs) as a means to reduce child poverty to support more parents into fair, well paid jobs. The wider scope, however, extends beyond this and recognises that access to further education and training is a vital aspect of reducing (future) child poverty, as is access to healthcare (as a service and as an employer).

### **Decision**

- 1) That the contents of the report, and the proposed delivery programme for 2026/27, including the intention to further engage on this with Local Employability Partnerships and wider local authority teams, be noted.
- 2) That the draft Transport to Employment Grant Eligibility and Assessment Criteria, attached at Appendix 2 to the report, be approved and that delegated authority be given to the Partnership Director to, in discussion with the Chair of the Board, update these in line with urgency provisions of the Grant Standing Orders.
- 3) That it be noted that a further detailed update will be provided to the Project and Strategy Delivery Oversight Subgroup at its next meeting.

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

## **A6. (d) Transport to Health Case for Change**

---

The Board considered a report by the Project Officer informing it that since October 2025 SEStran had been working with its four NHS Boards and NHS Scotland Assure, as well as with consultancy support from Urban Foresight, to produce a Case for Change on Transport to Health in South East Scotland, with the draft report attached as Appendix 1 to the report.

### **Decision**

- 1) That the findings of the Case for Change report be noted.
- 2) That it be noted that a Programme Initiation Document for the development of a full strategy and implementation plan will be presented to the Project and Strategy Delivery Oversight Subgroup prior to the Board's meeting in June 2026.

(Reference – report by the Project Officer, submitted.)

## **A7. Date of Next Meeting**

---

The Board was reminded that its next meeting would be held on Friday, 19 June 2026 in the Dean of Guild Court Room, Edinburgh City Chambers and online via Microsoft Teams.

### **Decision**

The Board noted the date of its next meeting.

## **B1. SEStran Consultation Responses**

---

The Board considered a report by the Projects Officer providing an update on SEStran's response to consultations between December 2025 and March 2026.

### **Decision**

That the content of the report, and its appendices, be noted.

(Reference – Report by the Projects Officer, submitted)

## **B2. Risk Management**

---

The Board considered a report by the Business Manager providing the quarterly update on SEStran's Corporate Risk Register.

### **Decision**

That the content of the report be noted.

(Reference – Report by the Business Manager, submitted)

## **B3. Projects and Strategy Performance Report**

---

The Board considered a report by the Programme Manager providing an update on the performance of the Partnership's strategy and project workstreams in quarter 3 of 2025/26.

### **Decision**

That the content of the report be noted.

(Reference – Report by the Programme Manager, submitted)

## **B4. Contract Register**

---

The Board received a report by the Programme Manager presenting the Partnership's Contract Register for review in line with a commitment to transparency in procurement.

### **Decision**

That the Contract Register, attached at Appendix 1 to the report, be noted.

(Reference – Report by the Programme Manager, submitted)

## **B5. Annual External Audit Plan 2025-26**

---

The Board received a report by the Treasurer presenting the External Auditor's Annual Audit Plan for 2025-26.

### **Decision**

- 1) That the External Audit Annual Audit Plan be noted
- 2) That it be noted that the External Audit Annual Audit Plan was considered by the Performance and Audit Committee on 27 February 2026.

(Reference – report by the Treasurer, submitted.)

## **B6. Asset Management Strategy**

---

The Board received a report by the Projects Officer presenting the Partnership's Asset Management Strategy and Asset Derecognition Form to address the recommendations from the Annual Audit Report 2024-25, specifically that "The partnership should improve its processes and documentation around the disposal of assets."

### **Decision**

- 1) That the External Audit Annual Audit Plan be noted.
- 2) That it be noted that the External Audit Annual Audit Plan was considered by the Performance and Audit Committee on 27 February 2026.

(Reference – report by the Treasurer, submitted.)