SESTRAN PARTNERSHIP BOARD MEETING
Dean of Guild Room, City Chambers, Edinburgh, EH1 1YJ
Or via Microsoft Teams
10:00am Friday 19th June 2026

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
4. PPP CASE STUDY VIDEO

AGENDA A – POINTS FOR DECISION

GOVERNANCE AND CORPORATE UPDATES

A1. **MINUTES** (For Approval)
(a) Partnership Board – 13 March 2026 **3**
(b) Performance and Audit Committee – 5 June 2026 **11**

A2. **FINANCE REPORTS** – Reports by Richard Lloyd-Bithell
(a) **UNAUDITED ANNUAL ACCOUNTS 2025/26 AND TREASURY MANAGEMENT** **16**
(b) **REVENUE BUDGET 2026-2027** **69**

A3. **PaSDOS AND FUTURE REPORTING –** Report by Michael Melton **74**

A4. **APPOINTMENTS TO PERFORMANCE & AUDIT COMMITTEE** – Report by Angela Chambers **129**

A5. **PARTNERSHIP DIRECTOR UPDATE** – Update by Brian Butler

COFFEE BREAK

PROGRAMME AND PROJECTS UPDATE

A6. **WORKFORCE MOBILITY PROJECT –** Report by Ewan Doyle **131**

A7. PROJECTS REPORTS

(a) **RTS DELIVERY PLAN –** Report by Ewan Doyle **136**
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(c) **REGIONAL BUS ACTION PLAN –** Report by Rebecca Smith **218**
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(e) **TRANSPORT TO HEALTH –** Report by Sandra Lavergne **273**
(f) **SEStransit –** Report by Stuart Turnbull **439**

A8. DATE OF NEXT MEETING:

The date of the next meeting is **25 September 2026**

AGENDA B – POINTS FOR NOTING

B1. SESTRAN CONSULTATION RESPONSE – Report by Rebecca Smith **449**

B2. INTERNAL AUDIT REPORT 2024/25 – Report by Colin McCurley **463**

B3. RISK MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK – Report by Angela Chambers **487**

B4. PROJECTS & STRATEGY PERFORMANCE – Report by Michael Melton **502**

B5. SUMMARY OF AWARDS TO PEOPLE AND PLACE PROGRAMME – Report by Michael Melton **520**

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12 June 2026

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

SEStran Partnership Board Minutes

10.00am, Friday, 13 March 2026

Dean of Guild Court 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 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
In Attendance	**Name**	**Organisation Title**
	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

Apologies for Absence	Name	Organisation Title
	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 Fisken, 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 place 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) SEStransit

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 SEStransit.

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.)

PERFORMANCE AND AUDIT COMMITTEE

Dean of Guild Court Room, City Chambers, Edinburgh
on Friday 5 June 2026
1.00pm

PRESENT:	Name	Organisation Title
	Councillor Russell Imrie (Chair)	Midlothian Council
	Councillor Tom Conn	West Lothian Council
	Councillor Paul Garner	Falkirk Council
	Councillor Stephen Jenkinson	The City of Edinburgh Council
	Councillor Scott Harrison	Clackmannanshire Council
	Councillor Jenny Linehan	Scottish Borders Council
	Simon Hindshaw	Non-Councillor Member

IN ATTENDANCE:	Name	Organisation Title
	Brian Butler	SEStran
	Rebecca Duncan	SEStran
	Michael Melton	SEStran
	Christopher Gardner	Audit Scotland
	Richard Lloyd-Bithell	The City of Edinburgh Council
	Colin McCurley	The City of Edinburgh Council
	Andrew Rose (Clerk)	The City of Edinburgh Council
	Nandana Silva	The City of Edinburgh Council
	Tom Stokes	The City of Edinburgh Council

1. ORDER OF BUSINESS

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

2. APOLOGIES

Apologies were submitted on behalf of Councillor Glen and Callum Hay.

3. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

There were none.

4. MINUTES

(a) To approve the minute of the Performance and Audit Committee of 27 February 2026, and

(b) To note that the minute of the Project and Strategy Delivery Oversight Sub-Group of 24 April 2026 would be circulated following the meeting.

5. FINANCE REPORTS

(a) Updated Annual Accounts 2025-26 and Treasury Management

The Committee received a report by the Treasurer presenting the Annual Accounts, attached at Appendix 1 to the report, in accordance with the Local Authority Accounts (Scotland) Regulations 2014 and advising that the accounts are subject to audit and that the audited accounts, together with the Auditor's report, would be presented to the Committee in due course.

There was also presented the Treasurer's opinion on the effectiveness of the Partnership's system of internal financial control, as detailed within pages 12 to 14 of the Annual Governance Statement. The Treasurer's opinion was reported as being that reasonable assurance can be placed upon the adequacy and effectiveness of the Partnership's internal control system.

During the presentation to the Committee of his report, the Treasurer wished to express his gratitude to audit partners and officers at the City of Edinburgh Council for their efforts in preparing the Annual Accounts.

Decision

(1) That the unaudited annual accounts for 2025/26 be noted and referred to the Partnership Board for review;

(2) That the annual Treasury Management report for 2025/26 be noted, and

(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.

(b) Revenue Budget 2026-27

The Committee received a report by the Treasurer presenting an update on the Partnership's budget for 2026/27, which had been agreed by the Board at its meeting held on 13 March 2026. The report set out some proposed revisions to the approved budget following confirmation of Scottish Government funding for 2026/27. The revised budget would be presented to the Board at its meeting to be held on 19 June 2026.

Decision

1. That the proposed revised core budget of £1,053,000 for 2026/27, as detailed at Appendix 1 to the report, be noted;

2. That the proposed People and Place: Transport to Employment and the Workforce Mobility Project budgets for 2026/27, as detailed at Appendix 2 to the report, be noted, and

3. That it be noted that the proposed revised budget for 2026/27 will be referred to the Partnership Board meeting on 19 June 2026 for final decision.

6. INTERNAL AUDIT PLAN 2026/27

The Committee received a report from the Head of Internal Audit, City of Edinburgh Council, providing details of the outcomes of the 2025/26 SEStran Internal Audit review of Project Management, as well as to provide an update on progress with the completion of actions agreed as part of previous audits, and requested the Committee's input on potential areas for inclusion in the planned 2026/27 audit.

Decision

1. That the outcomes of the 2025/26 Internal Audit review of Project Management, including Internal Audit findings and recommendations, and agreed management actions and implementation dates, be noted, and

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

7. RISK MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK

The Committee received a report by the Business Manager which provided quarterly update on SEStran's corporate risk register. The report also informed the Committee that the Risk Register will be subject to a comprehensive review in response to the Internal Audit findings. As part of this process, the register will be refreshed and rebuilt from first principles to ensure it remains robust, transparent and aligned with current organisational priorities.

Discussion took place on the Risk Register review and the Partnership Director explained how long it had been since the last review, and that, going forward the Register would be reviewed annually.

Decision

1. That it be noted that a revised and updated Risk Register would be presented to a future Committee, and

2. That it be noted that the Corporate Risk Register would be presented to the 19 June 2026 Partnership Board meeting for noting.

8. PROJECTS AND STRATEGY UPDATE PAPER

The Committee received a report by the Programme Manager which provided an update on the performance of the Partnership's Strategy and Project workstreams in Quarter 4 of 2025/26 and noted that an earlier version of this report had been presented to the Project and Strategy Delivery Oversight Subgroup at its last meeting in April 2026.

Decided

That the contents of the report be noted.

9. PASDOS AND FUTURE REPORTING

The Committee received a report by the Programme Manager providing an update on discussions around the future role of the Project and Strategy Delivery Oversight Subgroup (PaSDOS) and future reporting resulting from this and the 2026/27 Business Plan, namely that (a) the scrutiny/audit function of existing projects to be passed back to this Committee, (b) PaSDOS will report to the Board and provide advice and guidance on project delivery alignment with overall strategy, (c) a core role will be to support development of the Business Plan for the next year and evaluation of the previous year's Business Plan, (d) the group will continue to support ongoing project development with meetings focusing on specific projects, (e) the group will set a 'work plan' for the year based on the milestones within the Business Plan, and (f) membership will look to increase to up to seven with an ongoing focus on the right skills mix to support the role of the Committee.

Decision

1. That the proposed changes as set out in Section 2 of the report, subject to approval from the Partnership Board, be approved, and

2. That the content of sections 3 and 4 of the report be noted.

10. HR POLICY REVIEW REPORT

The Committee received a report by the Business Manager providing an update on the annual HR policy review and advising that three policies were identified as requiring minor updates, namely (a) Family Leave Policy, (b) Sexual Harassment Policy, and (c) Travel and Assistance Policy. The report provided a summary of the proposed changes to these policies.

In addition, it was highlighted that the Anti-Bribery Policy was currently under review by the partnership's legal advisers.

Decided

1. That the changes as detailed in the report to the Family Leave Policy, Sexual Harassment Policy, and the Travel and Assistance Policy be approved, and

2. That it be noted that the Anti-Bribery Policy was currently under review and would be presented to the next meeting for approval.

11. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

11 September 2026.

Unaudited Annual Accounts 2025/26 and Treasury Management report 2025/26

1.	**INTRODUCTION**
1.1	This report presents:
1.1.1	the unaudited Annual Accounts for the year ended 31st March 2026
1.1.2	the annual Treasury Management report for 2025/26.
2.	**UNAUDITED ANNUAL ACCOUNTS 2025/26**
2.1	The unaudited Annual Accounts are submitted to the Partnership in accordance with the Local Authority Accounts (Scotland) Regulations 2014. The accounts are subject to audit and the audited Annual Accounts, incorporating the Auditor's report, will be presented to the Performance and Audit Committee and Partnership Board in due course.
2.2	The unaudited Annual Accounts are appended at Appendix 1.
2.3	The Treasurer's opinion on the effectiveness of the Partnership's system of internal financial control is provided within the Annual Governance Statement on pages 12 to 14. The Treasurer's opinion is informed by the work of Internal Audit and managers in the Partnership. It is the Treasurer's opinion that reasonable assurance can be placed upon the adequacy and effectiveness of the Partnership's internal control system.
2.4	The Management Commentary is on pages 2 to 10 of the Annual Accounts. This highlights key aspect of financial performance during the year. The unaudited underspend is £180,000. This comprises an underspend of £22,000 on the Core revenue budget, an underspend of £97,000 on the Projects budget and a further project budget carry forward of £61,000 to meet future lease commitments for a folding bicycle rental scheme.
3.	**RESERVES**
3.1	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 2025, the Partnership had an unallocated General Fund Reserve of £221,000.
3.2	Subject to confirmation of the audited outturn position, the Partnership will be asked to approve carry forward of the Core budget underspend of £22,000. This will increase the unallocated reserve to £243,000.

3.3	Underspends of £158,000 on project budgets in 2025/26 will be managed by establishment of an earmarked balance, in accordance with the Partnership's Reserves Policy. The proposed allocation of £97,000 of this balance is set out elsewhere on this agenda. The balance of £61,000 for the folding bike lease will be used over 2026/27 to 2028/29 to meet the financial commitments under this lease.
4.	**TREASURY MANAGEMENT REPORT 2025/26**
4.1	The Partnership has adopted the CIPFA Code of Practice on Treasury Management in the Public Sector. Under the code, an annual report on Treasury Management must be submitted to the Partnership at the end of each financial year.
4.2	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.
4.3	For 2025/26, interest was calculated in accordance with the (withdrawn) Local Authority (Scotland) Accounts Advisory Committee's Guidance Note 2 on Interest on Revenue Balances.
4.4	Net end of month balances for 2025/26 are shown below.

	Balance due to SEStran(+ve)
Opening Balance	£1,030,395
30 April 2025	£1,793,542
31 May 2025	£1,183,977
30 June 2025	£277,201
31 July 2025	£1,390,623
31 August 2025	£562,096
30 September 2025	£578,435
31 October 2025	£1,138,737
30 November 2025	£807,368
31 December 2025	£373,870
31 January 2026	£34,261
28 February 2026	£739,342
31 March 2026	£260,842

4.5	Interest is calculated on the average monthly balance. The interest rate applied was 3.663%, giving an interest payment of £30,248.
5	**RECOMMENDATIONS**
	It is recommended that the Partnership notes:
5.1	the unaudited Annual Accounts for 2025/26;
5.2	the annual Treasury Management report for 2025/26;

5.3	the audited Annual Accounts, incorporating the Auditor's report, will be presented to the Performance and Audit Committee and Partnership Board in due course.

Richard Lloyd-Bithell
Treasurer
8th June 2026

Appendix Unaudited Annual Accounts 2025/26
Contact Thomas.Stokes@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.
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.

The South East of Scotland Transport Partnership (SESTRAN)

Unaudited Annual Accounts

2025/2026

The South East of Scotland Transport Partnership (SESTRAN)

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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 8,400km^2, which is just over 10% of Scotland's landmass. It has 11,821 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). Drivers in our region covered 3,201 million km in 2025.

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.

3. Corporate Strategy (*continued*)

The Corporate strategy for 2026/27 will include a focus on transport governance and the regionalisation of key public sector activities including economic growth, land use planning and transport. These discussions are described in detail in the Risks and opportunities section of this report.

The Partnership will develop a Target Operating Model for transport in Scotland, showing what it considers to be the:

- Ideal split of roles and responsibilities between national, regional and local levels
- Any additional powers required by RTPs to facilitate delivery of this model

This model will then be used to inform SEStran's responses to the two main consultations taking place in 2026/27 – the Transport Scotland review of Transport Governance, and the Scottish Government's work on empowering Regional Economic Partnerships.

4. Risks and Opportunities

The principal risks and uncertainties faced by the Partnership in recent years have traditionally fallen into two main categories - financial and transport governance.

Financial Risks and Opportunities

In recent years, the Partnership has had 3 main sources of funding:

- Annual grant funding from Transport Scotland
- Ringfenced funding for specific projects or activities e.g. People and Place (active travel behaviour change)
- Requisition from each of the eight local authority partners

Annual grant funding from Transport Scotland

The annual grant from Transport Scotland remained at the same level for around 15 years, but, in 2024/25, it was reduced by 5% in line with reductions across the Scottish Government. In absolute terms, Council requisitions have reduced by 10% over the last 15 years. Taken together, in real terms, funding from Transport Scotland and our Council partners has reduced by well over 50% over the last 15 years.

This reduced level of funding from Transport Scotland continued into 2025/26 and will remain at this level in 2026/27. However, there remains a real risk that there will be further reductions to our core grant, which is designed to cover the Partnership's core costs, in 2027/28 and beyond.

In addition, Transport Scotland is currently reviewing future core funding for RTPs. It is understood that the split of funding across RTPs is being examined, as smaller RTPs have long argued that they are underfunded in relation to larger RTPs such as SEStran. We support this argument as long as our current level of funding is taken as a baseline, and the percentage split is changed by the award of new funding to the smaller RTPs. We will resist any attempts to reduce our current funding by re-allocating some of it to the smaller RTPs.

Ringfenced project funding

In 2025/26, the Partnership received an additional £6.45m of grant funding for the People and Place active travel behaviour change programme. This funding is ringfenced and most was passed through to local authorities and active travel delivery partners whose projects qualified for funding under the grant standing orders (SOs) and funding processes which have been approved by the Partnership.

People and Place funding for 2026/27 has been reduced by £1.2m, reflecting revenue pressures facing the Scottish Government. This reduction does not have a significant impact on SEStran, but does impact our ability to deliver this important aspect of the Regional Transport Strategy.

RTPs have also been awarded around £9m in 2026/27 to tackle transport barriers to reducing child poverty. SEStran will receive £2.5m of this Transport to Employment funding and we are working with our partner local authorities to help low income families with children to access paid employment or training opportunities. This funding has only been confirmed for one year, but all RTPs will aim to make a strong case that it should be continued in future if improvements in access are to be maintained beyond this year.

Council requisitions

Transport Scotland has encouraged RTPs to increase Council requisitions and we had planned to seek an increase of 10% for the 2026/27 financial year. However, with council budgets already under significant pressure, it was decided to delay any increase and to fully consider how we can best work with our partners. It is anticipated that, at the September meeting of our Partnership Board, we will submit a paper proposing an updated mechanism for agreeing funding of future workstreams. We are hopeful that this will provide a greater degree of certainty about future funding.

Management Commentary *(continued)*

4. Risks and Opportunities (*continued*)

Mitigations are in place both to reduce the probability and impact of these risks, and to respond to them if they become issues.
Primary amongst these are:

- Influencing central and local government partners by building strong cases for further investment in SEStran
- Making prudent planning assumptions
- Monitoring income and expenditure on a monthly basis and adjusting expenditure to mitigate against any forecast overspends
- Holding an appropriate cash reserve to be used in the event that an overspend cannot be prevented by other controls.

Transport Governance

Transport Scotland is planning to review transport governance in 2026/27, and discussions on strengthening Regional Economic Partnerships will take place in 2026 with legislation earmarked for 2027/28.

These initiatives present both a risk and an opportunity to SEStran.
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 for this review. 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.
The recent transfer of People and Place responsibilities, and subsequent award of Transport to Employment funding, indicate that Transport Scotland supports a regional approach to the governance of at least some transport functions. 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.

The Scottish Government has also committed to strengthening the ability of regional partnerships to drive economic growth. Although not explicitly mentioned to date, transport will form a key part of these discussions since it is a key enabler of land use planning and economic growth.
The government is currently consulting on models and the powers required to support this change, and all RTPs including SEStran will be part of this process. We are currently developing a 'gold standard' model for how transport would be improved in the SEStran region, for presentation to our Partnership Board, at its June meeting. This will then form the basis of our input into discussions on regionalisation.

5. Results for the Year

The net revenue budget of the Partnership in 2025/26 was £0.933m, funded by Scottish Government grant of £0.743m and Council Contributions of £0.190m. In summary:

- The Partnership had a Core budget underspend of £22,000.
- After inclusion of carry forward of £0.264m from the 2024/25 Projects budget underspend, the Partnership had a Projects budget underspend of £0.097 in 2025/26. A further £0.061m of Projects expenditure is carried forward to 2026/27 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 2025/26 financial results is shown in the table below.

	Revised Budget £'000	Earmarked Reserves from 24/25 £'000	Total Available Funding £'000	Outturn £'000	Variance from Total Funding £'000
Core Budget	856	0	856	864	(22)
Core Budget - Interest Received	0	0	0	(30)	
Revenue Projects - Expenditure	6,483	251	6,734	6,778	(97)
Revenue Projects - Income	(6,406)	13	(6,393)	(6,534)	
Revenue Projects - Electronic Bicycle Lease	0	84	84	23	(61)
Total Expenditure before Government Grant and Council Contributions	**933**	**348**	**1,281**	**1,101**	**(180)**
Government Grant	(743)	0	(743)	(743)	0
Constituent Council Requisitions	(190)	0	(190)	(190)	0
Total Government Grant and Council Contributions 2025/26	**(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:

- £37,000 of additional employee costs being recharged to the Projects budget
- £30,000 of interest received on revenue balances reflecting the additional cash balances that the Partnership benefited from through the People and Place Programme.

The principal adverse variances which arose on the Core budget were employee costs (£33,000) and IT device refresh (£11,000), resulting in a net Core budget underspend of £22,000.

Projects budget

The Partnership incurred expenditure of £6.778m on revenue projects and received external grants and contributions of £6.534m. After inclusion of carry forward of £0.264m from the 2024/25 Projects budget underspend, the Partnership had a Projects budget underspend of £97,000 in 2025/26.

A further £0.061m of Projects expenditure is carried forward to 2026/27 to meet future lease commitments for an electronic bicycle scheme.

The principal favourable variances on the Projects revenue budget arose on the following projects:

- £50,000 - Freight Strategy
- £37,000 - RTS Delivery Plan

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 2025, the Partnership had an unallocated General Fund Reserve of £221,000. At 31st March 2026, this increased to £243,000. Slippage on project delivery from 2025/26 to 2026/27 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 2025/26, interest of £30,248 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 24.

5. Results for the Year (*continued*)

Non Financial Results

During 2025/26, the Partnership progressed work on a number of exciting projects and on the development of strategies essential to facilitate delivery of the RTS.

Regional Transport Strategy Delivery Plan

The Regional Transport Strategy is the guiding light for everything required to improve transport across our region. Its 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 2025/26, the Partnership worked with transport, planning and economic development colleagues from both the Edinburgh and South East of Scotland City Region Deal and partner local authorities to develop a matrix of regional projects. They agreed scoring and weighting that brings parity across our eight authorities.

In 2025/26 these priorities were split into 6 key themes:

- Decarbonisation
- Digital
- Freight
- Active Travel
- Mass Transit
- Interchanges

One of these themes, Mass Transit, has now been formed into the SEStransit Programme which is described below.

SEStransit

A key theme from the RTS Delivery Plan, SEStransit is a transformational, once-in-a-generation opportunity to reshape how people move across South East Scotland. It will deliver a faster, greener and more reliable regional transport system - one that matches the scale of our economic ambition, supports inclusive economic growth, and enables tens of thousands more people to travel sustainably every day.

At its heart, SEStransit imagines a region where buses, trains, trams and other shared modes operate not as fragmented services but as a single, fully integrated, high-capacity mobility system, supported by seamless interchanges, smart ticketing, real-time information and world-class digital tools. This is a bold step toward creating a regional network that is coherent, coordinated and futureproof - a system where passengers can move effortlessly between modes, access employment, housing, healthcare and education sites, and rely on a transport network that works for every community. In doing so, it will accelerate decarbonisation and reduce congestion, expand opportunity and strengthen the resilience, wellbeing and economic opportunity of communities across the region.

SEStransit will provide the robust evidence, modelling and delivery pathways required to unlock major investment, drive regional cohesion and support Scotland’s climate, modal shift and economic priorities.

In 2025/26 work was undertaken to develop a Strategic Business Case, which will be completed in Q1 of 2026/27. When this Business Case has been approved, we will move to an Outline Options appraisal which will identify a number of potential solutions to each of the challenges identified.

People and Place

The People & Place Programme is a region-shaping initiative designed to reshape how communities move, connect and thrive. We funded over 100 project across the region, delivering multi million targeted investment in the local authorities, third sector delivery partners, and community groups that support making active and sustainable travel not just possible, but the preferred choice for everyday journeys. By empowering schools, workplaces, communities and local authorities, the programme drives a fundamental shift away from car dependency and towards healthier, fairer and cleaner daily journeys for everyone.

5. Results for the Year (*continued*)

People and Place (*continued*)

At its core, this programme unlocks real behaviour change at scale—removing barriers to access, widening participation, and embedding the skills, systems and confidence needed to create lasting change. It results in expanded access to cycles across the region, increasing active journeys to schools through projects such as walking buses and cycle training, supporting increased use of public transport through provision of mobility hubs and enhanced bus stop information, and working with community groups to deliver change at a local level to achieve regional impact.

Coordinated at a regional level to achieve maximum impact through concentrated investment, it advances inclusion, enhances accessibility, and strengthens local capability, while supporting the shift to net zero and Scotland's wider climate, health and economic ambitions.

Specifically, the programme aims to:

- 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

The results for 2025/26 are currently being evaluated and will be reported to the Partnership Board – in June 2026. It is anticipated that the evaluation report will demonstrate that we have built on the very positive evaluation of the programme's first year 2024/25.

Transport to Health (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 result of not getting appropriate treatment where and when it is needed can be poorer health outcomes which impact people and the NHS.

The Partnership is working with healthcare partners across the region to better understand the barriers to healthcare and to find ways to tackle them.

During 2025/26 we conducted a Literature Review and developed a Case for Change, both of which were approved by the Partnership Board. These demonstrated that there are significant barriers to healthcare, which disproportionately affect older people, and those living in rural or deprived areas.

As well as worse health outcomes for individuals, these barriers increase costs to the NHS and reduce economic activity rates which are a key component of productivity and economic growth.

Therefore it will be argued that tackling these barriers will result in significant returns elsewhere in the economy, and that the costs should be shared across central and local governmental departments.

Regional Bus Strategy

The Partnership Board has approved the development of 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, and many operators have had to reduce the number and frequency of services they offer due to falling patronage and increased costs.

Buses account for 75% of commuter journeys across Scotland. Reduced service provision disproportionately affects deprived areas and impacts people's ability to access employment, education and healthcare. This means that there is an impact on the economy, education levels, and poverty.

As a result, SEStran began developing a Regional Bus Strategy in 2024/25. The strategy was launched in December 2025 and the associated Action Plan kicks off in May 2026 when the Programme Board meets for the first time.

Grounded in our 2025/26 consultation that heard from thousands of voices from across our communities and driven by a clear vision for affordable, reliable, inclusive mobility, this programme will reshape how the region moves - strengthening opportunities, reducing inequalities, and positioning public transport as the natural first choice for everyday travel.

We are building a system that delivers consistently, connects communities fairly, and competes confidently with private car travel. Our work will unlock faster and more dependable journeys through targeted bus priority measures; simplified and integrated fares and ticketing; moving toward a clear and trusted network identity; and ensuring all users benefit from high-quality information, infrastructure, and customer experience.

5. Results for the Year (*continued*)

Thistle Assistance and Realtime Passenger Information (RTPI)

Thistle Assistance provides support to people who find using public transport challenging, and we manage this initiative on behalf of all RTPs across Scotland. The scheme has exceeded all expectations in 2025/26, with usage ballooning from previous levels due to the excellent efforts of the team. We continue to support the rollout of RTPI screens across the region. These play a crucial role in journey planning and in improving the perception of safety when using public transport – because people know exactly when a bus will arrive at their stop.

6. Future Developments

The Partnership's Business Plan for 2026/27 builds further on the work undertaken in 2025/26. It identifies seven priority workstreams, including five continuing programmes:

- Regional Transport Strategy Delivery Plan
- SEStransit
- People and Place
- Transport to Health
- Regional Bus Strategy Delivery Plan

And two new programmes:

- Travel to Employment
- Workforce Mobility

All supported by a number of cross-cutting initiatives including:

- Thistle Assistance
- Realtime Passenger Information
- Digital

Regional Transport Strategy Delivery Plan

Work on two of the six themes in the Delivery Plan, Mass Transit (SEStransit) and Active Travel (People and Place), is progressing well and plans for 2026/27 are described below. Further work will be done on other elements of the Delivery Plan, primarily on the Digital and Interchanges themes, both of which are required to support SEStransit.

SEStransit

At the time of writing, we are relatively confident that Transport Scotland will confirm funding of up to £500k, through the Bus Infrastructure Fund, for the next phase of the programme. This will allow us to complete all elements of the Strategic and Outline Business Cases during 2026/27 (exact timescales to be confirmed).

The programme has access to additional funding – possibly up to £100k from the Local Growth Fund via the Edinburgh and South East Scotland City Region and it is likely that we will seek funding from all programme partners. They have been advised of this likelihood, but the exact amounts cannot be confirmed until Transport Scotland have confirmed whether and how much funding we will receive.

This additional funding means that we can continue work ahead of Transport Scotland confirmation.

People and Place Plan

The Partnership developed a Delivery Plan that establishes the medium to long term 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.

The £1.2m reduction in revenue funding described earlier will impact partners' ability to drive behaviour change, but we are happy to report that all partners accepted the reduction and understood that it was completely out of our hands. They have worked with us to adjust their plans and timetables and we will still make measurable inroads in 2026/27.

Transport to Health

We are aiming to develop an Outline Business Case and, possibly, a Detailed Business Case in 2026/27. Planning is currently underway and, until finalised, timescales remain indicative. However the tender documents for consultancy support for the Outline Business Case have been drafted and the tender should be initiated late in Q1 of 2026/27.
Our aim is to move to implementation of preferred solutions in Q4 2026/27 or Q1 2027/28.

Regional Bus Strategy Delivery Plan

The Bus Programme Board meets for the first time in May 2026, and will take ownership of the Action Plan arising from the Bus Strategy.

6. Future Developments *(continued)*

Regional Bus Strategy Delivery Plan (*continued*)

The Board will agree the Programme Initiation Document which will outline the programme vision, objectives, benefits, scope, resources, cost, risks, issues, success criteria, measures etc.

It will prioritise the various actions to ensure that the programme quickly gains credibility by delivering quick wins, and then using their skills and experience to ensure that the programme schedule and timescales take full cognisance of dependencies and constraints so that actions are scheduled in an appropriate order.

Transport to Employment

Directly supporting the First Minister's key priority for government of reducing child poverty, the Transport to Employment programme is a targeted, outcomes-driven intervention designed to break the link between low income, poor transport access, and child poverty. It will increase household incomes for parents across the region by enabling access to fair, well paid employment and training, while simultaneously reducing the financial burden of travel that can make work unaffordable or unsustainable.

Rather than operating in isolation, the programme maximises the impact of the Regional Transport Strategy by accelerating and shaping its delivery through a child-poverty lens. Every improvement to public and sustainable transport - whether reduced journey times, simpler networks, or lower fares - strengthens access to work and training and reduces reliance on private car ownership. This programme ensures those benefits are intentionally directed towards parents and communities most in need.

A core ambition is to turn short-term funding into long-term change. The programme will build regional capacity, deepen partnerships with Local Employability Partnerships, local authorities, NHS boards, and operators, and pilot scalable interventions that can be sustained beyond 2026/27. A strong emphasis on monitoring, evaluation, and learning will ensure that successful approaches are evidenced, refined, and ready for future expansion.

SEStran has been awarded £2.5m and will work with local authorities and third sector partners to deliver on four strategic areas: supporting journeys to further education and training opportunities; improving transport access to large and strategically important workplaces, including healthcare sites; addressing the unique challenges of rural access to work and further education; and delivering targeted fare interventions that reduce travel costs for parents who currently fall outside existing concessionary schemes. Together, these actions will unlock opportunity, improve financial resilience, and support families to move sustainably out of child poverty.

Specifically, the programme aims to:

- Reduce current levels of child poverty by improving the availability of transport options for parents to access employment and training
- Reduce current levels of child poverty by increasing household incomes for families by reducing transport costs to employment and training
- Reduce current levels of child poverty by supporting access to NHS sites as one of the region's major employers and to support access to health services to reduce health inequalities that impact on ability to work
- Make best use of the one year funding to build capacity in future years to deliver further action to reduce child poverty

Workforce Mobility Project

The Workforce Mobility Project is part of the Edinburgh and South East Scotland City Region Deal. This innovative project is the first of its kind within a regional growth deal, spanning employability and transport themes to overcome travel barriers and acknowledge the fundamental role transport plays in supporting employment, training, and education. The project aims to work across sectors to improve communication, collaboration, data usage and long-term planning to improve the effectiveness of local and regional transport to support the ambitions of the Integrated Regional Employability Skills Programme, the Regional Prosperity Framework and the Regional Transport Strategy.

The Workforce Mobility Project Manager has moved to SEStran as Senior Partnership Manager and, in order to maintain consistency, will continue to provide leadership to the project.

The Concordat between SEStran and the Edinburgh and South East Scotland City Region Deal, agreed in 2024:

- Strengthens collaboration, joint working, co-production and engagement between the organisations
- Ensures a robust basis for integrated regional economic development, land-use and transport planning, provision and delivery
- Ensures South East Scotland fulfils its potential as Scotland's foremost region

6. Future Developments *(continued)*

Workforce Mobility Project (*continued*)

This partnership approach has already paid dividends in the form of the successful Electric Vehicle Charging Infrastructure Procurement programme, and work to date on the Regional Transport Strategy Delivery Programme and the SEStransit Programme.

In addition, SEStran has secured additional funding from Transport Scotland to undertake a national pilot whereby RTPs and local authorities throughout Scotland will have free access to project tools and consultancy.

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.

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.

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 2026.

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

The South East of Scotland Transport Partnership (SESTRAN)

ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT 2025/26

1. Scope of Responsibility

The Partnership is responsible for ensuring that its business is conducted in accordance with the law and appropriate standards, that public money is safeguarded, 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 for 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 Partnership's framework is underpinned by 6 core princples:

- 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.

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 for 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;

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. SEStran Governance Scheme

The SEStran Governance Scheme forms a collection of the following key documents which enable lawful and transparent decision making:

- Standing Orders;
- Committee / Officer Powers;
- Financial Rules;
- Contract Standing Orders;
- Procurement Strategy; and
- Grant Standing Orders

The Scheme is subject to ongoing review, with any revisions subject to 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 2025/26, the Internal Audit Service undertook a review to assess the adequacy of design and operating effectiveness of the key controls established for the monitoring and oversight arrangements to oversee governance and financial management of SEStran projects. The review provided reasonable assurance that SEStran has a generally sound system of governance, risk management and control in place to support the project management within SEStran. Several areas for improvement were identified within the project management processes to further strengthen transparency, financial stewardship, and regulatory compliance.

Due to the 2025/26 review being focussed on the key controls in place in relation to project management, 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 2026. 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.

The South East of Scotland Transport Partnership (SESTRAN)

REMUNERATION REPORT

1. Audit of Remuneration Report

Sections 5, 6, 7 and 8 on pages 15 and 16 in the Remuneration Report will be audited by the Partnership's external auditor. The other sections in the Remuneration Report will be reviewed by the external auditor to identify any material inconsistencies with the financial statements, or inconsistencies 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 18 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	2025/26	2024/25
£50,000 - £54,999	0	1
£55,000 - £59,999	3	2
£60,000 - £64,999	1	0
£65,000 - £69,999	0	1
£95,000 - £99,999	0	1
£105,000 - £109,999	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 2025/26 £	Total Remuneration 2024/25 £
Brian Butler - Partnership Director	105,282	105,282	98,712
	105,282	105,282	98,712

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 As at	Difference from
	2025/26	2024/25		31 March 2026	31 March 2025
Name and Post Title	£	£		£'000	£'000
Brian Butler - Partnership	28,075	25,923	Pension	7	2
Director			Lump Sum	0	0
	28,075	25,923			

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 2025-26 were as follows:

Whole Time Pay	**Contribution rate**
On earnings up to and including £27,500 (2024/2025 £27,000)	5.50%
On earnings above £27,501 and up to £33,600 (2024/2025 £27,000 to £33,000)	7.25%
On earnings above £33,601 and up to £46,100 (2024/2025 £33,000 to £45,300)	8.50%
On earnings above £46,101 and up to £61,400 (2024/2025 £45,300 to £60,400)	9.50%
On earnings above £61,401 (2024/2025 £60,400)	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

No exit packages were paid in both 2025/26 and 2024/25,including compulsory and voluntary redundancy costs, pension contributions in respect of added years, ex-gratia payments and other departure costs.

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 2025/26, no individual spent time during the year on trade union-related activities.

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.

2024/25 - 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 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**

2025/26 - 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 2025	**569**	**569**	**110**	**679**
Movement in reserves during 2025/26				
Surplus or (Deficit) on Provision of Services	(147)	(147)	0	(147)
Other Comprehensive Expenditure and Income	0	0	(67)	(67)
Total Comprehensive Expenditure and Income	**(147)**	**(147)**	**(67)**	**(214)**
Adjustments between accounting basis & funding basis under regulations (Note 7)	(21)	(21)	21	0
Increase/Decrease in 2025/26	**(168)**	**(168)**	**(46)**	**(214)**
Balance at 31 March 2026 carried forward	**401**	**401**	**64**	**465**

The South East of Scotland Transport Partnership (SESTRAN)

COMPREHENSIVE INCOME AND EXPENDITURE STATEMENT 2025/26

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.

2024/25				2025/26		
Gross Expenditure	**Gross Income**	**Net Expenditure**		**Gross Expenditure**	**Gross Income**	**Net Expenditure**
£'000	**£'000**	**£'000**	**Services**	**£'000**	**£'000**	**£'000**
858	(5)	853	Core	845	0	845
5,213	(5,197)	16	Projects	6,801	(6,534)	267
6,071	**(5,202)**	**869**	**Cost Of Services**	**7,646**	**(6,534)**	**1,112**
165	(208)	(43)	Financing & Investment Income (Note 9)	206	(238)	(32)
0	(933)	(933)	Taxation and Non-Specific Grant Income (Note 10)	0	(933)	(933)
6,236	**(6,343)**	**(107)**	**(Surplus) or Deficit on Provision of Services**	**7,852**	**(7,705)**	**147**
			Other Comprehensive Income and Expenditure			
0	(4)	(4)	Change in Demographic Assumptions	16	0	16
0	(474)	(474)	Change in Financial Assumptions	0	(111)	(111)
466	0	466	Changes in the effect of the asset ceiling	190	0	190
0	(28)	(28)	Other Experience	25	0	25
71	0	71	Return on Assets excluding amounts included in net interest	0	(53)	(53)
537	**(506)**	**31**	**Total Other Comprehensive Income and Expenditure**	**231**	**(164)**	**67**
6,773	**(6,849)**	**(76)**	**Total Comprehensive Income and Expenditure**	**8,083**	**(7,869)**	**214**

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 2025 £'000		Note	31 March 2026 £'000
152	Property, plant and equipment	11	105
0	Other long-term assets (Pensions)	24	0
152	**Long term assets**		**105**
2,212	Short-term debtors	13	3,182
1,327	Cash and cash equivalents	14	766
3,539	**Current assets**		**3,948**
0	Contributions and Grants Received in Advance		(138)
(3,001)	Short-term creditors	15	(3,444)
(3,001)	**Current liabilities**		**(3,582)**
(11)	Property Lease	22	(6)
(11)	**Long-term liabilities**		**(6)**
679	**Net assets/ (liabilities)**		**465**
	Financed by:		
569	Usable reserves	16	401
110	Unusable reserves	17	64
679	**Total reserves**		**465**

The unaudited Annual Accounts were issued on the 12th June 2026.

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 2025 £'000	31 March 2025 £'000		31 March 2026 £'000	31 March 2026 £'000
		OPERATING ACTIVITIES		
(3,730)		Government Grants	(6,267)	
(176)		Constituent Council Requisitions	(190)	
(5)		Interest paid/ (received)	(44)	
(1,470)		Other receipts from operating activities	(186)	
	(5,381)	**Cash inflows generated from operating activities**		**(6,687)**
768		Cash paid to and on behalf of employees	829	
3,513		Cash paid to suppliers of goods and services	6,401	
	4,281	**Cash outflows generated from operating activities**		**7,230**
	(1,100)	**Net cash flows from operating activities**		**543**
		INVESTING ACTIVITIES		
1		Purchase of property, plant and equipment	18	
0		Proceeds from the sale of property, plant and equipment	0	
	1	**Net cash flows from investing activities**		**18**
		FINANCING ACTIVITIES		
0		Other receipts from financing activities	0	
	0	**Net cash flows from financing activities**		**0**
	(1,099)	**Net (increase)/ decrease in cash and cash equivalents**		**561**
	228	**Cash and cash equivalents at the beginning of the reporting period**		**1,327**
	1,327	**Cash and cash equivalents at the end of the reporting period (Note 14)**		**766**

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;
- 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.

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.

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;

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.

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 2026/27 Code where disclosures are required in the 2025/26 financial statements in accordance with the requirements of paragraph 3.3.4.3 of the Code are:

- Amendments to FRS 102 The Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (Amendments to Heritage assets);
- Amendments to the Classification and Measurement of Financial Instruments (Amendments to IFRS 9 and IFRS 7);
- Annual improvements to IFRS accounting standards – Volume 11;
- Contracts Referencing Nature-dependent Electricity (Amendments to IFRS 9 and IFRS 7)

For the standards introduced by the 2026/27 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 June 2023 legal judgement due to:
  >the ruling only applying to the above-named private sector pension scheme;
  > the legal judgement was subject to appeal and in August 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 were asked by pension bodies to look at pragmatic solutions where schemes are unable to evidence historic section 37 confirmation;
  > The government responded on 5 June 2025 that it will introduce legislation to deal with issues arising from the June 2023 legal judgement;
  > The government notes that the "legislation will give affected pension schemes the ability to retrospectively obtain written actuarial confirmation that historic benefit changes met the necessary standards" and that "scheme obligations will otherwise be unaffected";
  > Legislation permitting to this issue was included in the government's Pension Scheme Bill (Amendments) tabled on 1 September 2025.
- 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.

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

- 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 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 2026 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%	47
1 year increase in member life expectancy	4%	102
0.1% increase in the Salary Increase Rate	0%	1
0.1% increase in the Pension Increase Rate (CPI)	2%	46

5. EVENTS AFTER THE BALANCE SHEET DATE

The unaudited Annual Accounts were authorised for issue on 12th June 2026. 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 2026, 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 2026 which would materially affect the 2025/26 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 18).

Expenditure and Funding Analysis

	Net Expenditure Chargeable to the General Fund	Adjustments	Net Expenditure in the CIES
2025/26	**£'000**	**£'000**	**£'000**
Core	864	(19)	845
Projects	267	0	267
Net Cost of Services	**1,131**	**(19)**	**1,112**
Other Income and Expenditure			
Government grant	(743)	0	(743)
Constituent council requisitions	(190)	0	(190)
Interest paid/ (received)	(30)	0	(30)
Interest on the effect of the asset ceiling	0	64	64
Net pension interest cost/ (income)	0	(66)	(66)
(Surplus) or deficit on the provision of services	**168**	**(21)**	**147**

	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	0	(30)	(30)
(Surplus) or deficit on the provision of services	**(141)**	**34**	**(107)**

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:

2025/26	Adjusts. For Capital Purposes £'000	Net Change for Pensions Adjusts. £'000	Other Differences £'000	Total Statutory Adjusts. £'000
Core	41	(65)	5	(19)
Projects	0	0	0	0
Net Cost of Services	**41**	**(65)**	**5**	**(19)**
Other Income and Expenditure				
Interest on the effect of the asset ceiling	0	64	0	64
Net pension interest cost/ (received)	0	(66)	0	(66)
(Surplus) or deficit on the provision of services	**41**	**(67)**	**5**	**(21)**

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	0	(30)	0	(30)
(Surplus) or deficit on the provision of services	**53**	**(31)**	**12**	**34**

- 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.

6. EXPENDITURE AND FUNDING ANALYSIS *(continued)*

6.2 Segmental Analysis of Income included in Expenditure and Funding Analysis

2025/26	Core £'000	Projects £'000	Total £'000
Expenditure			
Employee expenses	687	138	825
Other service expenses	177	6,663	6,840
Total Expenditure	**864**	**6,801**	**7,665**
Income			
Government grants and other contributions	0	(6,534)	(6,534)
Total Income	**0**	**(6,534)**	**(6,534)**
Net Cost of Services	**864**	**267**	**1,131**

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			
Government grants and other contributions	(5)	(5,197)	(5,202)
Total Income	**(5)**	**(5,197)**	**(5,202)**
Net Cost of Services	**820**	**16**	**836**

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 2026 £'000	31st March 2025 £'000
Expenditure		
Employee expenses	763	661
Other service expenses	6,821	5,352
Depreciation, amortisation and impairment	62	58
Interest payments	206	165
Total Expenditure	7,852	6,236
Income		
Interest and investment income	(238)	(208)
Income from constituent councils	(190)	(190)
Government grants and other contributions	(7,277)	(5,945)
Total Income	(7,705)	(6,343)
(Surplus) or Deficit on the Provision of Services	147	(107)

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.

2025/26	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	55	(55)			(55)
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	(14)	14			14
Adjustments primarily involving the Pensions Reserve					
Reversal of items relating to retirement benefits debited or credited to the CIES	92			(92)	(92)
Employer's pension contributions and direct payments to pensioners payable in the year	(159)			159	159
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	5		(5)		(5)
Total Adjustments	**(21)**	**(41)**	**(5)**	**67**	**21**

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.

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)**

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 2025/26 to 2026/27.

9. FINANCING AND INVESTMENT INCOME

	2025/26 £'000	2024/25 £'000
Interest income on pension asset/liability	(208)	(165)
Interest Paid/ (Received)	(30)	(43)
Pensions interest cost	142	135
Interest on the effect of the asset ceiling	64	30
	(32)	(43)

10. TAXATION AND NON SPECIFIC GRANT INCOME

	2025/26 £'000	2024/25 £'000
Government Grant	(743)	(743)
Constituent Council Requisitions	(190)	(190)
	(933)	(933)

NOTES TO THE ANNUAL ACCOUNTS

11. PROPERTY, PLANT AND EQUIPMENT

11.1 Movements on balances:

Movements in 2025/26 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 2025	21	431	11	463
Additions	0	14	0	14
Transfers	0	2	(2)	0
De-Recognised Assets	0	(82)	(4)	(86)
At 31st March 2026	21	365	5	391
Accumulated Depreciation				
At 1st April 2025	(5)	(306)	0	(311)
Depreciation charge	(5)	(50)	0	(55)
De-Recognised Assets	0	80	0	80
At 31st March 2026	(10)	(276)	0	(286)
Net Book Value				
At 31st March 2026	11	89	5	105

Gross Book Value of £0.086m were de-recognised with associated depreciated of £0.080m.
The assets had all reached the end of their useful operating life.

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

11.2 Movements on balances:

Comparative Movements in 2024/25 Cost or Valuation	Property Lease (Right of Use Asset)	RESTATED * 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	(408)	0	(408)
At 31st March 2025	21	431	11	463
Accumulated Depreciation				
At 1st April 2024	0	(661)	0	(661)
Depreciation charge	(5)	(53)	0	(58)
De-Recognised Assets	0	408	0	408
At 31st March 2025	(5)	(306)	0	(311)
Net Book Value				
At 31st March 2025	16	125	11	152

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 2026, the Partnership had no capital commitments.

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 2026	**31st March 2025**
	£'000	**£'000**
Trade creditors	1,589	1,253

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

	Current	
	31st March 2026	**31st March 2025**
	£'000	**£'000**
Loans and receivables	3,655	3,261
Trade debtors	190	57
	3,845	3,318

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 2026		31 March 2025	
Financial Liabilities	**Carrying Amount £'000**	**Fair Value £'000**	**Carrying Amount £'000**	**Fair Value £'000**
Trade creditors	1,589	1,589	1,253	1,253

	31 March 2026		31 March 2025	
Financial Assets	**Carrying Amount £'000**	**Fair Value £'000**	**Carrying Amount £'000**	**Fair Value £'000**
Loans and receivables	3,655	3,655	3,261	3,261
Trade debtors	190	190	57	57
	3,845	3,845	3,318	3,318

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 2026 £'000	**31st March 2025 £'000**
Total expense and income in Surplus or Deficit on the Provision of Services:		
Interest Expense/ (Income)	(30)	(43)

13. DEBTORS

	31st March 2026 £'000	**31st March 2025 £'000**
Debtors:		
Central government bodies	2,889	1,934
Other local authorities	184	109
HM Customs and Excise - VAT	0	30
Other entities and individuals	109	139
	3,182	2,212

NOTES TO THE ANNUAL ACCOUNTS

14. CASH AND CASH EQUIVALENTS

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

	31st March 2026 £'000	31st March 2025 £'000
Bank account	766	1,327
	766	1,327

15. CREDITORS

	31st March 2026 £'000	31st March 2025 £'000
Central government bodies	0	(92)
Other local authorities	(2,361)	(2,032)
Other entities and individuals	(1,047)	(846)
Employee costs	(31)	(26)
Finance Lease obligations	(5)	(5)
	(3,444)	**(3,001)**

16. USABLE RESERVES

		31st March 2026 £'000	31st March 2025 £'000
16.1	Unallocated General Fund Reserve	243	221
16.2	Earmarked Balance - Project Budget slippage	158	348
		401	569

NOTES TO THE ANNUAL ACCOUNTS

17. UNUSABLE RESERVES

		31st March 2026 £'000	31st March 2025 £'000
17.1	Capital Adjustment Account	95	136
17.2	Pension Reserve	0	0
17.3	Accumulated Absence Account	(31)	(26)
		64	110

17.1 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.

	2025/26 £'000	2024/25 £'000
Balance at 1st April	136	189
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	(55)	(58)
Net written out amount of the cost of non-current assets consumed in year	81	131
Capital financing applied in the year:		
• Contributions credited to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement that have been applied to capital financing	14	5
Balance at 31st March	95	136

17.2 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.

17. UNUSABLE RESERVES *(continued)*

17.2 Pension Reserve *(continued)*

	2025/26 £'000	2024/25 £'000
Balance at 1st April	0	0
Remeasurements of the net defined benefit liability	(67)	(31)
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.	(92)	(111)
Employer's pension contributions and direct payments to pensioners payable in the year.	159	142
Balance at 31st March	0	0

17.3 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.

	2025/26 £'000	2024/25 £'000
Balance at 1st April	(26)	(14)
Settlement or cancellation of accrual made at the end of the preceding year	26	14
Amounts accrued at the end of the current year	(31)	(26)
Balance at 31st March	(31)	(26)

18. MEMBERS EXPENSES

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

	2025/26 £'000	2024/25 £'000
Expenses	0	0
	0	0

NOTES TO THE ANNUAL ACCOUNTS

19. 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:

Fees payable in respect of:	2025/26 £'000	2024/25 £'000
• external audit services carried out by the appointed auditor for the year	13	13
	13	13

20. GRANT INCOME

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

	2025/26 £'000	Re-stated 2024/25 £'000
Credited to Taxation and Non Specific Grant Income		
Scottish Government - Revenue Grant	(743)	(743)
Constituent Council Requisitions (Note 21.3)	(190)	(190)
	(933)	(933)
Credited to Services		
Contribution - Fife Council	0	(1)
Contribution - Scotrail	(5)	(5)
Contribution - Scottish Borders Council	0	(1)
Contribution - Paths for All	0	(87)
Contribution - Stirling Communication Centre	(4)	(4)
Contribution - Scottish Government/ Transport Scotland	(6,479)	(5,084)
Contribution - SPT	(8)	0
Contribution - West Lothian Council	0	(1)
Contribution - HITRANS	(14)	0
Contribution - NESTRANS	(1)	(3)
Contribution - SPT	0	(5)
Contribution - SWESTRANS	(2)	(2)
Contribution - TACTRAN	(26)	(7)
Contribution - ZETRANS	(1)	(1)
	(6,540)	(5,201)

Agency income has been removed from the Grant Income credited to services note, in accordance with the Code of Practice.

21. 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.

21.1 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 20.

21.2 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 2025-26 is shown in Note 18.

21.3 Other Parties

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

	2025/26 Expenditure	2025/26 Income	2025/26 Debtor/ (Creditor)	2024/25 Net Expenditure	2024/25 Debtor/ (Creditor)
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Revenue Expenditure - Support Services				0	
City of Edinburgh Council - Financial and Clerking Services	42	0	0	42	0
Falkirk Council - HR Services	1	0	(1)	0	0
Revenue Expenditure - Interest on Revenue Balances					
City of Edinburgh Council	0	(30)	0	(44)	0
Revenue Expenditure - Grants/ Other					
City of Edinburgh Council	1,533	2	(1,149)	825	(919)
Clackmannanshire Council	135	0	(101)	212	(181)
East Lothian Council	176	1	(151)	162	(104)
Falkirk Council	121	0	106	84	(19)
Fife Council	569	2	(571)	319	(267)
Midlothian Council	131	0	(93)	105	(89)
Scottish Borders Council	461	1	(183)	458	(198)
Scottish Government/Transport Scotland	20	(6,479)	2,889	(4,979)	1,826
West Lothian Council	90	0	(53)	150	(152)
	3,236	(6,473)	694	(2,664)	(103)

21. RELATED PARTIES *(continued)*

21.3 Other Parties *(continued)*

	2025/26 Income £'000	2025/26 Debtor/ (Creditor) £'000	2024/25 Net Expenditure £'000	2024/25 Debtor/ (Creditor) £'000
Revenue Income - Requisitions				
Clackmannanshire Council	(6)	0	(6)	0
East Lothian Council	(13)	0	(13)	0
City of Edinburgh Council	(61)	0	(61)	0
Falkirk Council	(19)	0	(19)	0
Fife Council	(44)	0	(44)	0
Midlothian Council	(11)	0	(11)	0
Scottish Borders Council	(14)	0	(14)	0
West Lothian Council	(22)	0	(22)	0
	(190)	0	(190)	0
Revenue Income - Agency Income				
Clackmannanshire Council	0	0	(2)	0
Fife Council	0	0	(151)	0
Falkirk Council	(59)	0	(52)	0
Midlothian Council	(15)	15	0	0
Scottish Borders Council	0	0	(59)	0
	(74)	15	(264)	0

NOTES TO THE ANNUAL ACCOUNTS

22. 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.

Office Accommodation - Victoria Quay, Edinburgh	**2025/26 £'000**	**2024/25 £'000**
• Not later than 1 year	5	5
• Over 1 year	6	11
	11	16

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 2026, 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 2025/26 was £26,000 (2024/25 £24,000).

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

Hire Bicycles, Bicycle Docks, Office Printer, SIM cards.	**2025/26 £'000**	**2024/25 £'000**
• Not later than 1 year	26	24
• Over 1 year	45	62
	71	86

23. DEFINED BENEFIT PENSION SCHEMES

23.1 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.

23. DEFINED BENEFIT PENSION SCHEMES *(continued)*

23.2 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:

Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement	**2025/26 £000**	**2025/26 £000**	**2024/25 £000**	**2024/25 £000**
Cost of services:				
Service cost, comprising:				
Current service costs	94		111	
		94		111
Financing and investment income:				
Net interest expense/ (income)	(66)		(30)	
Interest on the effect of the asset ceiling	64		30	
		(2)		0
Total post employee benefit charged to the surplus on the provision of services		92		111
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	(53)		71	
Actuarial gains and (losses) arising on changes in financial assumptions	(111)		(474)	
Actuarial gains and (losses) arising on changes in demographic assumptions	16		(4)	
Restriction in Pension Asset	190		466	
Other experience	25		(28)	
		67		31
Total post-employment benefits charged to the Comprehensive Income / Expenditure Statement		159		142
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.		(67)		(31)
Actual amount charged against the General Fund Balance for pensions in the year:				
Employer's contributions payable to the scheme		159		142
		159		142

23. DEFINED BENEFIT PENSION SCHEMES *(continued)*

23.3 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:

	2025/26 £'000	2024/25 £'000
Fair value of employer assets	3,909	3,541
* Restriction in Pension Asset	(1,360)	(1,106)
Present value of funded liabilities	(2,549)	(2,435)
Net asset/(liability) arising from defined benefit obligation	0	0

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

	2025/26 £'000	2024/25 £'000
Opening fair value of scheme assets	3,541	3,363
Interest income	208	165
Remeasurement gain / (loss):		
Return on plan assets, excluding the amount included in the net interest expense	53	(71)
Contributions from employer	159	142
Contributions from employees into the scheme	42	36
Benefits paid	(94)	(94)
Closing fair value of scheme assets	3,909	3,541

Reconciliation of Present Value of the Scheme Liabilities

	2025/26 £'000	2024/25 £'000
Present value of funded liabilities	(2,435)	(2,753)
Present value of unfunded liabilities	0	0
Opening balance at 1st April	(2,435)	(2,753)
Current service cost	(94)	(111)
Interest cost	(142)	(135)
Contributions from employees into the scheme	(42)	(36)
Remeasurement gain / (loss):		
Change in demographic assumptions	(16)	4
Change in financial assumptions	111	474
Other experience	(25)	28
Benefits paid	94	94
Closing balance at 31st March	(2,549)	(2,435)

* 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 2024/25 and 2025/26.

23. DEFINED BENEFIT PENSION SCHEMES *(continued)*

23.5 Fair Value of Employer Assets

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

	2025/26		2024/25	
	£'000	%	£'000	%
Equity Securities:				
Consumer *	492.9	12.6	448.7	12.7
Manufacturing *	470.2	12.0	426.3	12.0
Energy and Utilities *	200.3	5.1	198.1	5.6
Financial Institutions *	235.7	6.0	197.7	5.6
Health and Care *	264.5	6.8	223.9	6.3
Information technology *	137.2	3.5	109.5	3.1
Information technology	0.1	0.0	0.1	0.0
Other *	250.1	6.4	238.6	6.7
Sub-total Equity Securities	2,051.0		1,842.9	
Debt Securities:				
Corporate Bonds (investment grade) *	64.5	1.7	0.0	0.0
Corporate Bonds (non-investment grade)	53.5	1.4	0.0	0.0
UK Government *	729.9	18.7	617.5	17.4
Other *	0.0	0.0	58.1	1.6
Sub-total Debt Securities	847.9		675.6	
Private Equity:				
All *	4.7	0.1	5.4	0.2
All	3.5	0.1	600.4	17.0
Sub-total Private Equity	8.2		605.8	
Real Estate:				
UK Property *	21.9	0.6	0.0	0.0
UK Property	141.1	3.6	133.2	3.8
Overseas Property *	8.0	0.2	0.0	0.0
Overseas Property	10.6	0.3	0.0	0.0
Sub-total Real Estate	181.6		133.2	
Investment Funds and Unit Trusts:				
Equities *	6.7	0.2	6.2	0.2
Bonds *	7.1	0.2	51.6	1.5
Bonds	0.0	0.0	60.6	1.7
Infrastructure	625.3	16.0	13.7	0.4
Other *	0.0	0.0	29.3	0.8
Sub-total Investment Funds and Unit Trusts	639.1		161.4	
Derivatives:				
Foreign Exchange *	0.0	0.0	0.7	0.0
Sub-total Derivatives	0.0		0.7	
Cash and Cash Equivalents				
All *	181.2	4.6	121.4	3.4
Sub-total Cash and Cash Equivalents	181.2		121.4	
Total Fair Value of Employer Assets	3,909.0		3,541.0	

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

23. DEFINED BENEFIT PENSION SCHEMES *(continued)*

23.6 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 2026 were those from the beginning of the year (i.e. 31 March 2025) 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 2025 to 31 March 2026 — 7.3%

	2025/26	2024/25
Mortality assumptions - longevity at 65 for current pensioners:		
• Males	22.3 years	21.9 years
• Females	23.0 years	22.8 years
Mortality assumptions - longevity at 65 for future pensioners:		
• Males	22.4 years	22.1 years
• Females	25.7 years	25.6 years
Pension increase rate	3.00%	2.75%
Salary increase rate (see below)	3.70%	3.45%
Discount rate	6.30%	5.80%

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 2026 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).

23. DEFINED BENEFIT PENSION SCHEMES *(continued)*

23.7 Analysis of projected amount to be charged to profit or loss for the period to 31 March 2027

	Assets £000	Obligations £000	Net (liability) / asset £000	% of pay
Projected current service cost	0	(87)	(87)	(14.8%)
Total Service Cost	0	(87)	(87)	
Interest income on plan assets	249	0	249	
Interest cost on defined benefit obligation	0	(162)	(162)	
Interest on the effect of the asset ceiling	0	0	(86)	
Total Net Interest Cost	249	(162)	1	
Total included in Profit or Loss	249	(249)	(86)	

The Partnership's estimated contribution to Lothian Pension Fund for 2026/27 is £158,000.

24. 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.

24. 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 2026, the Partnership had no financial assets subject to foreign exchange risk.
The Partnership has no financial liabilities denominated in foreign currencies.

25. 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. 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 2025/26, the Partnership entered into agency arrangements with Falkirk Council and Midlothian Council. The total income received and expenditure incurred of £0.074m is not included in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement. In addition, the Partnership received a contribution in advance of £0.138m from Falkirk Council on 31st March 2026 which related to 2026/27 agency expenditure, which is not included in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement.

Budget 2026/27 - Update

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 This report presents a proposed revised Partnership budget for 2026/27.

1.2 The Board approved the Partnership budget for 2026/27 on 13th March. This report sets out proposed revisions to that approved budget following confirmation of Scottish Government funding for 2026/27.

1.3 An update on the proposed revised budget was considered by the Performance and Audit Committee on 5th June 2026.

2. MAIN REPORT

Introduction

2.1 The Partnership approved the 2026/27 budget on 13th March. It was noted that Scottish Government funding under the People and Place Programme (PPP) had not been confirmed and that the approved budget assumed funding of £6.356m in line with the 2025/26 allocation.

2.2 PPP funding for 2026/27 has now been confirmed at £5.115m in 2026/27. This represents a £1.241m (20%) reduction on funding in 2025/26.

2.3 This report sets out proposed revisions to the budget to reflect confirmed PPP funding. It also includes proposed amendments to the core projects budget to reflect carry forward of project underspends from 2025/26; an updated delivery budget for the Transport to Employment Programme following further consideration by Partnership Officers; and additional funding of £0.200m for Workforce Mobility.

Core Budget Projects Expenditure

2.4 The Partnership Board previously approved project expenditure totalling £165,000 within the Core SEStran 2026/27 budget. This assumed a carry forward of £50,000 from the 2025/26 forecast project budget underspend.

2.5 As reported elsewhere on the agenda, the provisional 2025/26 project budget underspend is £97,000, representing an increase of £47,000 on the carry forward assumed in the approved 2026/27 budget. It is proposed to allocate this additional carry forward as follows: RTPI +£20,000; Sustainable Travel +£37,000; Projects Consultancy -£10,000. The provisional project budget underspend is subject to review by external audit, and no additional legal commitments will be entered into until the audit outcome is confirmed.

2.6 The unaudited accounts also include a project budget carry forward of £61,000 to meet future lease commitments for a folding bicycle rental scheme. The approved core budget has been increased to reflect lease commitments of £23,000 which will be incurred in 2026/27.

2.7 An analysis of the proposed updated Core budget for 2026/27 and indicative budgets for 2027/28 to 2028/29 is shown in Appendix 1.

People and Place Programme

2.8 The approved budget for 2026/27 assumed funding of £6.356m from Transport Scotland to progress the People and Place Programme (PPP). It was noted that final confirmation had yet to be received and that Transport Scotland had advised to plan for 2026/27 based on funding being at the same level as 2025/26.

2.9 Funding for 2026/27 has now been confirmed at £5.115m, which represents a £1.241m (20%) reduction on funding in 2025/26.

2.10 The proposed revised programme allocations for 2026/27 are shown in Appendix 2. Programme Delivery Plan updates will be reported to the Board by the Partnership Programme Manager.

Transport to Employment Programme

2.11 For 2026/27, as previously advised, Transport Scotland is providing additional funding to RTPs to support a Transport to Employment programme which aims to reduce child poverty. Total grant funding of £2.588m has now been confirmed and this is in line with budget planning.

2.12 When the Board approved the budget in March it was noted that the proposed delivery budget was in development and would be subject to change. Work has been ongoing to refine programme planning and Appendix 2 shows the updated delivery budget. Final allocations are currently being discussed with Local Authority partners, and any budget revisions will be reported through regular in-year reporting.

Workforce Mobility Project

2.13 Since the 2026/27 budget was approved, Transport Scotland has allocated an additional £0.200m to SEStran to partner Edinburgh & South East Scotland City Region Deal in the delivery of the Workforce Mobility Project and deliver a pilot rollout of the established Transport Planning services across the whole of Scotland. Full detail of this new project will be reported to the Board by the Senior Partnership Manager. This project is also included at Appendix 2.

3 NEXT STEPS

3.1 Following approval of a revised budget for 2026/27, the Partnership decision will be implemented with progress reported to the Performance and Audit Committee and Board through regular in-year reporting.

4 RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 It is recommended that the Partnership:

4.1.1 Approves the proposed revised core budget of £1,053,000 for 2026/27, as detailed at Appendix 1;

4.1.2 Approves the proposed People and Place; Transport to Employment; and Workforce Mobility Project budgets for 2026/27, as detailed in Appendix 2;

4.1.3 notes that all income and expenditure of the Partnership will continue to be monitored closely with updates reported to each Partnership meeting.

5 BACKGROUND READING/EXTERNAL REFERENCES

5.1 Revenue Budget 2026-27 and Financial Plan 2027/28 to 2028/29 – report to the South East of Scotland Transport Partnership 13th March 2026

Richard Lloyd-Bithell
8th June 2026

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Proposed Core Budget 2026/27 and Indicative Budgets 2027/28 to 2028/29

Appendix 2 – People and Place, Transport to Employment and Workforce Mobility - Proposed Budgets 2026/27

Contact thomas.stokes@edinburgh.gov.uk

Policy Implications	There are no direct policy implications arising as a result of this report.
Financial Implications	There are no direct financial implications arising.
Equalities Implications	There are no direct equality implications arising.
Climate Change Implications	There are no direct climate change implications arising.

Appendix 1

Revised Core Budget 2026/27 and Indicative Financial Plan 2027/28 and 2028/29

	Approved Budget 2025/26	Proposed Budget 2026/27	Indicative Budget 2027/28	Indicative Budget 2028/29
	£0	£0	£0	£0
Employee Costs				
Salaries	564	640	668	691
National Insurance	76	86	91	94
Pension Fund	151	171	178	184
Recharges	(104)	(255)	(270)	(282)
Training, Conferences & Recruitment	10	10	10	10
	697	**652**	**677**	**697**
Premises Costs	**21**	**25**	**25**	**25**
Transport	**5**	**5**	**5**	**5**
Supplies and Services				
Communications & Computing	48	48	48	48
Printing & Office Supplies	7	7	7	7
Insurance	7	9	9	9
Equipment, Materials & Miscellaneous	4	4	4	4
	66	**68**	**68**	**68**
Governance & Support Services				
Finance, Legal Services & HR	38	38	38	38
Clerks Fees	12	12	12	12
External Audit Fees	12	12	12	12
Members Allowances and Expenses	1	1	1	1
Contingency Provision		30	40	50
	63	**93**	**103**	**113**
Interest	**0**	**(25)**	**(25)**	**(25)**
Core Projects				
Regional Bus Action Plan Delivery		100	75	75
Real Time Passenger Infromation (RTPI)		20		
Sustainable Travel		47	10	10
Projects Consultancy		20	20	20
Communications and Marketing		25	10	10
Electric Bike Scheme		23	23	16
2025/26 Projects	81			
	81	**235**	**138**	**131**
Total Gross Expenditure	**933**	**1,053**	**991**	**1,014**
Funding				
Scottish Government Grant	(743)	(743)	(743)	(743)
Council Requisitions	(190)	(190)	(200)	(210)
Efficiency Programme			(25)	(45)
Projects Reserve - Electric Bike Lease		(23)	(23)	(16)
Project Budget Underspend 25/26		(97)		
Total Funding	**(933)**	**(1,053)**	**(991)**	**(1,014)**

Appendix 2

People and Place Programme - Revised Budget 2026/27

	Proposed Budget 2026/27	
Core staff recharge	£154,986	
Project Support Officer	£24,682	
Project Officer	£48,332	
RTPI – System Maintenance	£23,500	
Thistle Assistance	£40,000	
Regional Project Delivery	£86,714	
Local Authority Delivery Support	£484,922	*
Regional Priority Investment Fund	£2,054,576	*
Access to Cycles and Cycle Storage	£1,871,947	*
Community Grant Fund	£364,579	
RTPI - System Maintenance contributions	(£12,000)	
Thistle Assistance - RTP contributions	(£27,500)	
Scottish Government Grant	(£5,114,738)	
	£0	

* Two local authority awards are provisional at this stage.

Transport to Employment Programme - Revised Budget 2026/27

	Proposed Budget 2026/27
Core staff recharge	£100,014
Project Officer x2	£96,664
Capacity and Capability	£300,209
Working with School Communities	£188,676
Transport to Large Workplaces	£755,700
Rural Transport to Work and Further Education	£572,000
Local Employability Partnership (LEP) Delivery Support	£206,000
Transport to Healthcare Pilot Projects	£320,000
Contingency	£48,477
Scottish Government Grant	(£2,587,740)
	£0

Workforce Mobility Project - Revised Budget 2026/27

	Proposed Budget 2026/27
Workforce Mobility Project	£200,000
Scottish Government Grant	(£200,000)
Future Development and Programme Management	**£0**

PaSDOS AND FUTURE REPORTING

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 This paper updates the Board on discussions around the future role of the Project and Strategy Delivery Oversight Subgroup (PaSDOS) and future reporting resulting from this and the 2026/27 Business Plan. The recommendation in this paper was approved by the Performance and Audit Committee on 6th June, subject to approval by the Board.

2 PaSDOS

2.1 PaSDOS was established in early 2025 to strengthen governance, oversight, and strategic alignment of SEStran's project delivery, ensuring that projects are effectively scrutinised, coordinated, and delivered in line with the Regional Transport Strategy and business plan priorities.

2.2 As the Subgroup had been in place for 12 months, it was felt timely to review its terms of reference (ToRs) and overall function, which the Subgroup did in an additional meeting on 6th March 2026. Subsequent to this, the terms of reference were redrafted and agreed, subject to final amendments, by the Subgroup at their last meeting on 24th April 2026. The final draft is attached as appendix 1.

2.3 Key changes proposed to the ToRs are as follows:

- The scrutiny/audit function of existing projects to be passed back to this Committee – this will include the project dashboard report and risk register in a more streamlined format
- Instead of reporting to this Committee, PaSDOS will instead report to Board and provide advice and guidance on project delivery alignment with overall strategy (as strategic direction is a core remit of the Board)
- In doing this, PaSDOS will be reframed around ensuring project delivery against the RTS and national strategies
- A core role will be to support development of the business plan for the next year and evaluation of the previous year's business plan
- The Subgroup will continue to support ongoing project development with meetings focusing on specific projects, with project leads attending and discussion focused around the groups input on specific project challenges and project development
- As part of the business plan process, the group will set a 'work plan' for the year based on the milestones within the business plan – this will include setting meeting dates that align with project development to facilitate the above role
- Membership will look to increase to up to 7 with an ongoing focus on the right skills mix to support the role of the committee

3 BUSINESS PLAN 2026/27 AND PROGRAMMATIC APPROACH

3.1 The final Business Plan is attached at appendix 2. The 2026/27 Business Plan sets out a programme-led delivery model to implement the Regional Transport Strategy (RTS), aligning transport investment with national priorities, regional economic ambitions, and local authority outcomes. Collectively, the portfolio is designed to improve everyday journeys, expand access to opportunity, and support long-term regional prosperity and wellbeing. The plan is built around six core programmes, forming a coherent and mutually reinforcing portfolio:

- People and Place
- Regional Bus Action Plan
- Transport to Health
- Transport to Employment
- Regional Transport Strategy Delivery Plan
- SEStransit (mass transit programme)

3.2 The 2026/27 Business Plan adopts a fully programmatic approach, moving away from the previous model of delivering numerous, often discrete projects. Instead of funding individually scoped interventions with some coordination, delivery is now structured around a small number of strategic programmes that group related activities, align partners, and manage delivery collectively at a regional level. This enables improved prioritisation, stronger governance and oversight, and a clearer line of sight from investment to outcomes.

4 PROPOSED 2026/27 PROGRAMME REPORTING

4.1 Further to the above, it is proposed that programme reporting for 2026/27 take a different format than in previous years, both to reflect the change in approach and to ensure it has the easily accessible information it needs to scrutinise this new approach.

4.2 As such, it is proposed that future reporting is as follows:

- A quarterly update focusing on the progress of each programme, consisting of a dashboard overview for each project giving high level updates since the last meeting plus progress to milestones. Whilst this will include some budget information, the separate budget report will be the main source of reporting and scrutiny for the project budget.
- A six monthly report on projects risks and issues, to alternate with the existing corporate risk report.

5 RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 The Board is asked to:

- approve the proposed changes set out in section 2, and
- note and comment on sections 3 and 4.

Michael Melton
Programme Manager

19th June 2026

Appendix 1: Final Draft PaSDOS Terms of Reference
Appendix 2: SEStran Business Plan 2026/27

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.

SEStran Project and Strategy Delivery Oversight Subgroup (PaSDOS) Terms of Reference

Version History

Version	*Approved Date*	*Approved By*	*Notes*
1	24/04/2025	PaSDOS	First issue
2			Revisions as follows: • Subgroup to report to Partnership Board and not P&A Committee • Clarity on Subgroup size • Meeting schedule to be agreed by the Subgroup rather than quarterly • Remit and reports section revised in full

Title

The subgroup shall be called the Project and Strategy Delivery Oversight Subgroup (PaSDOS)

Purpose

PaSDOS is a Subgroup of the Partnership Board. The Subgroup will provide advice and guidance on project and strategy delivery alignment with the Regional Transport Strategy, any other relevant strategy, and individual Business Plans on behalf of the Partnership Board. It will also advise on relative priority of workstreams, value for money, and the management and control of project and strategy work.

Membership

Membership of the Subgroup shall be made up of at least two Councillor Members and two non-Councillor Members. Membership will be by invitation, at the direction of the Partnership Chair, in order that Members with specific skillsets can be targeted. These skillsets may include audit, accounts, programme or project management, change management, risk management or legal knowledge. Membership will be reviewed on an annual basis to ensure that the membership of the Committee is aligned with annual Business Plans.

The minimum membership of the Subgroup is five members, with a maximum of eight members.

Chair

The Chair will be elected by Members at the first meeting for the Subgroup, and thereafter if the Chair becomes vacant at the following Subgroup meeting.

Meetings

There will be a minimum of four meetings per year, with scheduling agreed for each financial year in advance based on the agreed annual workplan.

Papers will be issued one week in advance of the meeting via email.

The secretariat will be provided by SEStran.

The quorum for meetings shall be a minimum of three members. If this cannot be reached, the meeting should rearranged for an alternative time when the quorum can be met.

Officer Attendance

The Senior Partnership Manager, Strategy Manager, and Programme Manager will normally attend meetings of the Subgroup. Depending on items on the agenda, the Partnership Director will attend, as will other SEStran officers where items for discussion will benefit from their input and support.

Governance

The names of the attendees present at the meeting will be recorded in the minute of the meeting. The names of other persons in attendance will also be recorded.

SEStran will appoint an employee to prepare the minutes.

The agenda will be drawn up by partnership officers and discussed with the Chair. Items can be suggested by other Members.

Minutes will be presented to the Partnership Board.

The Subgroup will operate on the basis of consensus. In the event of an issue arising on which consensus cannot be achieved, the matter will be reported to the Partnership Board for a view.

All Members appreciate that some of the information discussed at the Subgroup will be confidential in nature, and by participating agree to comply with any requirement for confidentiality advised by the Chair.

Delegated Authority

The forum has the delegated authority from the Partnership Board to discuss and consider any matters within its remit.

Remit

The Subgroup acts on behalf of the Board to provide advice and guidance on project and strategy delivery alignment with the Regional Transport Strategy, any other relevant strategy, and individual Business Plans. To perform this function, the Subgroup will:

- Support in the process of the development of the next year's Business Plan, including through the review of Project Initiation Documents and the setting of objectives, outcomes, milestones and deliverables.

- Support the evaluation of the current and previous year's Business Plan(s), including through the review of project closure reports and lessons learned, and through review of progress against set outcomes and RTS objectives
- Support ongoing (in year) project development, with project leads attending and discussion focused around the groups input on specific project challenges and project development
- Review and advise on relative priority of workstreams, the development of value for money measures, and the management and control of project and strategy work.

In order to fulfil this function, the Subgroup will agree an annual workplan for each financial year, based on the content of the Business Plan, which should set out:

- Dates for meetings for the year
- The main focus for each meeting

The Subgroup will report to the Partnership Board by exception only where this has been agreed within a meeting. This will take the form of a verbal report from the Subgroup Chair (or other nominated Member) or a written report produced by SEStran Officers as directed by the Subgroup. In addition, all Subgroup minutes will be reported to the subsequent Partnership Board.

For the avoidance of doubt, the remit of this group does not replace the Partnership Director's operational responsibilities as set out in the Partnership's Standing Orders.

SEStran 2026/27 Business Plan

GO SEStran
South East of Scotland Transport Partnership

ON OUR WAY

We're better connected.

We are the South East of Scotland Transport Partnership (SEStran). We are a partnership of eight local authorities, working collaboratively with each other, and with government, transport and infrastructure operators, businesses and communities across our region to revolutionise our transport system by delivering the Regional Transport Strategy (RTS).

This business plan outlines six key programmes designed to deliver key planks of the RTS. These programmes will enhance transport connectivity, accessibility, and sustainability across the region. Each programme is summarised below, with intended outcomes and objectives clearly stated to demonstrate our strategic approach to improving everyday journeys, supporting local communities, driving economic growth and fostering social wellbeing.

- **People and Place programme (P&P):** We know that car use has a number of significant negative consequences, including emissions that add to climate change, deaths and injuries through road collisions, illness and fatalities caused by pollution, major loss of economic productivity through congestion, and negative impacts on people's physical and mental health and wellbeing. P&P supports delivery partners to encourage people to replace car journeys with active and sustainable travel for daily journeys, with particular emphasis on schools, workplaces, inclusion, accessibility and building local capacity.
- **Regional Bus Action Plan (RBAP):** Across the region, more journeys are made by bus than by any other form of public transport, but bus use has been falling consistently for a number of years. Tackling this and encouraging people to use the bus instead of driving will be essential to reducing the negative impacts of car use. The Regional Bus Strategy sets out a shared vision to deliver the regular, reliable and affordable bus services that people tell us are essential to persuading them to make the switch. These improved bus services will also allow people in communities across the region to access jobs, education, healthcare and leisure activities. Informed by extensive public feedback, the strategy drives improvements in service quality, fares, ticketing, information and governance, with objectives focused on enhancing connectivity, affordability, and overall service standards.
- **Transport to Health (TtH):** Imagine not being able to access essential healthcare appointments simply due to a lack of transport options. This is reality for many people, and it can contribute to people becoming increasingly unwell before they receive care, and additional costs and lost capacity for healthcare services through missed appointments. Working closely with health boards and partners, this programme seeks to remove the transport barriers that prevent people from accessing the healthcare they need, when and where they need it. The programme will improve health outcomes for people across the region, enhance patient experiences, create operational efficiencies and cost savings across NHS Primary Care activities, and improve integration with other transport services.
- **Transport to Employment (TtE):** Many factors contribute to child poverty, which the First Minister of Scotland has pledged to eradicate. These include a lack of transport options for parents to reach the jobs, education or training they need to increase household income. This programme will deliver a number of targeted interventions, in partnership with local authorities and third sector organisations, which aim to reduce child poverty by supporting employment and education opportunities. The programme focuses on increasing employment and training rates, lowering transport costs, and supporting integrated ticketing and bus network enhancements.

- **Regional Transport Strategy Delivery Plan**: Guided by the 'Infrastructure First' principles set out in National Planning Framework 4 and the objectives of the Regional Transport Strategy, the Regional Transport Strategy Delivery Plan will define the medium- to long-term transport interventions required to maximise the region's economic ambitions, as articulated in the Regional Prosperity Framework and partner economic strategies. The Delivery Plan will be developed in close alignment with emerging regional land use planning, ensuring that future transport investment supports the safe, sustainable and efficient movement of people and freight across the region, and provides the foundations for inclusive and sustainable economic growth
- **SEStransit:** A lack of transport options to get people to jobs, healthcare, education or leisure, and the congestion caused by car use, are both already significant problems throughout much of the region. Southeast Scotland is the fastest growing part of Scotland, with the 3 fastest growing local authorities, so these problems will become much worse unless we can significantly improve the transport network over the next few years. SEStransit is the working name for a Mass Transit programme that will deliver many of the improvements targeted by the RTS and a key theme of the Regional Transport Strategy Delivery Plan. It is committed to providing faster, greener and more reliable transport connections. The initiative will develop integrated, high-capacity and sustainable mobility solutions, enabling seamless travel across the region and improving access to strategic housing, employment, health and education sites.

In addition to the exciting programme portfolio, we will continue to manage and deliver two pieces of ongoing operational work – each of which underpins key facets of our vision.

- **Thistle Assistance and Realtime Passenger Information (RTPI):** Thistle Assistance provides support to people who find using public challenging, and we manage this initiative on behalf of all RTPs across Scotland. The scheme has exceeded all expectations in 2025/26, with usage ballooning from previous levels due to the excellent efforts of the team. And we continue to support the rollout of RTPI screens across the region. These play a crucial role in journey planning and in improving the perception of safety when using public transport – because people know exactly when a bus will arrive at their stop.

Complementing all of our work, our communications and marketing strategy includes a refreshed SEStran website, designed to increase engagement and provide accessible information for all users. Together, these efforts form a comprehensive business plan aimed at delivering effective transport solutions and supporting the region's long-term growth and prosperity.

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Introduction

This is an incredibly exciting period for SEStran.

On 28 November 2025, at the State of the City Conference in Glasgow, the First Minister in his speech indicated his administration's intention to introduce enabling legislation to allow regional partnerships to seek legal status, unlock new powers, and design delivery models tailored to local priorities.

The details have yet to be worked out but – when considered together with Transport Scotland's impending review of the split of responsibilities between national, regional and local levels – it presents a generational opportunity to align economic development, land use planning and transport to drive economic growth.

And SEStran will be in the middle of these discussions.

We will work with the economic partnerships, growth deals and local authorities in our region to outline and define the crucial role of transport in enabling and driving economic growth and land use planning in our region.

And we will work with Transport Scotland to build on the initiatives devolved to Regional Transport Partnerships over the past few years, such as the People and Place active travel behaviour change programme, which has demonstrated that RTPs are key to tailoring national policy to suit regional circumstances.

Our project portfolio for 2026/27 is designed to support these discussions and further demonstrate the role that SEStran can play in delivering and managing a world class regional transport network.

Although the block grant received from Transport Scotland has reduced by 5% in recent years, having stayed at the same level for many years beforehand, the total level of funding we receive from TS has increased considerably over the past 3 years, taking account of the devolved initiatives, and will increase significantly again in 2026/27.

In fact, our total guaranteed external funding for 2026/27 is likely to be just under £9m - around nine times the level in 2023/24 – another demonstration of the level of confidence Transport Scotland has in us. Although the majority of this additional funding is ring-fenced for specific pieces of work, primarily People and Place and the new Transport to Employment programme, internal project team costs to support partners with the allocation and monitoring of budgets, progress monitoring and reporting are covered within this funding.

From 2026/27 forward, we will aim to deliver an increased percentage of our work in-house by upskilling our fantastic team to cover more of the initiatives that we would routinely put out to consultants. We will ensure that we can cover most of the broad range of skills that we need by developing a unique delivery programme, with development tailored to the individual needs of each member of the team. This work is already underway and will be introduced during the year.

How we will deliver regional impact

Our 2026/27 delivery programmes have been carefully selected and tailored to ensure they support the delivery of national policy outcomes and the Regional Transport Strategy. This section of our Business Plan sets out how our programmes align with the First Minister's priority for government, the National Transport Strategy, and the Regional Transport Strategy. Across all six programmes, SEStran delivers impact by removing transport barriers, supporting modal shift, and strengthening regional connectivity. This improves access to employment, health and education, reduces poverty, drives inclusive economic growth, and accelerates climate action. Investments in active travel, mass transit development, and an equitable bus network ensure the transport system becomes fairer, greener, more reliable, and more efficient.

		People and Place	Regional Bus Action Plan	Transport to Health	Transport to Employment	RTS Delivery Plan	SEStransit
First Minister's Priorities	**Eradicating Child Poverty**	Improves access to safe, low-cost everyday travel options with a focus on inclusion and groups facing barriers to sustainable travel.	Supports affordable, reliable day-to-day mobility, reducing transport poverty and helping families reach jobs, education, childcare and essential services without needing a car.	Reduces barriers to healthcare access, helping to prevent missed appointments and supporting healthier households, reducing the pressures that can exacerbate poverty and inequality.	Explicitly focused on reducing child poverty by improving access to fair work and training for parents, and by targeting transport costs that can make employment unaffordable for them.	Strengthens a prioritised pipeline of interventions to address cross-boundary accessibility gaps, helping ensure future investment targets the places and communities where transport barriers most limit opportunity.	Supports access to strategic employment and education sites at a regional scale, improving connectivity from communities to opportunity over the medium to long term.
	Growing the Economy	Supports a shift to more efficient travel for short and medium-length trips, helping reduce congestion impacts and improving local accessibility to jobs and services.	Improves reliability, journey times and connectivity on the bus network to support workforce mobility, town centre access and productivity.	Supports economic participation by improving access to healthcare and reducing missed appointments, benefiting individuals and system efficiency.	Increases labour market participation by removing transport barriers to jobs, training and apprenticeships for parents.	Aligns transport priorities with regional economic ambitions and emerging spatial planning, helping to unlock housing and employment growth and strengthen the case for investment.	Develops the evidence and delivery pathway for high-capacity, integrated regional connections that support key economic corridors and strategic sites.
	Tackling the Climate Emergency	Drives mode shift by enabling and encouraging walking, wheeling and cycling as normal choices for everyday journeys.	Supports lower-carbon travel by making bus services more attractive through improvements to quality, affordability and reliability.	Supports a reduction in car dependency for healthcare journeys by improving integration, information and accessibility, enabling more people to reach care by sustainable modes where feasible.		Brings together the regional pathway for decarbonisation (including mass transit, active travel, interchange and supporting themes such as data/digital), helping partners coordinate delivery at scale.	Provides a major medium- to long-term decarbonisation lever by developing a high-capacity, integrated public transport network that can reduce reliance on private cars on key corridors.
	Improving Public Services	Builds capacity across local authorities, communities and third sector partners to design and deliver locally-led interventions that improve everyday journeys.	Supports more consistent, user-centred services through coordinated action on fares, ticketing, information, service standards and governance.	Supports more equitable access to care and helps reduce missed appointments by addressing journey time, affordability, accessibility and information barriers, supporting better outcomes and system efficiency.		Strengthens long-term planning, prioritisation and coordination across partners, helping public bodies align investment, reduce duplication and manage interdependencies	Strengthens long-term planning, prioritisation and coordination across partners, helping public bodies align investment, reduce duplication and manage interdependencies.

		People and Place	Regional Bus Action Plan	Transport to Health	Transport to Employment	RTS Delivery Plan	SEStransit
National Transport Strategy Objectives	**Reduces inequalities** • Will provide fair access to services we need • Will be easy to use for all • Will be affordable for all	Enables inclusive access to affordable, safe and accessible active travel options, specifically targeting communities and groups who face the greatest barriers to sustainable transport.	Improves affordability, reliability and spatial equity of bus services, ensuring communities across the region can access jobs, services and opportunities without reliance on private cars.	Reduces inequalities in healthcare access by addressing transport barriers that disproportionately affect older people, disabled people and those without access to a private vehicle.	Directly tackles child poverty by improving access to fair work and training opportunities, while reducing the financial burden of transport for low-income households.	Provides a region-wide framework to target investment towards areas with the greatest accessibility challenges, ensuring equitable distribution of transport improvements and future infrastructure.	Improves strategic regional connectivity, enabling communities across urban and rural areas to access employment, education and healthcare opportunities through an integrated transport system
	Takes climate action • Will delivery our net zero target • Will adapt to the effects of climate change • Will promote greener, cleaner choices	Drives sustained behaviour change by enabling walking, wheeling and cycling as the preferred option for short daily journeys, significantly reducing dependence on private car travel.	Supports modal shift by improving the quality, reliability and affordability of bus services, making public transport a more attractive and lower-carbon alternative to private cars.	Encourages more sustainable healthcare journeys by improving integration, information and accessibility, enabling patients and staff to reduce reliance on private car use where appropriate.		Establishes a coordinated regional pathway towards net zero, aligning investment in active travel, public transport and infrastructure to deliver long-term transport decarbonisation outcomes.	Delivers a high-capacity, integrated public transport system that provides a viable alternative to private car use, reducing emissions on key regional travel corridors over time.
	Helps delivery inclusive economic growth • Will get people and goods where they need to get to • Will be reliable, efficient and high quality • Will use beneficial innovation	Improves local connectivity and accessibility, enabling more efficient everyday journeys and supporting access to employment, education and essential services at a neighbourhood and community level.	Enhances workforce mobility, connectivity and reliability across the region, supporting productivity, access to labour markets and the economic vitality of town centres and key destinations.	Supports economic participation by improving access to healthcare and reducing missed appointments, helping maintain a healthier workforce and improving system efficiency across public services.	Increases labour market participation by removing transport barriers to work, apprenticeships and training, enabling more people to access and sustain fair, well-paid employment opportunities.	Aligns transport interventions with regional economic and spatial priorities, unlocking housing and employment growth while strengthening the case for coordinated long-term investment.	Strengthens regional economic corridors by delivering high-capacity, reliable connections between key population centres and strategic employment, education and development sites across South East Scotland.
	Improves our health and well being • Will be safe and secure for all • Will enable us to make healthy travel choices • Will help make our communities great places to live	Promotes physical activity and healthier lifestyles by increasing walking, wheeling and cycling, while improving local environments and reducing the negative impacts of car dependency on communities.	Improves access to essential services and social opportunities, helping reduce isolation and supporting wellbeing through a more connected, accessible and user-focused public transport system.	Improves patient outcomes and wellbeing by ensuring reliable, affordable access to healthcare, reducing missed appointments and addressing barriers faced by vulnerable populations across the region.	Enhances wellbeing by improving financial security and reducing stress associated with accessing work and training, particularly for low-income families.	Supports the creation of healthier places by integrating transport, land use and planning decisions, encouraging sustainable travel and reducing exposure to congestion and pollution.	Contributes to improved public health by reducing congestion, emissions and journey stress, while enabling more reliable and comfortable regional travel for residents and visitors alike.

		People and Place	Regional Bus Action Plan	Transport to Health	Transport to Employment	RTS Delivery Plan	SEStransit
Regional Transport Strategy Objectives	**Reduces inequalities** • Will provide fair access to the services we need • Will be easy to use for all • Will be affordable for all	Expands access to active and sustainable travel opportunities, focusing on inclusion and ensuring underrepresented groups can participate more fully in everyday journeys.	Delivers a more equitable regional bus network, improving connectivity and service levels to ensure consistent access to opportunities regardless of geography or income.	Addresses inequalities in access to healthcare services by removing transport barriers that prevent people reaching essential appointments and treatment across the region.	Improves access to employment and training opportunities for disadvantaged groups, supporting households to overcome transport barriers and improve long-term economic outcomes.	Identifies and prioritises interventions that address cross-boundary accessibility gaps, ensuring improvements are targeted at communities where connectivity most limits opportunity.	Provides enhanced regional connectivity to strategic sites, reducing spatial inequalities and ensuring more communities benefit from access to key destinations and services.
	Takes climate action • Will help deliver our net zero target • Will adapt to the effects of climate change • Will promote greener, cleaner choices	Enables behaviour change at scale by embedding active travel as a normal choice for everyday journeys, supporting regional objectives to reduce emissions and reliance on private cars.	Supports a shift to lower-carbon travel by improving bus reliability, affordability and customer experience, making public transport more competitive with private car use.	Reduces transport-related emissions by improving sustainable access to healthcare, enabling more people to travel by public or shared transport rather than private car.		Provides the strategic framework for coordinated regional decarbonisation, aligning transport, land use and investment decisions to deliver net zero outcomes efficiently and at scale.	Delivers a transformational shift towards high-capacity, low-carbon transport, significantly reducing private car use on key regional corridors and supporting long-term decarbonisation targets.
	Helps deliver inclusive economic growth • Will get people and goods to where they need to be • Will be reliable, efficient and high quality • Will use beneficial innovation	Improves local accessibility and connectivity, supporting participation in employment, education and community life while strengthening the economic resilience of neighbourhoods and local centres.	Strengthens regional connectivity and service reliability, supporting labour market access, business productivity and economic activity across urban, rural and cross-boundary travel patterns.	Enhances workforce productivity and participation by improving access to healthcare, reducing disruption from missed appointments and supporting a healthier, more economically active population.	Directly supports inclusive growth by increasing access to fair work and training, enabling more people to contribute to and benefit from the regional economy.	Aligns infrastructure investment with economic and spatial priorities, supporting sustainable growth and enabling housing and employment development across the region.	Enhances economic connectivity by linking key employment, housing and education sites through high-capacity public transport, supporting growth across strategic regional corridors.
	Improves our health and wellbeing • Will be safe and secure for all • Will enable us to make healthy travel choices • Will help make our communities great places to live	Improves health outcomes by embedding active travel in daily life, supporting physical and mental wellbeing and creating safer, cleaner and more attractive local environments.	Enhances wellbeing by improving access to services, reducing isolation and providing a safe, reliable and accessible public transport system for all users.	Improves health outcomes by ensuring timely, equitable access to healthcare services, reducing missed appointments and addressing transport-related barriers to care.	Supports wellbeing by reducing financial stress and improving access to employment, training and services that contribute to improved quality of life.	Promotes healthier communities by integrating sustainable transport into planning decisions, reducing pollution, congestion and barriers to active and public travel.	Improves regional health and wellbeing by reducing congestion and emissions, while providing a smoother, more reliable and accessible travel experience across the network.

How we will deliver local impact

Alongside the alignment of our programmes to national policy outcomes, they also support the delivery of local priorities for each of our 8 partner local authorities.

City of Edinburgh Council

The activities that SEStran will undertake in 2026/27 relate directly to the Priorities of the City of Edinburgh Council Business Plan 2023-2027:

Priority: Create good places to live and work in Edinburgh

- People and Place supports safer, healthier neighbourhoods by enabling more sustainable travel and reducing the negative impacts of car use.
- The Regional Bus Action Plan and Transport to Health make it easier for people to move around the city and wider region without a car - supporting access to jobs, education, healthcare and leisure.
- Transport to Employment improves access to jobs and training and targets affordability barriers that can prevent people taking up or sustaining employment.
- The RTS Delivery Plan Supports good growth and 20-minute neighbourhood delivery through alignment with land-use planning to ensure new housing/employment areas are planned with sustainable transport provision “built in”
- SEStransit focuses on high-capacity, integrated regional connections to strategic housing, employment, health and education sites - supporting Edinburgh’s growth while improving reliability and reducing congestion pressures.

Priority: Take all the local actions needed to end poverty in Edinburgh

- Transport to Employment is explicitly designed to reduce child poverty by increasing access to fair, well-paid jobs and training and reducing the cost burden of travel.
- The Regional Bus Action Plan reduces transport poverty by improving affordability and service levels so people can reliably reach opportunities and essential services.
- Transport to Health tackles inequality of access to care - reducing missed appointments and improving access for people without private transport.

Priority: Work to deliver a net zero city by 2030

- People and Place drives modal shift away from car use by making active and sustainable travel more normal and accessible for everyday journeys
- The Regional Bus Action Plan encourages mode shift from car to bus by improving journey times, customer experience, and affordability—reducing car dependency and associated emissions.
- The RTS Delivery Plan (and SEStransit as part of this) is a major net-zero enabler through development of an integrated transport system at a regional, reducing congestion and supporting sustainable travel to key destinations at scale.=

Clackmannanshire

The strategic objectives of Clackmannanshire Council's Wellbeing Economy Local Outcomes Improvement Plan align well with work being carried out by SEStran:

Strategic outcome: Wellbeing

- People and Place supports healthier lives by enabling more sustainable transport for everyday journeys, and by improving inclusion and accessibility for groups who face barriers to sustainable travel.
- The Regional Bus Action Plan improves access to essential services and social participation by working toward a more reliable, affordable and equitable bus network.
- Transport to Health reduces health inequalities by removing transport barriers to appointments.
- Transport to Employment supports wellbeing by helping families improve financial security and by reducing the stress and cost burden of travelling to work, training and key services.

Strategic outcome: Economy & Skills

- The Regional Bus Action Plan supports labour market access by improving reliability, fares and ticketing, and cross-boundary connectivity—helping residents reach employment, colleges and training providers without needing a car.
- Transport to Health can support the economy by improving access to healthcare sites (including as major employers) and by reducing missed appointments—helping maintain a healthier workforce and improving system efficiency.
- Transport to Employment is directly aligned to helping people access fair work, learning and training, by improving connectivity to jobs and skills pathways
- The RTS Delivery Plan strengthens cross-boundary connectivity and access to regional opportunities - a regional pipeline helps prioritise interventions that improve access to jobs, education, healthcare and key centres across local authority boundaries
- SEStransit supports a stronger local and regional economy by developing the evidence and delivery pathway for integrated, high-capacity connections to strategic employment and education sites, reducing congestion and improving journey reliability.

Strategic outcome: Places

- People and Place helps create sustainable, thriving places by supporting locally designed projects (often delivered with community and third sector partners) that improve everyday journeys, strengthen local connection and reduce the impacts of car dependency.
- The Regional Bus Action Plan supports connected places by improving access between settlements and key destinations, helping communities remain linked to services, opportunities and each other.
- The RTS Delivery Plan and SEStransit support long-term place-based planning by improving connectivity to housing, employment, health and education sites, enabling growth that is better aligned with sustainable transport.

East Lothian Council

SEStran's 2026/27 delivery programmes support the East Lothian Council Plan 2022-27 vision and objectives as follows:

Overarching objective: Recovery and Renewal

- The Regional Bus Action Plan supports recovery by improving the reliability and affordability of bus services that connect people to town centres, services and employment—helping local economies to function better day to day.
- Transport to Health and Transport to Employment support recovery by reducing practical barriers to accessing healthcare, training and jobs - helping residents participate in the economy and sustain wellbeing.
- The RTS Delivery Plan and SEStransit supports long-term renewal by developing the evidence and delivery pathway for integrated, sustainable regional connections

Overarching objective: Reduce poverty and inequality

- People and Place supports inclusion by widening access to active and sustainable travel especially for underrepresented groups and by building local capacity to deliver community-based solutions.
- The Regional Bus Action Plan reduces transport poverty by working toward a more equitable, reliable and affordable bus network.
- Transport to Health tackles inequalities of access to care by reducing transport barriers, improving services for people, and reducing missed or delayed appointments.
- Transport to Employment is designed to reduce child poverty by improving access to fair, well-paid work and training, and by reducing the cost burden of travel for parents.
- The RTS Delivery Plan provides a region-wide prioritisation framework that can target accessibility gaps and helps coordinate equitable service and interchange improvements so people can reach jobs, education and services more reliably and affordably.
- SEStransit supports inclusive growth by improving strategic connectivity across East Lothian and the wider region, helping more communities access key destinations and opportunities through an integrated transport system.

Overarching objective: Respond to the Climate Emergency

- People and Place supports modal shift away from private car use by making sustainable travel more accessible for everyday journeys
- The Regional Bus Action Plan supports net zero by making bus travel more competitive with the car through improved journey times, customer experience and affordability.
- The RTS Delivery Plan and SEStransit are major net-zero enablers by developing an integrated, regional transport system that reduces congestion and supports sustainable travel to key destinations at scale.

Falkirk Council

SEStran's 2026/27 delivery programmes support the vision and three priorities of the Falkirk Council Plan:

Vision: Strong communities where inequalities are reduced and lives are improved

- People & Place removes barriers for under-represented groups, widens access to active and sustainable modes, and works with the partners to strengthen local delivery capacity.
- Transport to Employment reduces child poverty by supporting access to fair, well-paid jobs, training and skills pathways, particularly for low-income families and rural communities.
- Transport to Health improves access to healthcare, impacting health outcomes and reducing inequalities caused by missed appointments and delayed treatment.
- The Regional Bus Action Plan and SEStransit improve regional connectivity, affordability and service reliability, ensuring communities across Falkirk have fair access to services

Priority: Supporting stronger and healthier communities

- People & Place increases walking, wheeling and cycling, improves travel confidence, and embeds healthier behaviours in schools, workplaces and communities.
- Transport to Health strengthens access to preventative and routine care, improving health outcomes and reducing health inequalities.
- The Regional Bus Action and RTS Delivery Plans support cleaner air, reduce congestion and promote safe, accessible public transport, contributing to healthier local environments.

Priority: Promoting opportunities and educational attainment, and reducing inequalities

- People & Place enables safer, more sustainable school journeys and increases access to cycles, travel training and community-based mobility solutions.
- Transport to Employment will support people to access further education, apprenticeships and skills training, ensuring that transport is not a barrier to participation.
- The Regional Bus Action Plan delivers more reliable, affordable regional bus services, simplifying journeys to colleges, training centres and major employers.
- The RTS Delivery Plan and SEStransit improve longer-distance access to key destinations for learning and skills.

Priority: Supporting a thriving economy and green transition

- People & Place helps shift short and medium-length journeys to active and sustainable modes, lowering emissions and supporting local productivity.
- Transport to Health reduces avoidable demand on healthcare services, supporting a more resilient, sustainable regional economy.
- The Regional Bus Action Plan strengthens the regional bus network, supporting labour mobility, reducing car dependency and contributing to net-zero goals.
- SEStransit supports strategic economic sites across Falkirk by improving mass transit connections, reducing congestion to increase productivity and help drive economic growth.

Fife Council

The Plan for Fife 2017-2027 identifies four key themes, each of which ties in closely with the aims of this Business Plan for SEStran:

Theme: Opportunities for all

- The Regional Bus Action Plan supports equal access to opportunity by working toward a more reliable, affordable and equitable regional bus network, improving connectivity between communities and key services.
- Transport to Health and Transport to Employment support access to healthcare, training and fair work by improving transport options to key destinations and reducing the cost burden of travel, especially for parents and households experiencing low incomes.
- The RTS Delivery Plan delivers region-wide prioritisation of accessibility gaps helping target investment where lack of transport most limits access to jobs, education, healthcare and services.

Theme: Thriving places

- People and Place helps create healthier, safer and more attractive places by supporting a shift to sustainable modes for local journeys, reducing negative impacts of car dependency.
- The Regional Bus Action Plan supports thriving places by improving access to town centres and facilities through better bus services.
- SEStransit enables place-based growth by improving strategic connectivity to housing, employment and education in a way that supports sustainable travel, reducing congestion.

Theme: Inclusive growth and jobs

- The Regional Bus Action Plan supports business and labour market connectivity by improving service quality and cross-settlement links, helping employers access staff and customers and helping residents access jobs across Fife and the wider region.
- Transport to Employment supports inclusive growth by enabling more parents to access fair, well-paid work, improving household incomes and participation in the local economy.
- Transport to Health supports economic participation by improving access to healthcare, reducing missed appointments and supporting a healthier workforce.
- The RTS Delivery Plan Creates a coordinated regional investment pipeline, strengthening the case for external funding and via SEStransit helps deliver strategic corridors that support labour market access and business connectivity.

Theme: Community led services

- People and Place is delivered through local authorities, third sector partners and community groups, supporting community-led design and delivery of projects that respond to local needs and build local capacity.
- The Regional Bus Action Plan is shaped by extensive public feedback and depends on coordinated partnership working with local authorities and operators to support more consistent, user-centred services.

Midlothian

The delivery programmes set out in the Business Plan support the Single Midlothian Plan 2023-27 vision and four of its seven themes as follows:

Theme: Midlothian will be healthier

- People and Place supports healthier lives by enabling more active travel for everyday journeys and by building confidence and skills to support this.
- Transport to Health improves access to healthcare by reducing journey time, complexity and affordability barriers, supporting better health outcomes.
- The RTS Delivery Plan and SEStransit support long-term, integrated connectivity to health sites and population centres, improving reliability and reducing car dependency.

Theme: Midlothian will work towards reducing poverty

- People and Place supports inclusion by widening access to active and sustainable travel for underrepresented groups and by building local capacity to deliver solutions.
- The Regional Bus Action Plan reduces transport poverty by working toward simpler, more affordable fares and a more equitable, reliable network to support access to jobs
- Transport to Employment is designed to reduce child poverty by improving access to fair, well-paid jobs, education and training, and by reducing the cost burden of travel for parents
- The RTS Delivery Plan provides a region-wide prioritisation framework to target accessibility gaps, supporting access to opportunity for people without a car.

Theme: Midlothian will have a wellbeing economy and be better connected

- The Regional Bus Action Plan improves everyday connectivity within and beyond Midlothian through action on service quality, fares and ticketing, information and governance helping people and businesses rely on public transport.
- The RTS Delivery Plan Creates a coordinated regional investment pipeline, strengthening Midlothian's ability to progress priorities that depend on cross-boundary connectivity and to secure national investment.
- SEStransit supports a stronger wellbeing economy by developing the pathway for integrated, high-capacity regional connections to strategic employment, housing, education and health sites, improving journey reliability and reducing congestion.

Theme: Midlothian will be greener

- People and Place drives modal shift away from car use by making sustainable transport more accessible, reducing emissions while improving local environments.
- The Regional Bus Action Plan supports net zero by making bus travel more competitive with the car, supporting a shift to lower-carbon travel.
- The RTS Delivery Plan and SEStransit are major net-zero enablers through development of an integrated, regional transport system, reducing congestion and supporting sustainable travel to key destinations.

Scottish Borders

SEStran's 2026/27 delivery programmes help to deliver on the main focus and five outcomes of the Scottish Borders Council Plan for 2026/27 as follows:

Outcome: Clean, green future

- People and Place drives modal shift from car to sustainable transport reducing emissions and improving local environments.
- The Regional Bus Action Plan makes bus services more reliable, affordable and attractive, supporting a shift from private car use and cutting congestion and emissions.
- The RTS Delivery Plan supports the business cases for integrated, low-carbon regional transport, enabling longer-term prioritised decarbonisation at scale.

Outcome: Fulfilling our potential

- The Regional Bus Action Plan alongside Transport to Health and Employment improves access to education, work, and healthcare for those who have no access to a private car.
- The RTS Delivery Plan helps address rural accessibility by using a region-wide prioritisation to target gaps in access, particularly where trips are cross-boundary and multi-modal

Outcome: Strong inclusive economy, transport and infrastructure

- The Regional Bus Action Plan improves labour market access and day-to-day economic functioning by improving bus services.
- Transport to Employment tackles transport barriers that prevent parents from accessing fair work and training, supporting inclusive growth and household income.
- The RTS Delivery Plan and SEStransit directly contributes to stronger regional infrastructure by progressing strategic cross-boundary interventions, improving reliability for commuters, businesses and servicing

Outcome: Empowered, vibrant communities

- The Regional Bus Action Plan strengthens connection between settlements and essential services, reducing isolation (especially for rural communities).
- People and Place funds and supports the design and delivery of local initiatives, building community capacity, inclusion and resilience.
- Transport to Health and Employment reduces social exclusion by removing transport barriers to essential opportunities and services.
- SEStransit supports longer term place based planning and better regional connectivity between communities and key destinations.

Outcome: Good health and wellbeing

- People and Place increases physical activity through more active travel, supporting both physical and mental wellbeing and safer local environments.
- Transport to Health directly targets access to healthcare by reducing journey complexity and affordability barriers, improving equity of access and reducing missed and delayed appointments.

West Lothian Council

The delivery planned by SEStran for Corporate Plan for 2023/24 – 2027/28

Priority: Raising educational attainment

- The Regional Bus Action Plan supports access to schools, colleges and training providers by improving bus services and making journeys simpler and more affordable.
- The RTS Delivery Plana and SEStransit improve longer-term connectivity to education sites, widening the realistic catchment for learning opportunities.

Priority: Strengthening care and support for children, adults and older people

- The Regional Bus Action Plan supports access to GP practices, hospitals, community services and care settings through a more reliable and inclusive bus network.
- Transport to Health directly addresses barriers to appointments and treatment by reducing journey complexity and improving affordability, supporting equitable access to healthcare

Priority: Investing in skills and jobs

- The Regional Bus Action Plan improves access to employment areas and training providers by strengthening service quality, fares, ticketing and cross-boundary connectivity.
- Transport to Employment focuses on improving access for parents to work and training, helping parents enter and sustain employment.
- SEStransit develops the pathway for larger-scale, integrated regional connections to strategic employment sites, supporting the local and regional economy.

Priority: Helping to create strong and sustainable communities

- People and Place funds locally designed projects, building local capacity, improving inclusion and supporting healthier, more liveable places.
- The Regional Bus Action Plan: supports connected communities by improving access between settlements and destinations, reducing isolation and supporting participation.
- Transport to Health and Employment reduces exclusion by removing transport barriers to essential healthcare, work and training
- SEStransit supports longer-term sustainable growth and resilience through integrated regional connectivity and reduced congestion and car dependency.

Priority: Tackling homelessness, poverty and inequality

- People and Place targets inclusion and accessibility barriers for underrepresented groups, supporting more equitable access to local opportunities through sustainable travel.
- The Regional Bus Action Plan and Transport to Health and Employment tackles transport poverty by improving affordability and strengthening service levels so everyone can reliably reach essential services.
- The RTS Delivery Plan provides a region-wide prioritisation framework that can target accessibility and affordability gaps, supporting equitable access to opportunity and essential services for households without access to a car.

Our 2026/27 Delivery Programmes

This business plan outlines six key programmes designed to deliver across the Regional Transport Strategy, whilst also aligning with national, regional, and local priorities. They will enhance transport connectivity, accessibility, and sustainability across the region. Complementing these programmes, our communications and marketing strategy includes a refreshed SEStran website, designed to increase engagement and provide accessible information for all users.

Taken together, this delivery portfolio demonstrates our strategic approach to improving everyday journeys, supporting local communities, social wellbeing, and the region's long-term growth and prosperity.

People and Place

The People & Place Programme is a region-shaping initiative designed to reshape how communities move, connect and thrive. We will fund over 100 project across the region, delivering multi million targeted investment in the local authorities, third sector delivery partners, and community groups that support making active and sustainable travel not just possible, but the preferred choice for everyday journeys. By empowering schools, workplaces, communities and local authorities, the programme drives a fundamental shift away from car dependency and towards healthier, fairer and cleaner daily journeys for everyone.

At its core, this programme unlocks real behaviour change at scale—removing barriers to access, widening participation, and embedding the skills, systems and confidence needed to create lasting change. It will see expanded access to cycles across the region, increased active journeys to schools through projects such as walking buses and cycle training, supporting increased use of public transport through provision of mobility hubs and enhance bus stop information, and working with community groups to deliver change at a local level to achieve regional impact.

Coordinated at a regional level to achieve maximum impact through concentrated investment, it will advance inclusion, enhance accessibility, and strengthen local capability, while supporting the shift to net zero and Scotland's wider climate, health and economic ambitions.

Programme objectives

- 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

Regional Bus Action Plan

Building on the Regional Bus Strategy, we will deliver an ambitious transformation of bus services in South East of Scotland - turning years of public frustration, fragmented services and inconsistent access into a unified, modern, and equitable regional network designed around people, not modes or boundaries.

Grounded in our 2025/26 consultation that heard from thousands of voices from across our communities and driven by a clear vision for affordable, reliable, inclusive mobility, this programme will reshape how the region moves - strengthening opportunities, reducing inequalities, and positioning public transport as the natural first choice for everyday travel.

Through a coordinated Regional Bus Action Plan, we are building a system that delivers consistently, connects communities fairly, and competes confidently with private car travel. Our work will unlock faster and more dependable journeys through targeted bus priority measures; simplified and integrated fares and ticketing; moving toward a clear and trusted network identity; and ensuring all users benefit from high-quality information, infrastructure, and customer experience.

By improving access to jobs, services, education, and health, it will strengthen local economies, reduce carbon emissions, and support thriving, inclusive communities. Through strong partnerships with operators, local authorities, employers, and national bodies, we are creating a collaborative system that works better for everyone.

Together, we are building a future where using the bus is seamless, affordable, reliable and safe - where every community, regardless of geography or income, has a level of service they can depend on.

Programme objectives

- Move towards a regionally equitable and guaranteed level of service in terms of connectivity by settlement type that recognises the resource limitations and topographical challenges of local authorities, while accounting for the specific needs of communities.
- Improve affordability by ensuring that public transport fares across the region are simple, accessible, consistent, and equitable - providing fair, affordable options that prioritise those in transport poverty and make bus travel more competitive than car use.
- Improve service quality across the region to deliver a high-performing and user-centred regional bus network - through consistent network identity, efficient operations, integrated ticketing, high-quality infrastructure, strong customer experience, accessible information, decarbonised and well-maintained fleets, robust safety standards, and data-driven continuous improvement.

Transport to Employment

Directly supporting the First Minister's key priority for government of reducing child poverty, the Transport to Employment programme is a targeted, outcomes-driven intervention designed to break the link between low income, poor transport access, and child poverty. It will increase household incomes for parents across the region by enabling access to fair, well-paid employment and training, while simultaneously reducing the financial burden of travel that can make work unaffordable or unsustainable.

Rather than operating in isolation, the programme maximises the impact of the Regional Transport Strategy by accelerating and shaping its delivery through a child-poverty lens. Every improvement to public and sustainable transport - whether reduced journey times, simpler networks, or lower fares - strengthens access to work and training and reduces reliance on private car ownership. This programme ensures those benefits are intentionally directed towards parents and communities most in need.

A core ambition is to turn short-term funding into long-term change. The programme will build regional capacity, deepen partnerships with Local Employability Partnerships, local authorities, NHS boards, and operators, and pilot scalable interventions that can be sustained beyond 2026/27. A strong emphasis on monitoring, evaluation, and learning will ensure that successful approaches are evidenced, refined, and ready for future expansion.

Delivery will focus on four strategic areas: supporting journeys to further education and training opportunities; improving transport access to large and strategically important workplaces, including healthcare sites; addressing the unique challenges of rural access to work and further education; and delivering targeted fare interventions that reduce travel costs for parents who currently fall outside existing concessionary schemes. Together, these actions will unlock opportunity, improve financial resilience, and support families to move sustainably out of child poverty.

Programme Objectives

- Reduce current levels of child poverty by improving the availability of transport options for parents to access employment and training
- Reduce current levels of child poverty by increasing household incomes for families by reducing transport costs to employment and training
- Reduce current levels of child poverty by supporting access to NHS sites as one of the region's major employers and to support access to health services to reduce health inequalities that impact on ability to work
- Make best use of the one year funding to build capacity in future years to deliver further action to reduce child poverty

Transport to Health

SEStran will lead a step change in how people across South East Scotland access healthcare, switching transport from a barrier into an enabler of health, wellbeing and equity. Working in close partnership with our four NHS Boards, NHS Scotland Assure, local authorities and national partners, we are developing a bold, region-wide Transport to Health Strategy grounded in a clear Case for Change.

Across South East Scotland, too many people face delayed treatment, missed appointments and deteriorating health simply because the journey to care is too complex, unreliable or unaffordable. This programme will tackle entrenched inequalities in access to hospitals, clinics and specialist care - particularly for people without access to a car, disabled people, older people and those with long-term conditions. Through a coordinated, programmatic approach, we will reduce journey times, complexity and missed appointments; integrate public, community and demand-responsive transport; and cut unnecessary car dependency in healthcare travel.

The programme will deliver measurable improvements in patient outcomes, system efficiency and value for money, while ensuring fair access to healthcare in both urban and rural communities. Transport to Health will be a cornerstone of a more inclusive, efficient and resilient regional health and transport system.

Programme Objectives

- Reduce journey time, interchange complexity and uncertainty for secondary and tertiary healthcare trips
- Improve reliable and affordable access to healthcare for people without access to a private car
- Improve the accessibility and usability of transport for disabled people, older people and those with long-term conditions
- Reduce transport-related missed and delayed healthcare appointments
- Improve clarity, coordination and accessibility of transport information and support
- Integrate and enhance community and demand-responsive transport to support healthcare access
- Reduce unnecessary car dependency and improve system efficiency in healthcare travel

Regional Transport Strategy Delivery Plan

The Regional Transport Strategy Delivery Plan will provide a mechanism to identify, assess, prioritise and coordinate all regional transport projects that are required over the medium to long term, to realise the ambitions of the Regional Transport Strategy to support the economic and net-zero ambitions of the Regional Prosperity Framework and local authority economic priorities.

The Regional Transport Strategy Delivery Plan will dovetail with the Strategic Transport Projects Review 2 to support the delivery of a transport network that:

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

An integrated approach to economic development, land-use and transport planning, provision and delivery plays a vital role in creating a prosperous, successful, accessible and sustainable region.

Ensuring appropriate sustainable transport provision will make a positive contribution to many national, regional and local priorities, including:

- Strategy Objective 1: Transitioning to a sustainable, post-carbon transport system
- Strategy Objective 2: Facilitating healthier travel options
- Strategy Objective 3: Transforming public transport connectivity and access across the region
- Strategy Objective 4: Supporting safe, sustainable and efficient movement of people and freight across the region.

Through strengthened collaboration, joint working, co-production and engagement, we will seek to ensure a robust basis for integrated regional economic development, land-use and transport planning, provision and delivery, maximising the opportunities for our region. The six theme of the RTS Deliver Plan are:

1) Mass Transit (SESTransit)
2) Active Travel
3) Freight
4) Data/Digital
5) Decarbonisation
6) Interchange

SEStransit

A key theme from the RTS Delivery Plan, SEStransit is a transformational, once-in-a-generation opportunity to reshape how people move across South East Scotland. It will deliver a faster, greener and more reliable regional transport system - one that matches the scale of our economic ambition, supports inclusive economic growth, and enables tens of thousands more people to travel sustainably every day.

At its heart, SEStransit imagines a region where buses, trains, trams and other shared modes operate not as fragmented services but as a single, fully integrated, high-capacity mobility system, supported by seamless interchanges, smart ticketing, real-time information and world-class digital tools. This is a bold step toward creating a regional network that is coherent, coordinated and futureproof - a system where passengers can move effortlessly between modes, access employment, housing, healthcare and education sites, and rely on a transport network that works for every community. In doing so, it will accelerate decarbonisation and reduce congestion, expand opportunity and strengthen the resilience, wellbeing and economic opportunity of communities across the region.

Through a Strategic Business Case followed by an Outline Business Case, SEStransit will provide the robust evidence, modelling and delivery pathways required to unlock major investment, drive regional cohesion and support Scotland's climate, modal shift and economic priorities. Once the Business Cases are approved, we will move to a delivery phase so that the region will benefit from a harmonious and joined up plan ready to pursue national investment and implementation.

Programme Objectives

Transport Planning Objectives (TPOs) will be developed in collaboration with key stakeholders, including local authorities.. before the end of 2025/26. In advance of confirming the specific objectives, the working definition of the project is:

> The collective movement of people across all regional areas using an integrated and affordable shared transport system such as buses, trains, trams, and other connecting modes. It is designed to provide efficient, high-capacity, and sustainable mobility, supported by interchanges and integrating ticketing, data and digital solutions, that provide passengers with the ability to seamlessly transfer between different modes and access strategic housing, employment, health and education sites.

Our 2026/27 Delivery Programme

To follow

Appendix 1 – Core Delivery Programmes

Programme	**People and Place**
Project partners	Local authorities, third sector delivery partners, community groups

Programme summary
This initiative funds and supports delivery partners to encourage active and sustainable travel for daily journeys, with particular emphasis on schools, workplaces, inclusion, accessibility and building local capacity. The programme aims to increase journeys by sustainable modes, reduce car trips, improve perceptions of accessibility and enable broader participation in active travel.
RTS actions
• Expand the provision of bike-sharing initiatives across the region. • Promotional and communication campaigns to highlight the benefits of active travel across the region and encourage people to adopt it where possible. • Improve public transport information in a variety of formats supported by wayfinding infrastructure. • Regional audit to identify stops, stations and interchanges that do not meet accessibility requirement. Develop priority list of interventions.
Programme objectives
• 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
Programme outcomes
• Increase the number of journeys by active and sustainable modes in and around the target community • Reduce number of short trips being made by car • Improve perceptions of accessibility to local goods/services, education and employment by non-car modes • Increase the amount of walking, wheeling and cycling for physical activity • Enable people that were previously excluded from using active or sustainable modes for some journeys to do so • Increase the number of journeys made by young people by active and sustainable modes to school and for other commonly-made journeys • Increase the number of journeys made by parents/carers by active and sustainable modes to school and for other commonly-made journeys

- Reduce the number of journeys made by car to school and for other commonly-made journeys
- Improve perceptions of accessibility to school by non-car modes
- Enable people that were previously excluded from using active or sustainable modes for some journeys to do so
- Reduce the number of journeys made by car from or to major trip generators
- Increase the number of journeys made by active and sustainable modes from or to major trip generators
- Improve perceptions of accessibility from or to major trip generators by non-car modes
- Increase the use of the new infrastructure or services
- Improve perceptions of active travel and public transport
- Improve perceptions of accessibility to public transport
- Increase the use of public transport
- Improve perceptions of transport integration
- Reduce the number of medium-length and longer trips being made by car
- Local authorities are better able to establish and manage effective behavioural change projects
- Local partner organisations have increased willingness, capacity and skills to establish and implement effective behavioural change projects

Programme milestone / deliverables

Q1

Milestones:

- 2025/26 Q4 reporting and claims to Transport Scotland (April)
- 2026/27 Grant award letters circulated and signed (April)
- Inception meetings held with grant recipients (April)
- Training audit carried out with 2026/27 grant recipients (June)
- Q1 reporting meetings held with grant recipients (June)
- 2025/26 Evaluation report completed and presented to June Partnership Board (June)

Deliverables:

- 2025/26 Q4 report and claim
- 2025/26 Evaluation report
- Report on results of 2026/27 training audit
- Schedule of 2026/27 training delivery
- Newsletter
- Updated programme dashboard for 2025/26 with final spend and locations

Q2

Milestones:

- 2026/27 Q1 reporting and claims to Transport Scotland (July)
- Knowledge Sharing Event (local events) (Sept)
- Developed approach for 2026/27 programme evaluation (Sept)

Deliverables:

- 2026/27 Q1 report and claim
- Newsletter
- Case studies produced
- Updated programme dashboard with new project locations
- Project plan for 2026/27 programme evaluation

Q3

Milestones:

- 2026/27 Q2 reporting and claims to Transport Scotland (October)
- Delivery Plan review process completed
- Draft 2027/28 proposals to Transport Scotland

Deliverables:

- 2026/27 Q2 report and claim
- Newsletter
- Delivery Plan completed for 2027/28 onwards

Q4

Milestones:

- 2026/27 Q3 reporting and claims to Transport Scotland (Jan)
- Knowledge Sharing event (local authority event) (Jan)
- Portal application window opens/closes for 2027/28 programme (Dec/Jan)
- Internal assessment and funding panel completed for 2027/28 programme (Feb)
- Decisions in principle issued to successful 2027/28 applicants
- 2027/28 Grant awards reported to the March Partnership Board
- Updated 2027/28 Delivery Plan presented to March Partnership Board
- Final 2027/28 proposals to Transport Scotland

Deliverables:

- 2026/27 Q3 report and claim
- Updated 2027/28 grant funding guidance
- Newsletter
- 2027/28 People and Place funding report

Delivery areas
Main Grant Fund (DP)
This incorporates the Regional Priority Investment Fund (RPIF), Local Authority Delivery Support (LADS) and Access to Cycles and Cycle Storage: • RPIF: This fund supports the main programme delivery. Projects in this fund are to deliver according to the priority interventions and key outcomes identified in the People and Place Delivery Plan. • LADS: Provides support Local Authorities to deliver sustainable transport behaviour change projects, to supplement Transport Scotland funding direct to Local Authorities (Local Authority Direct Award). • Access to Cycles and Cycle Storage: To support access to cycles and cycle storage in the SEStran region. Access to cycles includes the purchase of new cycles, cycle share schemes, recycling of cycles and repair of cycles.
Community Grant Fund (DP)
This is a grant fund to support community organisations looking to deliver sustainable transport projects within the SEStran region. Project outcomes should align with the P&P objectives and should relate to one or more of the three behaviour change People and Place themes: schools and young people, workplaces and accessibility and inclusion. The funding is available to Community groups, CICs and charities delivering within the SEStran region.
P&P knowledge sharing events and training support
A project to support increased capacity and capability in the delivery of active and sustainable travel projects in the region. This will be achieved through delivery of knowledge sharing events, regional skill training, identifying best practice and supporting collaboration.
P&P monitoring and evaluation
Collation of monitoring data and development of an annual evaluation report.
P&P communications
Programme wide comms and marketing including case study development, a quarterly newsletter and ongoing promotion through the SEStran website and social media channels.
P&P regional bike share
Ongoing support for established e-bike libraries operating with SEStran assets including outreach and support for maintenance.
P&P grant management
Ongoing management of the People and Place grants including quarterly meetings, processing claims and monitoring progress and spend.

Programme	Regional Bus Action Plan
Project partners	Local authorities, transport operators

Programme summary

We are delivering our Regional Bus Strategy, which sets a shared vision for affordable, reliable and inclusive services, informed by thousands of public responses from across the region, and backed by actions on service quality, fares, ticketing, information and governance.

RTS actions

- 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.

Programme objectives

- Move towards a regionally equitable and guaranteed level of service in terms of connectivity by settlement type that recognises the resource limitations and topographical challenges of local authorities, while accounting for the specific needs of communities.
- Improve affordability by ensuring that public transport fares across the region are simple, accessible, consistent, and equitable - providing fair, affordable options that prioritise those in transport poverty and make bus travel more competitive than car use.
- Improve service quality across the region to deliver a high-performing and user-centred regional bus network - through consistent network identity, efficient operations, integrated ticketing, high-quality infrastructure, strong customer experience, accessible information, decarbonised and well-maintained fleets, robust safety standards, and data-driven continuous improvement.

Programme Outcomes

A more equitable regional bus network

Communities across the South East of Scotland experience a fairer and more consistent level of bus service, with improved access to employment, education, healthcare and essential services regardless of settlement type, geography or income. Inequalities in connectivity are reduced through a coordinated regional approach that prioritises communities most affected by poor access and limited travel choice.

Improved affordability and reduced transport poverty

Bus travel is simpler, more affordable and easier to understand, with clearer fares, better access to concessionary and discounted products, and reduced financial barriers for people experiencing transport poverty. As a result, public transport plays a stronger role in supporting household affordability, social inclusion and access to opportunity.

A more reliable and user centred bus experience

Passengers benefit from a more reliable, punctual and user focused bus network, with clearer network identity, better information and improved confidence in services. The overall customer experience improves, supporting increased satisfaction and making bus travel a more attractive option for everyday journeys.

Bus services that compete more effectively with the car

Bus services become a credible and competitive alternative to private car use on key corridors and for everyday travel, contributing to reduced congestion, improved journey time reliability and progress towards regional climate and health objectives.

A modern, accessible and decarbonised bus system

The regional bus system is supported by high quality infrastructure, accessible vehicles and a transition towards low and zero emission fleets, improving comfort, safety and environmental performance while supporting national and regional climate ambitions.

Stronger partnership working and coordinated delivery

Local authorities, operators and regional and national partners work more collaboratively and consistently, supported by clear governance, shared priorities and aligned delivery. This enables more effective use of resources, clearer decision making and greater confidence in regional delivery.

Evidence led planning and continuous improvement

Investment and decision making are increasingly detailed and outcome focused, with regular monitoring of service performance, affordability and user experience used to inform priorities, demonstrate progress and drive continuous improvement over time.

Milestones and deliverables
Note – further milestones and deliverables to be added as the action plan is finalised

Q1

Milestones:

Internal approval of Bus Action Plan which will map out work packages – *12 June 2026*
First Board Meeting is held where Terms of Reference, approach, and plan are agreed – *18 May 2026*

- Programme governance, scope and reporting arrangements confirmed – *18 May 2026*

Deliverables:

- Summary document with all LA BIF funding plans mapped out –
- Agreed programme plan, aligned to RTS and NTS outcomes – *12 June 2026*
- Baselining analysis for Current Level of Service by settlement type – *15 May 2026 with working document*
- Promote Bus Strategy outcomes to wider stakeholder through marketing and comm – *30 May 2026*
- Q1 Progress update to the Partnership Board – *19 June 2026*

Q2

Milestones:

- Embedded monitoring questions for all related projects to ensure impact on bus network can be evaluated
- Further milestones are developed based on Bus Action Plan finalised in Q1

Deliverables:

- Based on the Bus Action Plan finalised in Q1

Q3

Milestones:

- Further milestones are developed based on Bus Action Plan finalised in Q1

Deliverables:

- Based on the Bus Action Plan finalised in Q1

Q4

Milestones:

- Further milestones are developed based on Bus Action Plan finalised in Q1
- RBAP year 1 action plan to be reviewed and updated where required

Deliverables:

Based on the Bus Action Plan finalised in Q1
RBAP Action Plan Year 2– updated version based on review milestone – *31 March 2027*

Delivery areas

Advocacy

Advocacy activity will focus on representing the region's bus priorities clearly and consistently to national partners, funders and stakeholders, making the case for sustained investment, policy alignment and delivery support. Building on the Regional Bus Strategy and Business Plan, SEStran will use evidence from engagement, data and early delivery to advocate for fair and equitable levels of service, simpler and more affordable fares, and the infrastructure and powers required to deliver a high-performing regional bus network. This role will also include sharing best practice, influencing national guidance and ensuring that the needs of diverse communities across the region are reflected in wider decision-making.

Programme Governance

Programme governance will provide clear regional leadership and coordination for delivery of the Regional Bus Action Plan, ensuring activity is aligned with the Regional Transport Strategy and national priorities. SEStran will act as the convener and coordinator, bringing together local authorities, operators and national partners to agree priorities, manage dependencies and monitor progress against agreed outcomes. Governance arrangements will focus on enabling collaboration, providing transparency on decision-making, and ensuring that delivery is evidence-led, proportionate and responsive to emerging challenges, while maintaining regular reporting to the Partnership Board on progress, risks and next steps.

Operator Tasks

Operator-facing activity will centre on collaborative delivery, supporting operators to contribute to a more coherent, reliable and user-centred regional bus network. Working through existing partnerships and alliances, SEStran will support coordination on issues such as network clarity, service quality, fares simplification and passenger information, while recognising the operational realities faced by operators. The emphasis will be on enabling practical improvements that benefit passengers, strengthening trust and consistency across the network, and creating the conditions for bus services to compete more effectively with private car travel across the region.

Programme	Transport to Employment
Project partners	Local authorities, community planning partnerships, third sector delivery partners

Programme summary

This programme of work will reduce levels of child poverty across the region by increasing household income through increasing opportunities to access fair, well-paid jobs and training, and decreasing household expenditure on transport to these. Key focuses will be around improving specific public transport services where these can increase access to employment opportunities, and working with Local Employability Partnerships to roll out targeted measures to reduce the transport cost for parents to access employment.

RTS actions

There are no RTS actions specifically aimed at transport to employment. Rather, the implementation of any and all actions within the RTS will improve opportunities to access employment, reduce the cost of public and sustainable transport options and reliance on the private car.

Programme objectives

- Reduce current levels of child poverty by improving the availability of transport options for parents to access employment and training
- Reduce current levels of child poverty by increasing household incomes for families by reducing transport costs to employment and training
- Reduce current levels of child poverty by supporting access to NHS sites as one of the region's major employers and to support access to health services to reduce health inequalities that impact on ability to work
- Make best use of the one year funding to build capacity in future years to deliver further action to reduce child poverty

Programme outcomes

- Reduced public transport journey time and complexity when travelling to employment and further education
- Reduced public transport cost when travelling to employment and further education
- Improved access to employment and further education for people without access to a private car
- Strengthened role of demand-responsive transport in supporting access to employment and further education
- Reduced public transport journey time and complexity for staff and patients when travelling to secondary and tertiary healthcare centres
- Reduced public transport cost for staff and patients when travelling to secondary and tertiary healthcare centres
- Increased local capacity and knowledge to deliver action on transports role in addressing child poverty
- Development of self-sustaining programmes beyond the 2026/27 funding

- Evaluation of successful delivery to support future delivery programmes

Milestones and deliverables
Note – further milestones and deliverables to be added as programme develops

Q1

Milestones:

- 2026/27 Grant award letters circulated and signed (April)
- Inception meetings held with grant recipients (April)
- Finalise monitoring guidance (April)
- Q1 reporting meetings held with grant recipients (June)

Deliverables:

- Monitoring guidance

Q2

Milestones:

- 2026/27 Q1 reporting and claims to Transport Scotland (July)

Deliverables:

- 2026/27 Q1 report and claim
- Newsletter
- Project plan for programme evaluation

Q3

Milestones:

- 2026/27 Q2 reporting and claims to Transport Scotland (October)

Deliverables:

- 2026/27 Q2 report and claim
- Newsletter

Q4

Milestones:

- 2026/27 Q3 reporting and claims to Transport Scotland (Jan)

Deliverables:

- 2026/27 Q3 report and claim
- Newsletter
- Programme completion event/communication

Delivery areas
School to skills pathway
This programme will seek to work with school communities, targeting families who experience child poverty and then working with parents and children in those families. In working with parents, projects will support their transport options to work and/or further education. In working with children and young people, it will address what happens after secondary school - while existing funding supports walking, wheeling and cycling behaviours to become established through school-based activity, young people and families from low-income households often struggle to sustain access to skills training, apprenticeships and employment once leaving school
Transport to Large Workplaces
Projects in this area will look at improving transport access to large workplaces across the region. They will take an evidence based approach, working with local authority transport team and Local Employability Partnerships, to identify existing gaps in provision and put in place solutions to address these gaps.
Rural transport to work and further education
Projects in this area will support the introduction of new services in line with the level of service set out in the new Regional Bus Strategy, focusing providing access to employment for those living in more rural parts of the region.
Targeted action to reduce ticket prices
SEStran will partner with a range of organisations to fund an intervention to reduce ticket prices, potentially across multiple operators. This will be targeted based on available data to look at key trip origins and destinations that will have the maximum possible impact on reducing travel costs for low income parents travelling to work. In doing so, it will enable access to opportunities that are currently unaffordable or inaccessible, especially those located outwith specific communities due to travel costs. While existing free or subsidised bus travel for young people provides important support, current eligibility is limited to those aged 22 and under. This creates a significant gap for individuals aged 23 and over, many of whom are supporting families or seeking to increase household income who continue to face expensive travel costs when accessing employment or training. Targeted cost reductions would help address this gap, reduce transport related barriers, and support households to move out of poverty through improved access to employment, increased earnings, and greater financial stability.
Transport to Health pilot projects
Access to healthcare is a vital aspect of supporting people into work, and healthcare sites are major employers themselves. Following on from the regional case for change report, this funding area will support a small number of high priority pilot projects that can be used to demonstrate the value of specific interventions. The exact project list will be defined over the next month but will focus both on access to healthcare for patients and employees.

Future development and programme management
This area of work will focus on the administration of this funding, as well as investigating how it can be used strategically to support future work beyond 2026/27

Programme	Transport to Health
Project partners	Local authorities, health boards, transport operators

Programme summary

We lead transport to health work in the region, working closely with health boards and local partners to improve how people get to hospitals and clinics, creating a transport system that actively supports wellbeing and making access to healthcare equitable for all.

Since October 2025, SEStran has been working closely 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.

There is a clear need to improve transport to health in our region. The issues identified in the Case for Change highlight the inequality of access and subsequent negative impacts.

In 2026/27, the focus will be on moving from the evidence base and objectives to a co-created, prioritised pipeline of interventions, supported by early-stage business case development.

RTS actions

Support the delivery of bus services and infrastructure measures which ensure access to healthcare for all.

Programme objectives

- Reduce journey time, interchange complexity and uncertainty for secondary and tertiary healthcare trips
- Improve reliable and affordable access to healthcare for people without access to a private car
- Improve the accessibility and usability of transport for disabled people, older people and those with long-term conditions
- Reduce transport-related missed and delayed healthcare appointments
- Improve clarity, coordination and accessibility of transport information and support
- Integrate and enhance community and demand-responsive transport to support healthcare access
- Reduce unnecessary car dependency and improve system efficiency in healthcare travel

Programme outcomes

The development of a regional Transport to Health Strategy aims to achieve and/or contribute to the following items:

- Improved access to care
- Enhanced patient outcomes
- Operational efficiency – better coverage, ways of working (reduction in missed appointments etc.)

- Cost savings – for NHS and local authorities
- Equity in rural and urban access
- Better integration with other services (public transport, etc)

Milestones and deliverables

Q1

Q1 will see the publication of our Case for Change report and distribution to our key stakeholders. We'll also lead on engagement initiatives with our four Health Boards at a senior level to agree and finalise the Transport Planning Objectives prior to developing a shared regional Transport to Health vision. To progress on this work, we'll be seeking consultancy support and will go through a procurement exercise as appropriate.

Our NHS Leaders Board will direct future work packages, that will most likely include the delivery of outline business cases, updates from the Transport to Employment trials in 2026/27 that pertain to health journeys and events aimed at engaging the wider stakeholder network.

Milestones:

- Case for Change published and publicised to our key stakeholders
- Engagement plan agreed with stakeholders to review the TPOs
- NHS Leaders Board established and draft Terms of Reference agreed
- Procurement exercise started

Deliverables:

- Revised Project Initiation Document
- Engagement plan
- Terms of Reference for NHS Leaders Board and Shared Learning Network
- Tender brief

Q2

Milestones:

- Consultants appointed to support capacity on the development of the Strategy
- Regional Transport to Health vision developed and agreed
- TPOs agreed

Deliverables:

- Vision
- Final TPOs

Q3

Milestones:

- Engagement activities delivered with key stakeholders to identify potential solutions
- Long list options agreed to feed into the option appraisal

- Short list of options identified based on sifting methodology

Deliverables:

- Long list of options
- Short list of options

Q4

Milestones:

- Outline Business Cases developed based on short list of options (including economic, financial and management viability) – minimum one per TPO

Deliverables:

- Outline Business Cases
- Final report summarising approach, findings and recommendations

Delivery areas

Delivering on our objectives

To address the issues highlighted in the Case for Change, we will take a programmatic approach, building a programme board with whom we will work through a detailed options appraisal, leading a suite of outline business cases, that together will deliver on our objectives for Transport to Health. As ever, this work will be delivered in partnership with our health boards, NHS Assure, Transport Scotland, the Primary Care Directorate, local authorities, our Partnership Board and expert stakeholders.

Transport to Health pilot projects

To be delivered under Transport to Employment

Programme	**SEStransit**
Project partners	Transport Scotland, local authorities, Scotland's Railway, bus operators

Programme summary

The purpose of Project SEStransit is to provide faster, greener and more reliable connections across our region and to key strategic sites, helping more people travel sustainably. Our Strategic Business Case will set out the context and need for such a system and will be followed by followed by a series of Outline Business Cases for individual projects or packages. Achieving this will in turn reduce congestion in our urban areas, improving productivity, as well as increasing overall access to key employment sites across our region.

RTS actions

Project addresses a wide range of RTS actions therefore individual actions are not listed here

Programme objectives

Transport Planning Objectives (TPOs) will be developed in collaboration with key stakeholders, including local authorities before the end of Stage 1 work, and reported in the Case for Investment.

In advance of confirming the specific objectives, the working definition of the project is:

The collective movement of people across all regional areas using an integrated and affordable shared transport system such as buses, trains, trams, and other connecting modes. It is designed to provide efficient, high-capacity, and sustainable mobility, supported by interchanges and integrating ticketing, data and digital solutions, that provide passengers with the ability to seamlessly transfer between different modes and access strategic housing, employment, health and education sites.

Milestones/tasks and deliverables

Q1 *Network development and packaging*

Milestones/tasks

- Option shortlisting against problems and opportunities, TPOs and STAG criteria.
- Option prioritisation and packaging against regional aspirations and requirements (e.g. the recognised need to improve connectivity into Edinburgh and the need to enable inclusive growth across the region)

Deliverables:

- Network Development Technical Note (draft)

Q2 *Modelling and detailed appraisal and engagement*

Milestones:

- Model specification
- Quantification of impacts and benefits using the SEStran regional model
- Distributional analysis of social and economic benefits appraisal
- Evidencing public support through appropriate public engagement
- Building stakeholder buy-in through targeted stakeholder discussions and workshops

Deliverables:

- Network Development Technical Note (final)

Q3 *Modelling and detailed appraisal and engagement*

Milestones:

- Model specification
- Quantification of impacts and benefits using the SEStran regional model
- Distributional analysis of social and economic benefits appraisal
- Evidencing public support through appropriate public engagement
- Building stakeholder buy-in through targeted stakeholder discussions and workshops
- SEA and Integrated Impact Assessment scoping
- Commercial, management and financial case

Deliverables:

- Detailed appraisal – draft report
- SEA scoping – draft report
- IIA scoping – draft report
- Engagement – draft report

Q4

Milestones:

- Internal approvals
- Report reviews

Deliverables:

- Detailed appraisal – final report
- SEA scoping – final report
- IIA scoping – final report
- Engagement – final report
- SBC - draft report

Delivery areas
SEStransit Strategic Business Case
Completion of the strategic business case for the SEStransit project

Programme	Regional Transport Strategy Delivery Plan
Project partners	Local authorities, City Region Deals, Green Free Ports

Programme summary

The Regional Transport Strategy Delivery Plan will provide a mechanism to identify, assess, prioritise and coordinate all regional transport projects that are required over the medium to long term, to realise the ambitions of the Regional Transport Strategy to support the economic and net-zero ambitions of the Regional Prosperity Framework and local authority economic priorities.

Through strengthened collaboration, joint working, co-production and engagement, we will seek to ensure a robust basis for integrated regional economic development, land-use and transport planning, provision and delivery, maximising the opportunities for our region. The six themes of the RTS Deliver Plan are:

1. Mass Transit (SESTransit)
2. Active Travel
3. Freight
4. Data/Digital
5. Decarbonisation
6. Interchange

RTS actions

Project addresses a wide range of RTS actions therefore individual actions are not listed here

Programme objectives

The initial phase of the programme development focused on the collation of all the currently committed and planned transport investment by partners across the region. Each project was initially assessed against seven criteria of a 'regional' test.

The next phase that was paused in late summer 2025, to allow partners to focus on SEStransit, was to undertake a 'mapping & gapping' review of projects to identify:

- *Cross boundary opportunities for collaboration or upscaling;*
- *Opportunities for coordinated theme delivery*
- *Opportunities for service efficiencies and coordination*
- *Opportunity to increase the ambitions that maybe constrained by local budget reality.*

The programme is paused and will be recommenced in the latter half of 2026/27, so that the emerging outcomes of SEStransit, regional spatial planning and regional economic partnership development can be incorporated into the process. The next steps will be:

- *Review the emerging outcomes of SEStransit to identify areas of focus*
- *Recommence the 'mapping & gapping' exercise*
- *Incorporate the emerging regional spatial and economic development aspirations*
- *Update regional and LA priority lists*

- *Develop scope of service to commence the STAG process*

Milestones/tasks and deliverables

Q1

N/A

Q2

N/A

Q3 *Review of regionally dependant projects*

Milestones:

- *Review development and impact of SEStransit,*
- *Review development and impact of regional spatial and economic development progress*

Deliverables:

- Commission Consultancy Support
- Update programme documents
- Set up recommencement of regional development in Q4

Q4 Recommence Development/Prepare for future stages

Milestones:

Mapping and Gapping Workshops Deliverables:

- Complete Strategic matrix analysis of projects (incl review of STPR2)
- Update regional and LA project priority list
- Scoping for STAG/project Development
- Programme for next phase
- Cost estimate for next phase

Delivery areas

Mapping & Gapping

Completion of project development

Update regional and LA project priority list

Next Steps

Scoping for STAG/project Development

Appendix 2 – Cross Portfolio Delivery Areas

Some work SEStran officers will deliver in 2026/27 sits outside the five key programmes described above but nonetheless is key to realising the vision of our Regional Transport Strategy.

Delivery	Description
Regional Transport Strategy Delivery Plan: Active Travel Theme	A key theme of the RTS delivery plan is regional active travel. We have entered an application to Transport Scotland Active Travel Infrastructure Fund to refresh the SEStran Strategic Cycle Network, taking into account local authorities' new and developing plans for connecting routes across the South East. Should we be successful, we plan to update and broaden the use case for the previously developed SEStran Strategic Cycle Network. This would update the network, focussing on both existing, in construction and planned cycling routes. The proposal is to develop an online mapping tool to enable local authorities and other relevant partners to update the network at agreed regular intervals with standardisation of infrastructure types.
Regional Transport Strategy Delivery Plan: Data Theme	The South East of Scotland City Region Deal's authorities have benefited from the insights of the Workforce Mobility Project, but in the future RTPs will more directly receive learnings that will inform the data theme of our work: **Mobile Phone Data Dashboards** – These dashboards provide footfall data for trip attractors from every UK postcode over five years, supporting RTS delivery plan's data theme. PowerBI integration gives Local Authorities easy access to information, with heatmaps, dwell times, and time-of-day visits for enhanced analysis. **Postcode Accessibility Tool** – This tool offers detailed analysis of employee data—postcodes and shift patterns—to evaluate sustainable travel to work. By identifying barriers like excessive walking or unsuitable arrival times, it informs improvements to transport and active travel, helping employers support behavioural change. **Sustainable Transport Accessibility Tool** – The tool analyses transport connectivity to any Scottish site, using user-defined travel parameters. The Midlothian LDP assessment checked sites against public transport, considering a 45-minute journey, 8am departure and 6pm return, providing evidence for strategic improvements in line with RTS goals.

Thistle Assistance	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. The aim of Thistle Assistance is to improve the journey experience for anyone who requires extra assistance while travelling. For 2026/27, the Thistle Assistance project will focus on an in depth evaluation work of the scheme to assess its impact on users, better understand how to best engage with transport operators and identify areas for improvement.
Real time Passenger Information	Real time passenger information covers the provision of bus, rail and tram information via information on screens and apps. SEStran in the next year will be supporting three main strands: • Software contract – A regionally procured contract is managed by SEStran on behalf of all local authorities (plus Striling Council). The contract covers the running of the software which enables officers to input bus timetable and bus stop audit information on behalf of, or in collaboration with, bus operators. This will include a forum to support the contract, offering opportunities for local authorities to share learnings, speak with the provider directly, and discuss future opportunities. • Journeo Equipment Framework – A regional contract procured by City of Edinburgh Council that supports the equipment to display the information, and the associated maintenance to ensure the bus times are displaying correctly Indoor and outdoor screen management – SEStran have built up a network of around 170 screens across the region which are currently situated in public buildings, libraries and park and ride sites. The next year will be focused on improving reliability of screens as certain sites and identifying sites where existing screens are no longer viable.
Climate Adaptation Work	For 2026/27, climate adaptation work within SEStran will focus on strengthening organisational climate knowledge and embedding adaptation considerations across regional transport planning and delivery. This includes developing internal capability through targeted climate workstreams and collaboration with partners, informed by national adaptation priorities and emerging best practice. SEStran will support a more joined-up approach to climate resilience by contributing to cross-sector discussions on climate-ready infrastructure, ensuring transport considerations are aligned with land use, energy and place-based planning. This work sits alongside, and complements, SEStran's wider programmes, helping to ensure that the Regional Transport Strategy responds effectively to the increasing

	risks posed by climate change while supporting resilient, sustainable communities across South East Scotland.
2026/27 Communications and marketing	This area of work builds on SEStran's Communications Strategy and Stakeholder Map and will deliver communications activity to raise awareness of who we are, what we do and the difference our work makes across the South East of Scotland. It focuses on clearly demonstrating the impact, importance and value of SEStran's work, particularly the benefits of taking a coordinated regional approach to transport challenges. Through consistent, targeted communications, we will showcase our expertise, strengthen our profile with key stakeholders and the public, and make a clear case that we deliver excellent value for money, with the additional investment detailed this business plan enabling greater social, economic and environmental returns for the region.
Logo Update and Website Redesign	In 2026/27, the SEStran logo will be updated to align with refreshed branding guideline and support the corporate Communications Strategy and delivery work identified above. Alongside this will be a complete rebuild and redesign of the SEStran website to enable our messaging to reach our target audiences in a clear, effective and impactful way. The rebuild and redesign will allow us to better showcase our work (both projects and strategy), whilst ensuring that basics such as accessibility guidelines are met and provide improved control over the website so more updates can be carried out internally.

Appendix 3 - Our governance

SEStran Partnership Board

The SEStran Partnership Board is the strategic decision-making body for the South East of Scotland Transport Partnership. It sets the regional direction for transport policy, approves budgets, and oversees the delivery of major programmes across the eight partner local authorities. The Board meets quarterly, with agenda-setting sessions held in advance to prepare reports and agree forward business.

Membership is made up of elected members from the partner councils, supported by SEStran's senior management team.

Performance and Audit Committee

The Performance & Audit Committee ensures strong governance, transparency, and compliance across SEStran's work. Its remit includes reviewing financial performance, risk management, audit outcomes, and organisational performance indicators. The Committee meets quarterly, following a consistent annual cycle, with meetings typically scheduled in February, June, September and November.

Attendees include appointed elected members from partner authorities and non-councillor members, alongside relevant SEStran officers who provide reports and advisory support.

PaSDOS (Projects and Strategy Delivery & Oversight Subgroup)

PaSDOS provides focused oversight of SEStran's strategic project delivery. These sessions support coordination across key programmes—such as emerging regional transport initiatives—and help shape papers and recommendations ahead of committee and Board consideration. PaSDOS meetings are scheduled periodically throughout the year, often aligned to programme milestones or quarterly governance cycles.

Typical attendees include SEStran officers, project leads and, where relevant, partner authority representatives.

We are South East of Scotland Transport Partnership (SEStran), bringing together stakeholders across transport, place-based, economic and development planning to shape and deliver a better-connected, low carbon transport system. Our work includes delivering our Regional Bus Strategy, the People and Place active travel programme, Project SEStransit, and improving transport to health.

www.sestran.gov.uk

GO SEStran
South East of Scotland Transport Partnership

SEStran
Area 3D (Bridge),
Victoria Quay,
Edinburgh, EH6 6QQ

Appointments to Performance and Audit Committee

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 The purpose of this report is to ask the Board to nominate and appoint a Non-Councillor Member to the Performance and Audit Committee.

1.2 Following the resignation of Doreen Steele, and the new appointments of Non-Councillor Members to the Partnership Board there now exists a vacancy for a Non-Councillor Member to join the Performance and Audit Committee.

2. PERFORMANCE AND AUDIT COMMITTTEE

2.1 The Performance and Audit Committee provides independent scrutiny and assurance over the Partnership's governance arrangements, financial management and organisational performance. It ensures that effective systems of risk management, internal control and audit are in place, and reviews financial and audit reports, monitors delivery against objectives and performance indicators, promotes high standards of conduct and compliance, and supports transparency and continuous improvement in line with recognised public sector governance practice. In doing so, it oversees key risks relating to financial stewardship, governance and regulatory compliance, delivery of strategic objectives, and the effectiveness of internal controls and audit arrangements.

2.2 The Committee supports the Board by providing assurance that these arrangements are effective, through detailed scrutiny of risk, audit findings and financial management. It identifies issues early, ensures that improvements are implemented, and strengthens transparency, accountability and informed decision-making, giving the Board confidence that public resources are properly managed, risks are controlled and governance standards are maintained.

2.3 The Committee comprises 8 councillor members, one from each authority; and 4 non-councillor members, chosen (in the event of disagreement) by the Partnership. Each councillor member shall be entitled to nominate a substitute from their own authority. The Chairperson of the Partnership shall not be entitled to substitute for any member of the committee. The Committee's quorum shall be 4.

2.4 Current membership is as follows:

- Cllr Russell Imrie (Chair)
- Cllr John McMillan
- Cllr Stephen Jenkinson
- Cllr Jenny Linehan
- Cllr Tom Conn
- Cllr Paul Garner

- Cllr Derek Glenn
- Cllr Scott Harrison
- NCM Vacancy
- John Scott NCM
- Callum Hay NCM
- Simon Hindshaw NCM

2.5 The Committee normally meets 2 weeks in advance of each Partnership Board meeting, which run quarterly.

3. DEPUTY CHAIR

3.1 Councillor Sanne Dijkstra Downie has been elected as a Member of the Scottish Parliament and, as a result, is no longer able to continue in her role as Deputy Chair of the Partnership. The Chairs' have considered the current position and agreed that, as the Partnership has discretion over the number of Deputy Chairs appointed, the vacancy will not be filled at this time. This approach reflects the proximity of the scheduled local government elections in May, following which a new Partnership Board will be constituted and leadership positions can be reviewed as part of that process.

3.2 The current serving Deputy Chairs are:
- Cllr Russell Imrie
- Cllr John McMillan

4. RECOMMENDATIONS

The Board is asked to:

4.1 Nominate and appoint a Non-Councillor Member to the Performance and Audit Committee; and

4.2 Note that former Deputy Chair Sanne Dijkstra-Downie has been elected as MSP and the Partnership will continue with 2 serving Deputy Chairs as outlined at para 3.2.

Angela Chambers
Business Manager
12 June 2026

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

WORKFORCE MOBILITY PROJECT

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 This report provides an update to the Board on the opportunity for SEStran to deliver the Workforce Mobility Project (WMP) in partnership with the Edinburgh and South East Scotland City Region Deal (City Deal) through the existing Concordat between the two organisations. WMP already supports existing regional activities, and a newly funded pilot will provide data intelligence to Regional Transport Partnerships and Local Authorities across Scotland.

2 BACKGROUND

2.1 WMP has delivered recognised benefits since 2020, linking transport evidence, spatial planning and economic development into practical, data led decisions and investment across the region. WMP has one year of City Deal funding remaining – for 2026/27. This funding is in addition to the £200k for a national pilot project, accessed through Transport Scotland's Transport to Employment programme, which will be administered via SEStran and has been endorsed by all seven Regional Transport Partnerships. This is a pivotal year to continue the momentum and recognition of the project with the aim of gaining regional and national support required to mainstream and gain funding beyond March 2027.

2.2 There has been a personnel change within the WMP at the start of April 2026, with the embedded Manager leaving the seconded post at Scottish Borders Council (SBC) to join SEStran as the Senior Partnership Manager. Prior to leaving, the Manager drafted an options paper on the best way forward in order for WMP to maintain stability and momentum. This paper identified two main options:

1. SBC continues to deliver WMP and, over the first 3-6 months of 2026/27, undertakes the recruitment and upskilling of a new Workforce Mobility Manager, supported by the embedded resources and any embedded consultants; or
2. SBC and SEStran utilise the current Concordat agreement to jointly deliver the WMP, retaining the embedded knowledge of the former Workforce Mobility Manager in a leadership capacity through his new role at SEStran. The staff budget released by not replacing the Workforce Mobility Manager will be redirected to increase day to day delivery capacity within the wider team and maintain the quality and quantity of outcomes delivered.

2.3 The report was considered by SBC Directors and the City Deal Integrated Regional Employability & Skills (IRES) Board and both agreed on 8th May 2026 that the preferred way forward is Option 2.

2.4 These decisions were primarily based on the following benefits offered by Option 2:

- Continued relationships to optimise existing team performance;

- Continuity of project and data knowledge;
- Continuity of Local Authority knowledge and relationships;
- Continuity of regional and national knowledge and relationships;
- Knowledge of IRES 2027+ and the inter-relationships with the rest of the programme; and
- Knowledge and experience of local and regional governance.

As a result, it was concluded that the continuity of knowledge, experience and regional/national relationships will maximise the outcomes for 2026/27 and provide the best opportunity for the project to be mainstreamed in 2027

2.5 Under this model, SBC (on behalf of City Deal) will continue to deliver the project and the national pilot in partnership with SEStran to optimise the benefits of personnel continuity, rapid mobilisations, team capacity, experience, maintaining regional/national relationships, national leverage and value for money.

2.6 This approach also simplifies the administration of the two funding streams and performance reporting to both City Deal and Transport Scotland.

3 WORKFORCE MOBILITY PROJECT OUTCOMES

3.1 At a regional level the WMP has provided transport, spatial planning and economic development teams with support to develop their data maturity and access to new data and analysis that has and will inform decision making to deliver transport solutions that match the needs of communities and regional opportunities.

3.2 Examples of outcomes and benefits delivered to date:

- SBC Bus Network Review and implementation: This has delivered significant growth in patronage; reduced operational inefficiencies; delivered financial headroom to enable further investment in the bus network;
- East Lothian Council Journey Hub Study: A data led assessment of where the authority needs to invest in journey hub and supporting active travel infrastructure to deliver improved transport integration and facilities that improve the customer experience and promote behavioural change; and
- Local Authority PowerBi Dashboards: Utilising the Microsoft software package that all Local Authorities have access to, the team has developed an automated data analysis dashboard that enables partners to scrutinise subsidised bus data thoroughly, while presenting the data in a form that can be used as a communication tool for Elected Members and the public.

3.3 Workstreams for 2026/27

- Continue supporting West Lothian Council to deliver a Journey Hub Study and full Bus Network Review:

- Supporting Clackmannanshire Council with new data and analysis to inform its Active Travel Investment Plan and delivery;
- Supporting all Local Authorities within the region with data and analysis to inform multiple transport studies via the support of consultants; and
- Provide all Regional Transport Partnerships and associated Councils in Scotland with a suite of mobile phone and census data and dashboards to create a data informed public sector, and to support the intelligent Client function. This support will include the upskilling of the public sector to utilise existing software and understand how to utilise the data available to inform investment decision making.

4 THE FUTURE OF THE WORKFORCE MOBILITY PROJECT

4.1 There is strong regional support to extend WMP beyond March 2027, recognising the value of retaining the specialist insight, experience and data intelligence developed by the regional team. Continuing the project will enable partners to further embed data-led decision making and reinforce transport's role as a core enabler of spatial and economic planning across the region.

4.2 A business case has been developed to support the continuation of the project, positioning it as a key coordination mechanism for regional partners and aligned initiatives, and as a foundation for a future regional intelligence hub with transport data at its core. This draft business case, developed as part of the wider IRES Programme 2027+, was tabled with the Scottish Government in late 2025 and will be formally submitted following the establishment of the new administration.

4.3 The 2026/27 national pilot is pivotal in securing future investment, providing the evidence required to demonstrate the value of a centralised data resource that delivers economies of scale, consistent national insight, and improved outcomes. SEStran's leadership role in delivering the pilot is therefore critical. By working closely with national partners to drive adoption, build capability within transport teams, and strengthen confidence in data-led decision making, SEStran will play a defining role in establishing the credibility, sustainability, and long-term success of WMP.

4.4 This development will also raise SEStran's profile and influence in ongoing discussions around national transport governance and the empowerment of regional partnerships.

4.5 It is therefore proposed that SEStran will continue to partner the City Deal in the delivery of the Workforce Mobility Project beyond March 2027 and that it will be named as a delivery partner in the business case to be submitted to Scottish Government.

5 GOVERNANCE STRUCTURES

5.1 The governance structure of the WMP will continue through the City Deal IRES Board, with validation of any decision by SEStran Board. The lead for all reporting will be the SEStran Senior Partnership Manager and this will include the governance and reporting requirements associated with the Transport Scotland funding.

6 SEStran BOARD APPROVALS

6.1 Due to the urgency involved in ensuring continuation of the WMP plus putting the new arrangements in place, the Partnership Director and Chair of the SEStran Partnership Board utilised Standing Order 40 to authorise:

- SEStran working in partnership with the City Deal
- Expenditure of the £200k additional funding, which has already been received from Transport Scotland (see 6.2), to deliver WMP commitments

(Standing Order 40: Items of Urgency. If a decision which would normally be made by the Partnership requires to be made urgently between meetings of the Board, the Partnership Director, in consultation with the Chairperson (whom failing, the Deputy Chairperson(s)), can take action subject to the matter being reported to the next meeting of the Partnership.

6.2 Transport Scotland has supported the concept of the national pilot with the separate allocation of £200k funding through the Transport to Employment fund. This will provide the following resources:

- Increase SBC project Support for 12 months
- Additional data analyst 4 days per week (external consultant)
- Additional Management, maintenance & Storage capacity for WFM data tools
- Commercial Expert resource 2 days per month for 12 months
- Additional PM support 3 days per week for 12 months (external consultant)
- Purchase Mobile Phone Data
- Contingency (circa 4%)

The approval of the Transport to Employment funding is contained within Agenda item A2(b) Revenue Budget 2026-27.

7 RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 The Board is asked to note the content of this report and the associated funding position that is further detailed within Agenda item A2(b) Revenue Budget 2026-27.

7.2 The Board is asked to note action taken by the Partnership Director and Chair of the SEStran Partnership Board under Standing Order 40, approving the participation of SEStran in the delivery of the Workforce Mobility Project in 2026/27

7.3 The Board is asked to approve the continuation of the Senior Partnership Manager's leadership of the Workforce Mobility Project to deliver the benefits identified in Section 2.4 of this report.

7.4 The Board is asked to endorse the continuation of SEStran partnership delivery of the Workforce Mobility Project beyond March 2027, subject to approval of the Business Case to be submitted to Scottish Government later in 2026.

Ewan Doyle
Senior Partnership Manager
27th May 2026

Policy Implications	Utilising data to inform transport decision making is a commitment within the RTS and many Local Transport Strategies. SEStran's leadership role in the Workforce Mobility will support the delivery of the RTS priorities and influence the longer term adoption of these principles to support partners with continued access to data intelligence.
Financial Implications	Costs incurred by Scottish Borders Council are funded directly through Edinburgh & South East Scotland City Region Deal. The Transport Scotland – Transport to Employability funding will be administered by SEStran to procure additional resources to scale-up delivery for the national pilot. This will be a combination of services procured directly by SEStran and granting money to Scottish Borders Council to expand existing commissions. The financial implications and approval request are contained within Agenda item A2(b) Revenue Budget 2026-27. The Senior Partnership Manager's time to lead the project will be an 'in-kind' contribution to support the project success and future delivery business case.
Equalities Implications	An EQIA has been undertaken by Scottish Borders Council at the start of the Workforce Mobility Project and the outcomes still influence the project direction to fundamentally reduce the transport related barrier to employment, training and education across the region.
Climate Change Implications	As projects will generally support access to sustainable transport, this will support the transition to net zero.

REGIONAL TRANSPORT STRATEGY DELIVERY PLAN

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 SEStran, working in partnership with the Edinburgh and South East Scotland City Region Deal (the City Deal) and constituent local authorities, is leading the delivery of the Regional Transport Strategy Delivery Plan. Following the update paper presented to the Board in September 2025, progress on the Plan was paused to enable limited regional resources to be prioritised towards the development and delivery of SEStransit, a nationally significant initiative funded by Transport Scotland through the Bus Infrastructure Fund.

1.2 The City Deal has provided an in-principle approval of a three-year capital funding bid through the Local Growth Fund which represents a significant opportunity to re-establish momentum on the Regional Transport Strategy Delivery Plan. This funding will allow SEStran to strengthen regional capacity and recommence development of the Delivery Plan, ensuring it is robust, deliverable and aligned with national policy and investment priorities.

1.3 Over the next three years, this renewed focus will support further work on the prioritisation and coordination of strategic transport interventions across the region, dovetailing with the outcomes of the SEStransit and Regional Bus programmes. This will result in a coherent and investable pipeline of transport interventions that will support and influence regional spatial and economic ambitions.

2 MAIN REPORT

2.1 In December 2024 the Board received an overview of the Regional Transport Strategy Delivery Plan.

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; and
- Devise a prioritised list of projects for which funding will be sought to undertake appraisals and build business case.

2.3 An updated was provided in September 2025 that confirmed:

- Regional governance for the programme had been developed further to include the appropriate officer and Elected Member forums to consider transport matter across all partners;

- Transport Scotland had clarified the expectation for regional partners to lead on the development of the Strategic Transport Projects Review 2 recommendation 12 to develop a Mass Transit system for the southeast of Scotland (SEStransit);
- The interdependency between SEStransit as a key theme of the Regional Transport Strategy Delivery Plan and the need to develop both in parallel; and
- Confirmation that Transport Scotland had approved funding in 2025/26 to commence the development of a Strategic Business Case in accordance with the Scottish Transport Appraisal Guidance.

2.4 Since September 2025 SEStran and the City Deal have led the mobilisation of a lead technical consultant to develop the Strategic Business Case for SEStransit, with input from regional partners as 'in-kind' contributions. A client based Technical Director has also been commissioned to support the regional partners navigate and review the Scottish Transport Appraisal Guidance process and the consultant outputs.

2.5 The data led 'Case for Investment' will be drafted by mid-May 2026 for partners to review at the gateway point and will form the evidence base for the remainder of the Strategic Business Case process between now and mid-2027. Further detail is provided in the specific SEStransit update report.

3 LOCAL GROWTH FUND

3.1 With the end of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund, regional partners have been asked to coordinate the allocation of revenue and capital funding for regional priorities that support the outcomes of the new Local Growth Fund which include:

- Support long term economic growth;
- Boost GDP; and
- Boost real household disposable income.

3.2 In March 2026, the City Deal Joint Chair of the Regional Transport Strategy Delivery Plan Working Group brought forward a proposal to the City Deal Directors' Group to allocate capital funding to restart the Delivery Plan process. The proposal sought to provide additional regional capacity, enabling partners to progress development of the Delivery Plan in parallel with the ongoing delivery of SEStransit. This approach is intended to optimise contributions from regional partners, ensure effective use of limited resources, and articulate a comprehensive, region-wide picture of the transport investment required to support and complement SEStransit.

3.3 The proposal was endorsed by City Deal Directors and at a subsequent City Deal Joint committee meeting, so the SEStran team is drafting an official funding application to be submitted by City Deal to Scottish Government.

4 PROPOSED NEXT STEPS

4.1 Confirmation of LGF funding is expected in June 2026 and will allow the following activities to be undertaken over the remainder of the financial year:

- Commission a consultant to complete the baselining of existing projects from regional partners and the list of ‘Sifted Projects’ from the Strategic Transport Projects Review 2 into the existing strategic assessment matrix;
- Undertake an Equalities Impact assessment to supplement the project level assessments undertaken by partner Local Authorities for individual projects. The outcomes will be built into the future process, programme and scope;
- Complete the ‘mapping and gapping’ exercise with regional partner to identify opportunities for new projects, cross boundary collaborations and economies of scale;
- Assess and draft a scope of services for the remaining two financial years of funding (2027-2029) to undertake a Strategic Business Case Assessment in accordance with Scottish Transport Appraisal Guidance, or other appropriate alternatives;
- Provide an updated programme cost estimate to deliver the scope of service;
- Provide a draft delivery programme with external dependencies quantified;
- Provide programme governance structure, with processes and templates; and
- Draft Transport Planning Objectives for consideration at the next stage.

5 RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 The Board is asked to note the contents of this report and that progress updates will be provided to future meetings.

Ewan Doyle
Senior Partnership Manager
19th June 2026

Policy Implications	The Regional Transport Strategy Delivery Plan support the deliver of the Regional Transport Strategy and will form the basis for future influence on a Regional Spatial Strategy and Regional Economic Partners developments. It will provide a coherent and ambitious business case for transport investment over the next 30-40 years to enable the regional to reach its full potential.
Financial Implications	The proposed Local Growth Fund will support the activities identified within 2026/27 and the scoping of the next phase of activities will identify if any additional funding is required beyond the 3 year capital funding.

Equalities Implications	An EQIA will be undertaken within the proposed activities and the outcomes included in the next phase of the programme.
Climate Change Implications	As projects will generally support access to sustainable transport, this will support the transition to net zero.

PEOPLE AND PLACE

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 This report provides an update on the People and Place programme, focusing on developments since the last Board meeting.

2 BACKGROUND

2.1 Our approach for 2026/27 was to be one of stability after several years of significant change in this area, allowing projects to bed in and deliver on their outcomes.

2.2 On the 5th December 2025, the Board approved the following in relation to the 2026/27 People and Place grant rounds:

- Delegate to the Partnership Director the setting of the fund values as noted at paragraph 4.2 for grants to local authorities, grants to third parties, and the community grant fund.
- Approve the eligibility and assessment criteria for grants to third parties, and delegate to the Partnership Director the ability to vary the project section of the eligibility criteria as set out in paragraph 4.9
- Approve the eligibility and assessment criteria for the community grant fund and delegate to the Partnership Director the ability to vary these criteria to support joint working with other RTPs as set out in paragraph 4.12

2.3 In line with the last two points above, the People and Place grant round opened in January 2026 and closed on 6th February 2026. Following this, all projects were scored by three team members against the approved scoring criteria as set out in the Grant Standing Orders, and the team met on 17th-18th February 2026 to review the average scores for each project and make funding recommendations.

2.4 A funding panel was then held on 24th February where approval was given to progress on the basis of the recommendations, and provisional decisions were issued. Subsequent to this, Local Authority awards were also approved by the Partnership Director. This was all carried out on the basis of the grant award figures Transport Scotland had advised all RTPs to budget with.

2.5 On 1st April, Transport Scotland informed RTPs of a likely reduction to the revenue allocation of 60% following their internal approval process. This was confirmed on 9th April along with confirmation of a static capital budget. This decision was then communicated to all local authorities and funded partners on 10th April. These communications included requests for detail on where revenue funding was supporting existing staff roles, and where there was the possibility of capitalising revenue spend. Discussions were also held with some groups to run through options in more detail.

2.6 Throughout this process, first and foremost, our priority was to retain capacity in the sector and to ensure that any decisions regarding funding focused on protecting existing staff

roles. Following on from this, we looked to prioritise projects working with marginalised groups and in areas of high relative deprivation.

3 FUNDING REDUCTION PROCESS

3.1 Following on from the funding announcement, various options have been examined to bring the programme into balance in line with the priorities outlined above. This took a progressive approach over 3 rounds of funding reductions:

- Round 1 found simple savings to areas such as number of bikes purchased, non-essential costs which would not impact delivery, and ending school projects on 31st March 2027 (i.e. 9 months delivery instead of 12). This round saved £458,406.28 (£217,502.58 revenue and £240,903.70 capital)
- Round 2 necessarily went further, and involved removal of low scoring projects, blanket cost reductions of 60% to local authority revenue allocations and 20% to all other revenue budgets, plus further cuts to project budgets. This round took total savings to £747,754.38 (£891,443.93 revenue and -£143,689.55 capital). This round was then the basis for discussion with grantees about additional savings/where cuts would affect staff roles.
- Round 3 was informed by discussions with provisional grantees, where they were asked to confirm the assumptions made and to make additional savings – overall organisations were extremely supportive in this in looking at the costs savings to support delivery across the programme. Final adjustments were also made to capital budgets and SEStran costs. Savings at the end of this round totalled £1,266,365.95 (£1,265,859.10 revenue and £506.85 capital). As the programme was now balanced, no further reductions were needed.

3.2 Final grant awards for 2026/27 are presented elsewhere on this agenda for noting.

3.3 The summary of the reductions by fund area is as follows:

Fund	Projects Cut	Revenue Cut	Revenue Cut %	Capital Cut	Capital Cut %	Total Cut	Total Cut %
Community grant fund	3	£232,050	51%	-£15,946	-12%	£216,104	37%
Main grant fund	1	£423,762	69%	£131,414	6%	£555,176	21%
Local authorities	0	£470,850	60%	-£106,994	-5%	£363,856	13%
Regional projects	2	£139,197	50%	-£7,967	-4%	£131,230	27%
Total	**6**	**£1,265,859**	**59%**	**£507**	**0%**	**£1,266,366**	**19%**

4 IMPACT ON PROGRAMME

4.1 Whilst the overall People and Place programme retains a similar value to 2024/25, the large reduction in revenue funding presents a significant challenge. Fundamentally, behaviour change relies heavily on revenue funding to be successful. In addition, we had purposely directed a higher proportion of revenue funding to local authorities and community groups, therefore they will be more heavily impacted by these reductions. Finally, revenue funding has increased importance for projects that work with more

marginalised groups and on projects that encourage increased rates of walking and use of sustainable transport – an even more capital heavy programme therefore risks entrenching inequality and being heavily focused on cycling while ignoring other modes

4.2 Whilst mitigation has been put in place to reduce the impact where possible, the scale of the funding reduction has meant that it has not been possible to completely negate it. For example, we have had to remove a provisional funding offer from project working in the Levenmouth area of Fife, and one that worked with primary school pupils to encourage increased rates of walking to school.

4.3 It has also not been possible to fully protect all staff roles that had been previously funded despite our best efforts to do so. We estimate that the direct impact of this funding reduction is a loss of 1.2FTE of staff roles in south east Scotland (assuming organisations cannot find alternative funding).

4.4 A full report on the impact of the funding reduction is attached as appendix 1. The summary from the document is as follows:

The 60% reduction in revenue funding presents a fundamental challenge to the delivery of the SEStran People and Place Programme, significantly constraining the programme's ability to support behaviour change and community-based interventions. While capital funding remains stable, the shift in funding balance limits flexibility and places additional pressure on delivery models not designed to operate without sufficient revenue support.

Despite the rapid and effective response to reprofile funding and maintain programme continuity, the scale and timing of these reductions will have immediate impacts on project delivery and longer-term implications for outcomes across the region. There is a clear risk that progress made in recent years, particularly in addressing transport inequality, supporting sustainable travel behaviours, and enabling access to employment and services, will be slowed or reversed.

Looking ahead, continued uncertainty around future revenue funding will further challenge strategic planning and delivery. Sustained investment in revenue is critical to ensuring that capital interventions are fully realised and that the programme can continue to deliver meaningful, inclusive, and lasting transport outcomes across South East Scotland.

5 2025/26 PROGRAMME EVALUATION

5.1 To close out the 2025/26 programme, an evaluation has been undertaken by Urban Foresight along a similar model as in 2024/25. A full copy of the report is attached as appendix 2, with a summary below.

5.2 In 2025/26, the programme has continued to deliver a substantial and wide-ranging portfolio of interventions across the SEStran region, with £6.45 million invested across 149 projects in all eight local authority areas. Delivered through partnerships with local authorities, community organisations and the third sector, the programme has expanded from a predominantly active travel focus to a broader emphasis on active and sustainable travel, supporting walking, wheeling, cycling, workplace travel planning and accessibility initiatives. This evolution has strengthened the programme's ability to respond to local

needs, particularly through community-led, place-based delivery models that address barriers to participation and promote inclusive access to transport.

5.3 The evaluation provides strong evidence of positive outcomes across multiple areas, including increased participation in active travel, improved confidence and skills, and enhanced accessibility for groups facing transport barriers. Projects have supported tens of thousands of engagements, alongside significant provision of bikes, training, infrastructure and community-based activities. Evidence indicates increased walking, wheeling and cycling activity, alongside wider benefits including reduced social isolation, improved physical and mental wellbeing, and greater access to education, employment and services. The most effective interventions combine practical support (e.g. equipment and infrastructure) with ongoing engagement, confidence-building and social connection, enabling more sustained behaviour change.

5.4 The programme also demonstrated growing maturity in delivery and evaluation, with improvements in monitoring, stakeholder engagement and evidence gathering since 2024/25. Increased collaboration, shared learning events and capacity-building activity have strengthened organisational capability and regional partnership working. However, the evaluation highlights ongoing challenges, including variation in monitoring consistency, capacity constraints among delivery partners, and the limitations of short-term funding cycles in evidencing long-term behavioural change.

5.5 Overall, the programme has been found to be delivering clear and demonstrable value, not only in shifting travel behaviour but in contributing to wider social, economic and community outcomes, with further opportunity to strengthen impact through sustained investment and continued refinement of delivery and evaluation approaches.

6 RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 The Board is asked to note the contents of the paper and the changes to the programme made as a result of the reduction in funding.

Michael Melton
Programme Manager
19th June 2026

Appendix 1: Report on impact of funding reduction on People and Place
Appendix 2: 2025/26 People and Place Evaluation Report

Policy Implications	The People and Place Delivery Plan aligns with the objectives of the RTS and therefore will help deliver on SEStran's policy objectives
Financial Implications	Project management costs for 2026/27 are included in the overall programme budget, so there is no anticipated financial impact.

Equalities Implications	In supporting people to travel actively, this programme should have a positive impact on equalities. Specific elements of the Plan have been designed to further support the accessibility of active and sustainable travel, with an objective include around this to ensure that this is measured. A programme wide IIA has been produced and published, and all projects will be expected to implement the recommendations of this where appropriate.
Climate Change Implications	In promoting behaviour change from private cars to active and sustainable travel, the People and Place Plan will support the transition to net zero.

SESTRAN PEOPLE & PLACE PROGRAMME BUDGET REDUCTION IMPACT REPORT

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 This report details the immediate and anticipated impact of the 60% revenue cut to the SEStran People and Place Programme for the 2026/27 funding year.

2 BACKGROUND

2.1 At the beginning of April 2026, Transport Scotland informed RTPs that the revenue funding element of the People and Place Programme grant would be reduced by 60% nationally. This reduced the SEStran revenue budget from £2,130,271 to £844,976. There was no change to the level of capital funding.

2.2 The 2026/27 funding ratio for the programme now sits at 16% revenue to 84% capital (33% to 67% in 2025/26 and 36% to 64% in 2024/25). This level of revenue funding presents a fundamental challenge for a programme focussed primarily on behaviour change interventions. While there was no cut to capital overall, there was additional pressure on the capital budget to cover significant reprofiling of budgets to capital spend.

2.3 Following indicative funding figures from Transport Scotland earlier in the year, we had already been through our grant funding application process for the 2026/27 year and had made provisional funding offers to organisations in the region and our eight local authorities. These had been made with the proviso that final confirmation on budget was required from Transport Scotland.

2.4 Given this progress made by SEStran and partners and the timing of the revenue reduction confirmation, significant amendments needed to be made to the provisional grants and local authority awards extremely quickly. Within 2 weeks of notification of the funding reductions being revised the process was completed and grant offers updated.

2.5 At present, it is not known whether the revenue funding will remain at this lower level in future years, however even if it were to return to previous levels, there would be knock on implications for delivery in 2027/28 due to the scale of reductions made across the programme. There are also further impacts from a potential reduction in LADA funding (direct People and Place funding from TS to LAs), which has not yet been confirmed.

3 SUMMARY OF CHANGES TO THE SESTRAN 2026/27 PEOPLE AND PLACE PROGRAMME

3.1 The below summarises the changes that have been made to the programme to align with the reduced revenue budget.

Funding area	Revenue cut	% cut
Community Fund	£232,050.39	51
Main Fund (Delivery partners)	£423,761.98	69
Local Authority Delivery Support	£470,849.73	60
SEStran PM and projects	£144,197.00	52

- Schools projects previously funded until June 2027 have had funding reduced for delivery until March 2027.
- Local Authority revenue awards have all been reduced by 60%
- 1 existing and 2 new community projects were removed from the programme
- 1 existing regional walking project was removed from the programme
- 1 new cross RTP wheeling project was removed from the programme
- Eligible costs were capitalised across all projects where possible
- SEStran project management and direct delivery costs reduced

4 IMPACTS TO THE PROGRAMME

4.1 **Impacts on Local Authority delivery**

The scale of Local Authority delivery has been reduced significantly as a result of the revenue cuts, where there is in general far fewer options to capitalise projects. The below two examples demonstrate the scale of the reduction. As we had made the decision in previous funding years not to support whole staff roles for LAs, our cuts to the programme will not substantially impact on the delivery capacity in LAs. However, LAs instead looked to LADA funding which was felt to be more secure long term for this, and so a reduction here may have a significant effect.

City of Edinburgh as an example has had a reduction in revenue from a provisional award of £278,000 to £111,000. This has reduced their revenue project list from 18 down to 4. With a loss of projects including delivering support to schools to increase cycling, promotion of car club across the city and a social prescribing project to address health inequalities.

Scottish Borders had a reduction in revenue from a provisional award of £128,255 to £51,302. Cuts were made to additional cycle training in schools including support for Learn to Ride sessions in younger pupils. This will have knock on impacts on the number of pupils being able to ride a bike and the numbers that will receive cycle training. This will also likely put additional pressure on future years training as more children reach the later years of primary school unable to ride a bike and take part in Bikeability Scotland training. This will also likely impact the ability to deliver a universal offer of Bikeability Scotland to schools.

4.2 **Impacts on community organisations**

For community organisations, a cut to revenue is particularly challenging, as they tend to rely more heavily on staff time and direct engagement to deliver projects. They are also less likely to have reserves to draw on, less ability to absorb budget changes and generally don't have the in-house financial expertise to capitalise costs or revise budgets at short notice.

Partial cuts were made to community projects staff time. It is harder to negotiate renewal or extensions of staff contracts when funding is partially cut, and smaller community organisations have less in-house capacity to navigate this quickly (and without further disruption to delivery).

Community organisations funded through the programme tend to work more directly with older people, disabled people, and those on lower incomes. This work tends to require higher levels of support per participant and as such will be more impacted by the cuts to revenue and reductions in funded staff time.

The three community projects that were removed from the programme would have worked closely within their local areas to engage people in walking and cycling more for everyday journeys. Two proposed to offer support for cycling and bike maintenance in areas of higher deprivation.

Overall, the cuts to community organisations will result in fewer staff days, fewer engagement opportunities and narrower geographic reach.

We are continuing to work with the other RTPs to develop additional support for community organisations. The proposal is based around providing community organisations funded across RTPs with a level of non-financial support.

This programme of non-financial support will support a co-ordinated approach across RTPs for community organisations and will work to lessen some of the challenges with the funding model as it stands.

4.3 **Impacts on delivery partners**

Larger delivery partners have to some extent been more able to adapt to the budget reduction than LAs or community groups. This is due to a greater proportion of project budgets already being capital heavy and a greater flexibility to capitalise costs in general. The larger organisations in particular are also more able to draw on reserves and absorb cuts as compared to community groups and smaller delivery partners.

There were still however substantial cuts to projects, within this area of the programme. It suffered the largest proportional revenue cut, at 69%. It was also necessary to remove a long-standing school-based national walking behaviour change programme delivered by Living Streets.

In 2025/26 the Living Streets project worked across 40 primary schools in the region, supporting children and families to make more active choices when travelling to school. The loss of the project will have a particular impact in Clackmannanshire,

where it was being delivered across 100% of schools and complemented the work of the LA.

A new cross RTP project was also removed from the programme. This project would have focussed their work across central Scotland ensuring young wheelchair users have both the confidence and ability to carry out everyday tasks and journeys, including allowing for door-to-door independent journeys, linking up with public transport, and using travel apps.

Ultimately the level of cuts to delivery partners will impact on both the scale and intensity of delivery and in-turn the ability to enable communities and individuals to make more active and sustainable transport choices.

4.4 **Reduced investment in walking projects (generally fully revenue based)**
Walking projects are generally much more reliant on revenue funding, and will likely be more impacted by this cut overall and this impact will be compounded in future years if the revenue/capital split remains the same. Projects focussed on improving the accessibility of the public realm is one area in which walking projects can continue to be supported through capital funding.

4.5 **Capacity and capability in the sector**
Our primary consideration at the start of revising the budget was to retain capacity in the sector, specifically for existing roles with someone in post. The scale of cuts did however mean that funded staff time was reduced and some projects had to be cut with the potential for jobs to be lost. As it stands this will directly affect 1.2 FTE across 2 roles, with further impact on support roles and freelancers delivering activity such as cycle training which is hard to quantify.

A reduced level of capacity overall will mean less staff time available to plan ahead and for community organisations, less time to explore and develop ways to become more self-sufficient in future.

As we had made the decision generally not to fund Local Authority staff roles through the programme, this cut has not as yet had a substantial impact on LA capacity.

Reduced confidence in the security of this funding more generally is likely to lead to greater hesitation to take on new staff or to fill vacant roles across all funded organisations. This will likely lead to reduced staff retention and reduced capacity to support engagement activity across the sector. Ultimately, vital skills and experience are being lost from the sector due to continuing uncertain and unpredictable annual funding cycles.

As part of the reductions in revenue, we cut the budget available to support knowledge sharing events. This will result in a reduction in the opportunities available for groups to come together and share best practice. We also had to reduce the budget available to support training, further reducing the potential to build capability in the sector.

The time required to reprofile the programme at the beginning of April took considerable staff time from SEStran and grantees. This took resource away from engagement, planning for the year ahead, and crucially for grantees, delayed their ability to start delivery of their projects. This is particularly impactful for active travel projects, this being an important time of year for engagement as the weather improves.

5 FUTURE IMPACTS

5.1 Projects tied to the school year had previously been funded up to June 2027. We reduced funding to school projects for delivery to March 2027 rather than June 2027. This resulted in a revenue saving of around £305,000 from the 2026/27 budget. However, this will require to be covered within the 2027/28 budget of these projects are to continue. This will push additional pressure onto the 2027/28 budget and will result in further significant cuts having to be made across the programme if the revenue budget remains at this reduced level – the programme would in practice see a further revenue reduction of 36%. This will put at risk most projects that are funded, and will see significant impact on jobs roles, community projects, and projects working with schools which so far have been comparatively insulated from the reductions.

5.2 If the programme continues with this revenue capital split, there is a risk of an increasing volume of capital assets that do not have the associated resource to ensure they are effectively utilised. This will lead to assets with insufficient support, training or engagement activity and reduced utilisation resulting in lower value for money overall.

5.3 Reduced resource across the programme will result in reduced staff time to monitor, evaluate and maintain reporting. This will result in reduced and lower quality data coming through from projects and subsequently make it harder to carry out a robust evaluation of the programme. The programme wide evaluation will also be reduced in scope and scale. This in turn will impact on the ability to make properly informed decisions about best practice and future funding awards.

5.4 The late announcement of this funding cut resulted in significant work on reviewing the budgets that had been agreed in principle both for SEStran and the groups funded. The scale and timing of this cut has already eroded trust and confidence in the programme overall.

5.5 City of Edinburgh, Midlothian and Scottish Borders Councils will all be hosting the Grand Depart of the Tour de France in July 2027. The cut in funding will have a negative impact on the ability of these Local Authorities to maximise the socio-economic benefits and legacy of this world-famous sporting event coming to the region. This is the first time the event has come to Scotland, and it is unlikely to return for some time so this a significant loss of opportunity to harness the impact it will have in engaging the public in cycling.

6 SUMMARY

6.1 The 60% reduction in revenue funding presents a fundamental challenge to the delivery of the SEStran People and Place Programme, significantly constraining the programme's ability to support behaviour change and community-based interventions. While capital funding remains stable, the shift in funding balance limits flexibility and places additional pressure on delivery models not designed to operate without sufficient revenue support.

6.2 Despite the rapid and effective response to reprofile funding and maintain programme continuity, the scale and timing of these reductions will have immediate impacts on project delivery and longer-term implications for outcomes across the region. There is a clear risk that progress made in recent years, particularly in addressing transport inequality, supporting sustainable travel behaviours, and enabling access to employment and services, will be slowed or reversed.

6.3 Looking ahead, continued uncertainty around future revenue funding will further challenge strategic planning and delivery. Sustained investment in revenue is critical to ensuring that capital interventions are fully realised and that the programme can continue to deliver meaningful, inclusive, and lasting transport outcomes across South East Scotland.

Michael Melton
Programme Manager
12 June 2026

Urban Foresight

SEStran People and Place Programme

Evaluation 2025/26

PREPARED FOR

South East of Scotland Regional Transport Partnership (SEStran)

Executive Summary

The SEStran People and Place Programme continued to support active and sustainable travel across the South East of Scotland during 2025/26.

A total of £6.45 million was invested across 149 projects delivered by local authorities, third sector organisations, community groups, educational institutions, and other delivery partners across all eight SEStran local authority areas.

The programme supported activity across four themes: Accessibility and Inclusion, Schools and Young People, Workplaces, and Capacity and Capability Building. During 2025/26, the programme broadened its focus beyond active travel to include a wider range of sustainable travel interventions and increased involvement from community organisations delivering locally tailored projects.

The evaluation found evidence of positive outcomes across all programme themes. More than 51,000 engagements with young people were recorded, alongside over 6,000 engagements through Accessibility and Inclusion projects. Across the programme, more than 1,800 cycles were distributed, over 2,500 cycles were repaired, refurbished or serviced, and hundreds of training sessions, led rides, workshops, and community events were delivered.

Evidence from project monitoring, stakeholder engagement, and participant feedback indicates increased participation in walking, wheeling, cycling, and wider sustainable travel activity. Participants reported increased confidence, greater use of active travel for everyday journeys, and improved perceptions of safety. Confidence-building emerged as one of the most consistently reported outcomes and was identified as an important precursor to longer-term behaviour change.

School-based projects supported increased cycling participation, skills development, and independent travel among young people. Accessibility and Inclusion projects were particularly effective in reducing barriers to participation through cycle access schemes, training, community engagement, and targeted support. Community-led projects demonstrated strong outcomes in engaging individuals experiencing financial, social, accessibility, and confidence-related barriers to active travel.

The programme generated a range of wider outcomes beyond transport behaviour change. These included improved physical and mental wellbeing, stronger social connections, increased independence, reduced transport barriers, and improved access to employment, education, services, and community opportunities. Evidence suggests that outcomes were strongest where projects combined practical support with ongoing engagement and community-based delivery.

The evaluation also found evidence of increased organisational capacity and stronger regional collaboration. Capacity and Capability Building projects supported skills development, partnership working, knowledge sharing, and organisational learning. Shared learning events strengthened relationships between local authorities, delivery partners, and community organisations, while stakeholders reported improved engagement, clearer monitoring expectations, and stronger evaluation practice compared with 2024/25.

Several challenges remain. Stakeholders highlighted the impact of short-term funding cycles on long-term planning, staff retention, partnership development, and the ability to evidence sustained behaviour change. Variations in monitoring approaches and organisational capacity also continue to affect the consistency and comparability of data across projects.

Overall, the evaluation concludes that the People and Place Programme is delivering positive transport, social, wellbeing, and organisational outcomes across the SEStran region. The programme's flexibility, emphasis on locally tailored delivery, and focus on reducing barriers to participation remain key strengths. Continued investment in community-led delivery, organisational capacity, partnership development, and proportionate monitoring approaches will be important in sustaining progress and supporting a longer-term shift towards active and sustainable travel.

Foreword

This report marks the second year of our People and Place programme, which has continued to support and enable a wide range of active travel behaviour change projects across the region. Building on the foundations established in 2024/25, the programme has expanded its reach and deepened its impact, supporting initiatives such as cycle repairs, bike recycling, access to new cycles, and local street audits aimed at removing barriers to walking, wheeling and cycling.

It has been particularly encouraging to see how delivery partners have adapted and strengthened their approaches over the year, with many projects demonstrating sustained engagement and growing participation. Hearing directly from participants has remained one of the most rewarding aspects of this work. From young people gaining confidence to travel actively, to communities benefiting from improved local environments, these stories continue to highlight the tangible difference the programme is making.

While progress has been positive, 2025/26 has also been a year of continued learning. As Regional Transport Partnerships have become more familiar with their roles in managing and administering funding, processes have become more streamlined. However, challenges remain, particularly in ensuring consistency in data collection and capturing the full breadth of outcomes across diverse projects.

As with last year, this report does not capture the entirety of activity delivered within the programme. A number of projects extend beyond the reporting period, meaning that some outcomes will be evaluated and reported in future publications. This approach allows for a more robust and comprehensive understanding of long-term impacts.

We are pleased that this evaluation provides a valuable overview of programme performance in 2025/26 and identifies key insights and lessons that will inform ongoing development. These learnings will be instrumental as we continue to evolve and strengthen People and Place in the coming years.

Finally, we would like to thank all those who have contributed to the success of the programme and this report – including our partner local authorities, delivery organisations, and wider stakeholders. We are also grateful to Transport Scotland for their continued investment and support in enabling the delivery and growth of People and Place.

Brian Butler

Partnership Director

In numbers

£6.45m
Total programme funding awarded and spent

£4.33m
Capital funding invested

£2.13m
Revenue funding invested

100+
Projects delivered across the SEStran region

8
Local authority areas supported

1,862
Cycles provided

1,029
Refurbished bikes provided

833
New cycles provided

850
Scooters provided

32
E-bikes provided

4
Adaptive cycles provided

4
Cargo bikes provided

199
Cycle parking spaces installed

59
Cycle storage units installed

38
Cycle repair stations installed

Supporting active travel across communities, schools, workplaces, and public spaces throughout the South East of Scotland.

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Introduction

About this report

The South East of Scotland Regional Transport Partnership (SEStran) commissioned Urban Foresight to undertake an independent evaluation of the People and Place Programme for 2025/26. This builds on the evaluation of the 2024/25 delivery year, providing continuity in approach while incorporating enhancements to reflect the evolving programme and improved data availability.

Purpose of the evaluation

The evaluation aims to assess the impact of funded projects across the region, understand what works in delivering behaviour change, and identify opportunities to strengthen future programme delivery, monitoring, and evaluation.

The 2025/26 programme continues to support a diverse portfolio of projects delivered by local authorities, third sector organisations, and community groups, focused on enabling a shift towards active and sustainable travel for everyday journeys.

Continuity with 2024/25 evaluation

This evaluation builds on the foundations established during the 2024/25 process. The 2025/26 evaluation has focused on:

- → Strengthening the evidence base,
- → Building understanding of project capacity and capability,
- → Enhancing engagement with project leads and delivery partners.

Structure of the report

The report is structured as follows:

Programme Context and Evolution. Introduces the programme, its aims, delivery model, and key developments since 2024/25.

Programme Reach and Delivery. Provides an overview of programme scale, thematic activity, geographic reach, and participant engagement across the SEStran region.

Evaluation Approach and Methodology. Outlines the evaluation framework, methodology, data collection methods, and key considerations informing the evaluation approach.

Programme Outcomes and Impact. Presents the findings of the evaluation, drawing on quantitative and qualitative evidence relating to programme outcomes and behaviour change.

Understanding Impact: Lived Experience. Explores programme impacts through stories of change, participant personas, and wider insights into behaviour change.

What Works, For Whom, and Why. Examines key success factors, barriers and challenges, and differences in delivery and outcomes across projects and participant groups.

Capacity Building and System Change. Explores organisational learning, partnership development, embedded change, and progress since the 2024/25 evaluation.

Reflections on Monitoring and Evaluation. Reviews improvements made during 2025/26 and identifies remaining gaps and opportunities relating to monitoring and evaluation processes.

Conclusions and Recommendations. Summarises overall conclusions from the evaluation and sets out recommendations for future programme delivery and evaluation.

Programme Context and Evolution

The South East of Scotland Transport Partnership (SEStran) is the statutory regional transport partnership for the South East of Scotland.

SEStran are responsible for developing and delivering the regional transport strategy (RTS) and comprises of eight local authorities covering: City of Edinburgh Council, Clackmannanshire, East Lothian, Falkirk, Fife, Midlothian, Scottish boarders, and West Lothian.

Overview of the programme

The SEStran People and Place Programme supports projects aimed at increasing participation in active and sustainable travel across the South East of Scotland. The programme funds a range of interventions designed to reduce barriers to participation, encourage behaviour change, and improve access to sustainable transport opportunities within communities across the region.

The programme builds on the first year of People and Place delivery during 2024/25, through which SEStran distributed approximately £6.4 million across around 100 projects. The programme continues to support projects delivered by local authorities, third sector organisations, educational institutions, community groups, and other delivery partners.

While the 2024/25 programme primarily focused on active travel interventions, the 2025/26 programme reflects a broader emphasis on both active and sustainable travel. This broader scope included projects supporting walking, wheeling, cycling, workplace travel planning, sustainable transport awareness activity, cycle access schemes, and wider accessibility initiatives.

The programme continues to support delivery across four core themes:

- Schools and Young People
- Workplaces
- Accessibility and Inclusion
- Capacity and Capability Building

A notable development within the 2025/26 programme has been the increased involvement of community groups and locally embedded organisations delivering place-based interventions tailored to local needs and priorities. The programme also broadened its focus to include sustainable travel alongside active travel projects.

Policy and strategic context

The People and Place Programme operates within a strong national and regional policy context focused on decarbonisation, public health improvement, accessibility, and behaviour change.

At a national level, the programme aligns with Scotland's National Transport Strategy, the Active Travel Framework, and wider ambitions to encourage a shift towards more sustainable and

inclusive transport systems. The programme also supports priorities relating to reducing inequalities, improving health outcomes, and enabling more connected and resilient communities.

At a regional level, the programme contributes to the delivery of SEStran's Regional Transport Strategy, supporting objectives relating to sustainable mobility, accessibility, community wellbeing, and reduced car dependency across the South East of Scotland.

Recent developments within the Scottish transport policy landscape have reinforced the importance of locally tailored and place-based approaches to behaviour change. Within this context, the People and Place Programme provides a flexible delivery mechanism capable of responding to differing local needs and opportunities across the region.

The programme reflects increasing recognition that transport behaviours are shaped by interconnected social, economic, environmental, and structural factors. As a result, many funded projects combine practical interventions with engagement, confidence-building, and community support activity.

Programme design and delivery (2025/26)

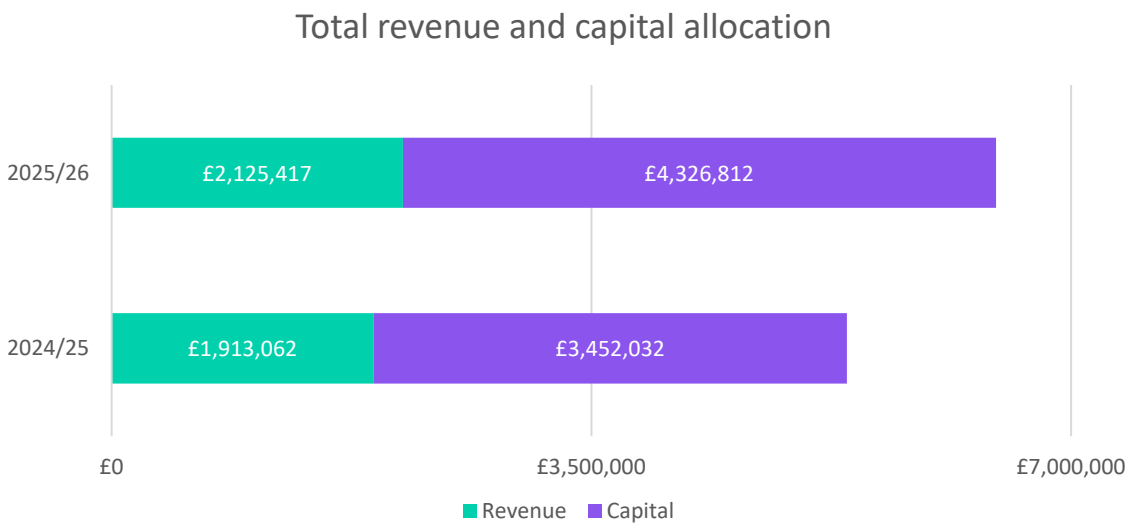
The 2025/26 programme supports a range of delivery approaches designed to encourage participation in active and sustainable travel across different population groups and communities.

Projects funded through the programme include:

- School-based active travel initiatives
- Community walking and cycling programmes
- Workplace engagement and travel planning
- Cycle access and repair schemes
- Skills development and training
- Behaviour change campaigns
- Sustainable transport awareness activity
- Community-led accessibility and inclusion projects

Delivery models vary depending on local context, participant groups, and project aims. While some projects focus primarily on infrastructure and physical access improvements, others prioritise engagement, education, confidence-building, or community development approaches.

The programme supports a combination of capital and revenue-funded interventions. Capital funding has supported infrastructure improvements, cycle hubs, repair stations, cycle parking, and accessibility measures, while revenue funding has enabled staffing, training, volunteer development, engagement activity, and programme delivery.



Key programme changes since 2024/25

The 2025/26 programme reflects several important developments from the first year of People and Place delivery.

The most significant change has been the broadening of programme scope from a predominantly active travel focus towards a wider emphasis on active and sustainable travel. This has enabled greater inclusion of projects relating to sustainable transport awareness, accessibility, and wider behaviour change activity.

The programme has also seen increased involvement from community groups and grassroots organisations delivering locally tailored interventions. This has strengthened the programme's ability to engage communities experiencing barriers to participation and enabled more flexible delivery approaches.

From an evaluation perspective, the 2025/26 programme benefits from improvements to monitoring and reporting processes developed following the 2024/25 evaluation. These improvements included clearer expectations around data collection, suggested monitoring questions provided by SEStran, and increased engagement between SEStran and delivery partners on monitoring and evaluation requirements.

Stakeholder evidence suggests that these developments are contributing to a more mature and integrated programme model, although challenges relating to organisational capacity, data consistency, and yearly government funding cycles remain.

Programme Reach and Delivery

Overview of funded projects

The 2025/26 programme supported projects across all SEStran local authority areas, delivered by local authorities, third sector organisations, educational institutions, and community groups.

Funded activity spanned four core themes:

- Schools and Young People
- Workplaces
- Accessibility and Inclusion
- Capacity and Capability Building

Projects included a combination of infrastructure improvements, behaviour change initiatives, training and skills development, community engagement activity, and sustainable transport awareness interventions.

The programme continued to support a mix of capital and revenue-funded activity, enabling both physical infrastructure improvements and engagement-led delivery approaches.

Table 1 provides an overview of the allocation and project numbers during the 2025/26 programme.

Table 1: Project number and funding per theme

Theme	Number of projects	Approx funding allocated	Percentage of total spend
Accessibility and Inclusion	79	£3.1m	48.5
Schools and young people	48	£2.3m	35.8
Capacity and capability building	17	£0.8m	11.9
Workplaces	5	£0.25m	3.9
Total	149	£6.45m	100%

Geographic and thematic distribution

Projects were delivered across all eight SEStran local authority areas, alongside seven regional projects operating across multiple council boundaries. The largest concentration of projects was

located within the City of Edinburgh (34 projects), followed by East Lothian and Midlothian (17 each), the Scottish Borders (16), Fife and West Lothian (15 each), and Clackmannanshire and Falkirk (14 each).

Accessibility and Inclusion represented the largest area of delivery, accounting for 79 projects and approximately £3.1 million (48%) of programme investment. Schools and Young People projects comprised a further 48 projects and £2.3 million (36%) of funding, highlighting the continued importance of schools as a key delivery setting. Capacity and Capability projects accounted for 17 projects (£0.8 million), while 5 Workplace projects received approximately £0.25 million.

Across the region, the programme supported a diverse mix of infrastructure, behaviour change, inclusion, and capacity-building activity, with a particular emphasis on improving access to active and sustainable travel opportunities for communities experiencing the greatest barriers to participation.

Table 2: Project number and funding by local authority area

Geographic area	Number of projects	Approx funding allocated	Percentage of total spend
City of Edinburgh	34	£2.1m	31.3
East Lothian	17	£0.45m	6.9
Midlothian	17	£0.36m	5.6
Scottish Borders	16	£0.70m	10.9
Fife	15	£1.1m	16.3
West Lothian	15	£0.46	7.2
Clackmannanshire	14	£0.46m	7.1
Falkirk	14	£0.54m	8.4
Regional (cross-boundary projects)	7	£0.40m	6.3
Total	149	£6.45m	100

Evaluation Approach and Methodology

Evaluation framework: Theory of Change

The evaluation is guided by the Theory of Change developed during the 2024/25 evaluation process. The Theory of Change provides a consistent framework for understanding how programme activities contribute to intended outputs, outcomes, and longer-term impacts.

Using the same framework across both evaluation years has supported continuity in the evaluation approach, enabling comparison across years and contributing to a broader understanding of programme progress and development.

The framework provided a basis for understanding how intended pathways of change were being realised across different projects, themes, and participant groups. Improved monitoring processes and wider stakeholder engagement during 2025/26 also provided a stronger basis for understanding how change was occurring across the programme.

Findings throughout this report are structured around key outcomes and themes linked to the evaluation framework.

Methodology overview

The evaluation drew on a range of quantitative and qualitative evidence sources. Quantitative analysis included quarterly monitoring returns, project reporting, programme documentation, and funding data submitted throughout the 2025/26 delivery year.

While the number of interviews represents a relatively small proportion of funded projects, interviewees were selected, where possible, because they had oversight of multiple projects. The 18 interviews therefore provided potential coverage of 80 funded projects, while also reflecting a spread of programme themes, geographies, and organisation types. Collectively, the organisations represented accounted for approximately 54% of total programme expenditure, providing insight into a substantial proportion of programme activity across the SEStran region.

Figure 1: Engagement summary

Additional qualitative evidence was gathered through a Capacity and Capability workshop, shared learning events, project case studies, and stories of change.

Enhancements from 2024/25

The 2025/26 evaluation process benefited from several enhancements developed following learning from the 2024/25 evaluation.

These included improvements to reporting consistency and comparability across projects, alongside expanded engagement with project leads and delivery partners throughout the evaluation process.

Additional qualitative evidence gathering, including stakeholder interviews, stories of change, and persona development, also contributed to a richer understanding of programme impacts and participant experiences.

Data collection methods

Evidence for the evaluation was gathered through a range of quantitative and qualitative methods, including:

- Monitoring and reporting data provided by funded projects
- Interviews and engagement sessions with project leads and stakeholders
- Stories of change developed through stakeholder engagement
- Personas reflecting common participant experiences and behavioural journeys identified across the programme

Using multiple sources of evidence helped strengthen and validate the findings presented throughout the evaluation.

Limitations and considerations

As with the 2024/25 evaluation, several limitations and considerations should be acknowledged when interpreting findings.

While the use of a consistent evaluation framework supports comparison across years, differences in project activity, delivery models, and monitoring approaches can affect direct comparability between programmes.

While data quality and consistency improved during 2025/26, monitoring approaches continue to vary across projects. Variation remains in the quality, completeness, and depth of monitoring information provided by projects.

Survey response rates also remained relatively low across several projects, limiting the ability to draw conclusions from participant survey data alone. As a result, qualitative evidence, stakeholder interviews, case studies, and project reporting played an important role in understanding programme impacts and participant experiences.

Programme Outcomes and Impact

Overview of intended outcomes

The People and Place Programme seeks to support a shift towards active and sustainable travel through interventions designed to reduce barriers, increase confidence, and improve access to opportunities for walking, wheeling, cycling, and sustainable transport.

Consistent with the Theory of Change developed during the 2024/25 evaluation, the programme aims to:

- → Increase uptake of active and sustainable travel modes
- → Improve perceptions of accessibility, safety, and confidence
- → Reduce transport poverty and barriers to participation
- → Build long-term behavioural change
- → Strengthen organisational and community capacity to support active and sustainable travel.

The evaluation framework remains aligned with Transport Scotland's Active Travel Framework indicators for People and Place, supporting continuity between delivery years and comparability with national objectives.

Core indicators for the People and Place Programme within Transport Scotland's Active Travel Framework are, in summary:

1. Proportion of short everyday journeys made by walking, wheeling, and cycling
2. Attitudes and propensity towards active travel
3. Journeys to school by active modes
4. Frequency of walking and cycling for leisure/exercise
5. Perceptions of safety
6. Identification of barriers to active travel

Analysis undertaken as part of this evaluation demonstrates evidence of positive change across a number of these areas, although the scale and consistency of evidence vary between themes and projects. As with the 2024/25 evaluation, evidence was strongest in projects with more mature monitoring processes and higher levels of participant engagement.

Participant reach

Projects funded through the programme engaged a broad range of participants across all eight SEStran local authority areas. The majority of programme investment was directed towards the Accessibility and Inclusion (£3.1 million; 48%) and Schools and Young People (£2.3 million; 36%)

themes, reflecting the programme's focus on addressing barriers to participation and supporting behaviour change among younger people.

Community-based projects were particularly effective in engaging groups who may not traditionally participate in active travel. For example, Bikes for Refugees supported refugees and asylum seekers through bike access and repair schemes, while projects such as Stow Cycle Hub and Sea the Change combined bike access with community-led activities to support participation in rural communities.

School-based initiatives, including local authority programmes and I Bike projects, provided opportunities for young people to develop cycling skills, confidence, and independence. Across the programme, engagement was often strongest where practical support, such as access to cycles, training, and maintenance services, was combined with social and community-based activities.

Headline figures

This section presents a programme-wide view of the activities delivered by funded projects throughout 2025/26. Reported figures have been aggregated to give a programme total against a number of key outcomes.

Schools and young people

48 projects were funded under the Schools and Young People theme. These projects aimed to deliver holistic solutions for creating an environment where active travel choices are not only an option, but the most desirable way to travel for young people and families.

- 286 events were held and 51,127 individual engagements with young people were recorded
- 806 young people's cycle were serviced, fixed and refurbished
- 96 cycle loans were recorded
- 69 cycles given to young people

Workplaces

Five projects were funded under the Workplace theme. These projects focused on workplaces and aimed to make active travel a realistic option for commuting. Across the funded projects:

- 198 cycle loans were recorded,
- 92 led walks and cycles were hosted,
- 23 separate cycle storage improvements were made in workplaces,
- Projects reporting participant engagement data recorded at least 416 participants across the Workplace theme.

Accessibility and inclusion

79 projects were funded under the Accessibility and Inclusion theme. These projects aimed to improve and promote accessibility and inclusion and create opportunities for everyone to be able to make the choice to travel actively.

Across the funded projects:

- 944 cycles were given to participants, including adaptive cycles, and 910 cycle loans were recorded,
- 1,730 cycles were serviced, fixed or refurbished,
- 580 training sessions, led walks/cycles and events were held,
- 6,135 engagements through projects funded under the accessibility and inclusion theme.

Capacity and Capability

17 projects were funded under the Capacity and Capability theme. These projects aimed to build the delivery capacity and capability of the active travel sector including within SEStran, the region's local authorities and third sector delivery partners.

- 3 FTE roles were created
- 18 different training sessions were delivered to staff

Integrated insights

Indicator 1: Proportion of short everyday journeys by walking/wheeling and cycling

Projects across multiple themes reported increases in walking, wheeling, and cycling participation. Evidence from led rides, workplace challenges, and community programmes suggests that participants increased both utility and leisure active travel.

Stakeholder analysis identified increased cycling participation as a particularly common outcome across projects. Community-based projects reported that participants often progressed from occasional or leisure cycling towards more regular everyday journeys.

Access to e-bikes have enabled a greater number of journeys to be made by active modes, as one participant shared:

"Having the e-bike meant that we took a lot of journeys by bike when we otherwise would have driven" – E-Bike Library, FEL Scotland

Cycling UK reported that 76% of participants were cycling for some short, local journeys, up from 42% before taking part in the Connecting Communities project. In 2024/25, post-intervention reporting identified 71% of participants cycling more for everyday journeys, from the same pre-intervention starting point of 42%. The similarity in findings across both delivery years provides further evidence of the project's ability to support sustained increases in everyday cycling.

Improvements in rates of active travel were particularly evident where projects combined practical access to bikes with confidence-building activities, route planning support, and opportunities to develop skills through real-world travel experiences.

Cycling UK's Connecting Communities programme, Transition University of St Andrews, CoMoUK's mobility hubs, the Bike Station's bike libraries, and community cycling projects such as Stow Cycle Hub all reported evidence of participants increasing their use of cycling for local journeys, commuting, accessing services, and travelling within their communities.

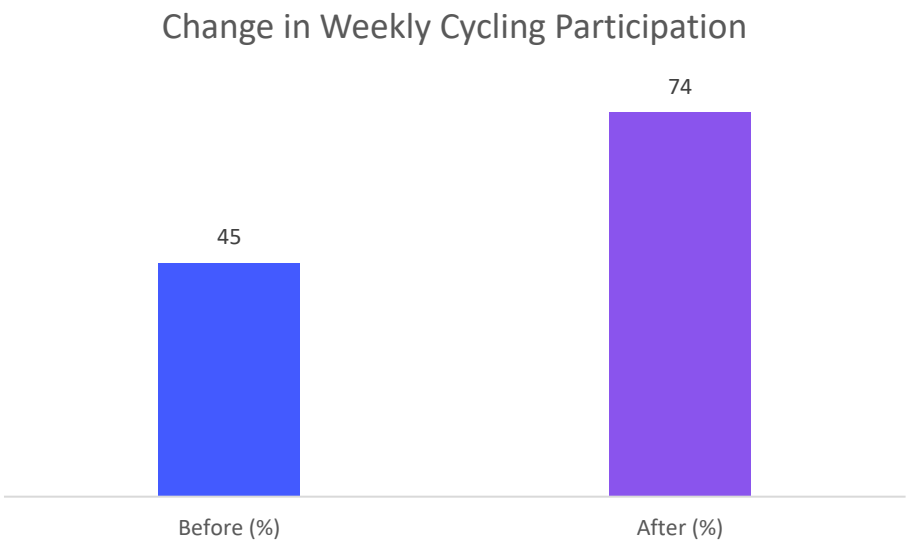


Figure 2: Cycling UK Connecting Communities participant survey data.

Evidence from project reporting suggests that increased use of active travel was often supported through sustained engagement activities that helped participants develop skills and confidence over time.

East Lothian Council ran two projects under the Workplaces theme aiming to increase the active travel share of staff commutes. Their 2025/26 staff travel survey showed a 3% modal share for cycling, increasing from 2% in 2024/25. The same survey showed a 6% modal share for walking, the same as 2024/25, sustaining a significant increase on previous years.

Across the programme, a range of practical activities were delivered to encourage active travel participation. FEL Scotland alone delivered 403 active travel sessions involving 2,833 pupils, including cycle skills training, led rides, maintenance workshops and active travel taster sessions. East Lothian Council's Learn to Ride programme supported more than 130 children to learn to cycle, with over 90 progressing into Bikeability Scotland training.

Similarly, Transition University of St Andrews combined cycle access with maintenance training and travel support to encourage sustainable travel among students, while CoMoUK's mobility hubs delivered led rides, Dr Bike sessions and travel awareness activities to help residents explore alternatives to private car use.

"I've been cycling to work in Edinburgh. I'm doing different routes. When you use an e-bike, it's not hard. Before, cycling was an exercise. I used to have to dress in sports clothes. Now, I'll just go out in my jeans."

Projects were most effective where practical support was combined with opportunities to build confidence and develop skills. The evidence suggests that sustained engagement and hands-on participation play an important role in supporting everyday active travel.

Evaluation: Positive change where data was available, building on the positive change observed in 2024/25. However, data gaps prevent a programme-wide change in proportion being calculated.

Indicator 2: Attitudes towards/propensity to walking, cycling and wheeling

One of the strongest and most consistent findings across projects was increased confidence among participants. Stakeholder evidence indicates that confidence-building is a critical precursor to longer-term participation in active and sustainable travel, though this has not been widely captured in quantitative form.

Cycling UK's Connecting Communities project, SHRUB Cooperative's Wee Spoke Hub, Falkirk Council's cycle maintenance programme, Greener Kirkcaldy's Build a Bike project, and FEL Scotland's schools programmes all reported improvements in confidence, independence, and willingness to travel actively.

45% of young people are cycling more outside school than before participation.

Figure 3: The Bike Station – Wee Bike Library

Project reporting consistently identified confidence-building as a precursor to longer-term behaviour change. Participants reported increased willingness to cycle independently, greater familiarity with local routes, and improved knowledge of cycle maintenance and road safety.

"I'm more confident cycling on the road and exploring the area. I previously wouldn't have cycled on my own and now I can and often do!" – Connecting Communities project, Cycling UK

Several projects demonstrated that practical workshops and supportive peer environments enabled participants to develop skills, independence, and confidence in maintaining and using bicycles. Falkirk Council's maintenance workshops enabled participants to learn practical repair skills and increase confidence in maintaining their own bikes. Greener Kirkcaldy's Build a Bike project supported participants to assemble and maintain cycles, while SHRUB Cooperative's Wee Spoke Hub used peer learning and practical workshops to build confidence among participants who may not otherwise have engaged with cycling activities.

In school-based projects, confidence outcomes were also more clearly linked to increased independence among young people, including greater familiarity with local environments, routes, and independent travel.

"It has been incredible to see the confidence boost and increase in cycling engagement following our first Bikeability cohort."

For several participants, increased mobility also had broader social and economic impacts. Bikes for Refugees' New Scots Bike Inclusion project, for example, demonstrated how access to a cycle can improve access to healthcare, appointments, community activities, and social opportunities.

Projects also demonstrated that active travel interventions can support access to local places and services, helping participants develop familiarity and confidence in local routes.

Compared with 2024/25, this year's evaluation provided stronger evidence of the role these interventions can play in improving confidence in accessing local places and services, particularly through increased familiarity with local routes and independent travel.

This suggests a broader range of wellbeing and developmental outcomes associated with participation than was evidenced during the previous evaluation period.

Confidence emerged as one of the most significant outcomes across the programme and appears to be an important precursor to longer-term behaviour change.

Evaluation: Positive change where data was available with increased confidence particularly evident, as in 2024/25.

Indicator 3: Proportion of journeys to school by active modes

Evidence from school-based projects suggests that young people used active modes more, including journeys to and from school.

FEL Scotland's school programmes, The Bike Station's Wee Bike Library, Bikeability delivery in Falkirk, East Lothian Council's Learn to Ride programme, and local authority school travel initiatives all reported increased cycling participation among young people.

70% of surveyed students walk/wheel more after participating in FEL Scotland's Schools programme, and 38% cycle more after taking part. The impact of this project is particularly significant, engaging more than 3,600 young people in 2025/26.

The Bike Station reported that 45% of young people engaged are doing more cycling outside of school than they used to (pre-intervention) after engaging with the Wee Bike Library project. This is a slight decrease on the 54% increase reported in 2024/25, though this could be attributed to the higher baseline as a result of last year's success in participating schools.

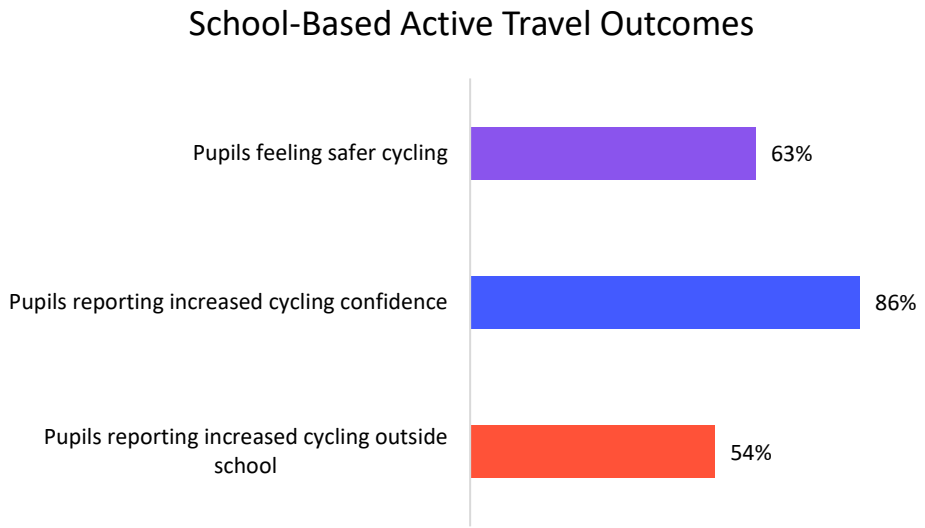


Figure 4: FEL Scotland Schools Programme and The Bike Station Wee Bike Library participant survey data

School-based projects combined access to equipment, skills development, and practical experience to support participation.

Across the programme, a range of practical activities were delivered to encourage active travel participation including cycle skills training, led rides, maintenance workshops and active travel taster sessions. East Lothian Council's Learn to Ride programme supported more than 130 children to learn to cycle, with over 90 progressing into Bikeability Scotland training.

Projects reported that access to bikes remained particularly important in supporting participation among pupils experiencing financial barriers.

"The bike has given me freedom to get around and do things independently."

"Having our own fleet of bikes will make a real difference, it means every child can take part in Bikeability training regardless of family circumstances."

Removing access barriers alongside providing skills development appears particularly important in supporting active travel among children and young people.

Evaluation: Positive change where data was available, building on the positive change observed in 2024/25. However, data gaps prevent a programme-wide change in proportion being calculated.

Indicator 4: Frequency of walking and cycling for pleasure/ exercise

Participants in projects frequently reported improvements in physical activity, mental wellbeing, and social connection.

In Cycling UK's Connecting Communities project, 68% of participants said that they were not meeting the NHS physical activity guidelines beforehand. After participating in the project, 69% of those said that the support they received through the project helped to increase the amount of exercise they do.

Borders Wheels' Indoor Walking survey discovered that 48% of surveyed walkers increased their physical activity with Walk It. 44% of participants reported improved feelings of social connectedness, 37% reported improved mental health and wellbeing, and 25% reported improved physical activity and mobility.

Qualitative evidence from across the programme demonstrated strong wellbeing outcomes associated with participation in projects. Many participants described improved mental wellbeing, reduced isolation, and stronger social connections.

Projects such as North Edinburgh Arts highlighted the importance of social and community aspects within active travel interventions. Several projects also identified wider health outcomes linked to increased activity levels, confidence, and participation.

"Since I got a bike, I started to exercise more often which resulted in me feeling healthier than before." – Cycle Access Fund, Cycling UK

"I feel happier and healthier when I cycle to work" – Connecting Communities, Cycling UK

Thematic analysis suggests that wellbeing outcomes were often strongest where projects created supportive and welcoming environments. In many cases, the social element of projects appeared equally important to participants as the active travel activity itself.

This was particularly evident within projects such as North Edinburgh Arts and FEL where participants frequently highlighted the value of social connection, peer support, and inclusive group activity alongside the practical aspects of participation.

Projects including Borders Wheels' Walk It programme, North Edinburgh Arts, Sea the Change, Stow Cycle Hub, Cycling UK's Connecting Communities project, and CoMoUK mobility hubs all reported wider health and wellbeing outcomes linked to participation.

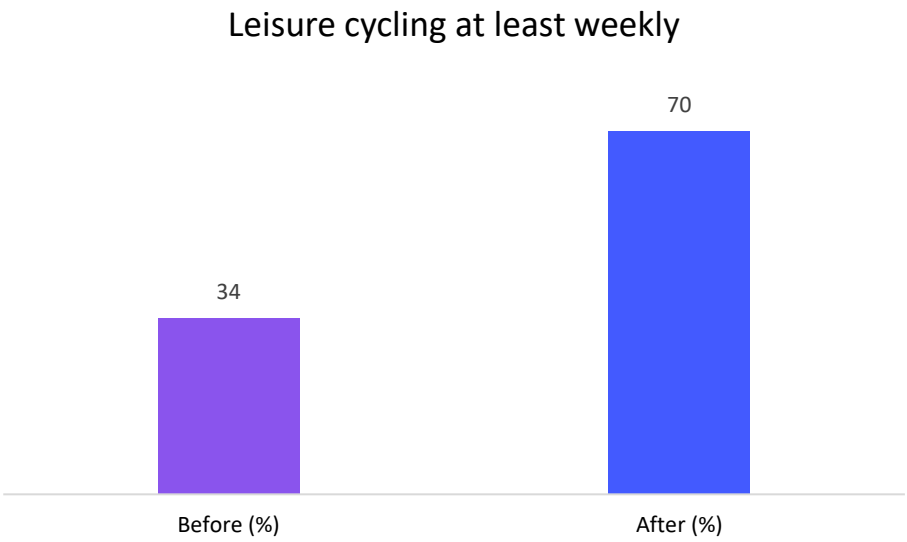


Figure 5: Cycling UK, Connecting Communities participant survey

Many projects highlighted that social connection was often as important to participants as the active travel activity itself.

"Cycling to work takes around 10–15 minutes, whereas before it took longer in the car because of congestion. I feel happier and healthier when I cycle to work. I've also saved money by not taking the car."

The wider wellbeing benefits generated through programme participation appear to support continued engagement and may play an important role in sustaining behaviour change.

Evaluation: Positive change where data was available, with increased recognition of the wellbeing benefits driving an increased frequency of walking and cycling.

Indicator 9: Perceptions of safety when walking, wheeling and cycling

Perceptions of safety were supported through a range of activities designed to build practical skills, confidence, and familiarity with active travel. Across several projects, participants took part in:

- → Cycle skills training
- → Led rides and supported cycling activities
- → Route planning and independent travel skills sessions

- → Bike maintenance training
- → Practical bike handling exercises, including ramps and cone-based activities

FEL Scotland's schools programme, Cycling UK's Connecting Communities project, Falkirk Council's maintenance workshops, Transition University of St Andrews, and Stow Cycle Hub all reported improvements in confidence and perceptions of safety.

81% Felt safer after participation

- FEL Scotland Schools Programme participant survey

Projects also supported perceptions of safety through a combination of practical skills development, confidence-building activities, and access to equipment.

Across the FEL Schools programme alone, delivery included 23 cycle skills sessions, 26 led rides, and 8 bike maintenance workshops. Projects also provided access to helmets, locks, loan bikes, maintenance support, and route planning activities, helping participants develop both the skills and equipment required to travel safely and confidently.

Data from the project in 2024/25 showed that less than 60% of young people felt safe walking and less than 40% felt safe cycling to school, indicating a substantial improvement in 2025/26. Similarly, 66% of participants in Cycling UK's Connecting Communities project reported that taking part in the programme helped them feel safer when cycling.

Projects supporting underrepresented groups continued to highlight the importance of inclusive environments and tailored support in reducing anxiety and enabling participation. However, compared with 2024/25, this year's evaluation provided stronger evidence around how confidence develops over time through gradual progression, peer support, and repeated engagement.

Participants frequently linked increased confidence with greater feelings of safety when travelling independently.

"Every child has the opportunity to develop essential road safety skills and cycling confidence."

Perceived safety remains a significant determinant of active travel participation. Behaviour change interventions appear to play an important role in reducing safety-related barriers.

Evaluation: Positive change, with significant improvements in perceptions of safety observed among young people.

Indicator 15: Proportion of people identifying barriers to walking, cycling and wheeling

While limited data was collected directly on participants' perceived barriers to walking, wheeling and cycling, evidence from project delivery provides valuable insight into the barriers that the programme was helping participants overcome.

In a staff travel survey undertaken by Forth Valley College for their Active and Sustainable Travel project, 43% of staff stated that improved bus/train connections would make it easier for them to choose active travel more.

The demand for cycle loans, the high utilisation of several cycle libraries and the number of cycles given out suggests that the upfront cost of cycling equipment is a major barrier to cycling. Improvements to feelings of safety across the programme, outlined under indicator 9, suggest that safety is a significant barrier for those without the training offered by the programme.

"For many of our pupils, owning a bike or a helmet is a luxury their families cannot afford. This equipment removes that barrier."

Evidence from project delivery suggests that the programme addressed multiple barriers simultaneously. Across the programme, 1,344 cycles were distributed and more than 1,200 cycle loans were recorded, helping participants overcome financial barriers associated with cycle ownership.

While limited data was collected directly on participants' perceived barriers to walking, wheeling and cycling, evidence from project delivery provides valuable insight into the barriers that the programme was helping participants overcome.

Table 3 Cross project quarterly report synthesis

Barrier	Programme Response
Lack of confidence	Cycle training, Bikeability and led rides
Lack of equipment	Bike libraries, cycle loans and recycled cycles
Financial barriers	Free access schemes and donated bikes
Safety concerns	Skills development and route planning
Lack of knowledge	Maintenance workshops and travel advice
Social isolation	Community rides, walks and group activities

Projects including the ones led by Cycling UK, the Bike Station, Sea the Change, SCOREscotland, Greener Kirkcaldy and FEL Scotland combined access to equipment with practical support such as maintenance workshops, cycle training, bike libraries, recycled cycle schemes and travel planning assistance. Several projects also provided access to safety equipment, including helmets and locks, helping remove practical barriers to participation.

Many programme outcomes appear to be driven by projects addressing multiple barriers simultaneously. The combination of access, affordability, confidence-building and ongoing support appears particularly important in enabling participation among groups facing the greatest barriers to active travel.

Evaluation: Insufficient data, as in 2024/25, to show the change in identification of barriers.

Sustainable transport

While much of the evidence focused on walking, wheeling, and cycling, several projects also supported wider sustainable travel behaviour change. Workplace travel planning initiatives, mobility hub projects, and sustainable travel awareness activities encouraged participants to consider a broader range of travel options, including public transport, lift-sharing, and car clubs.

Projects such as BioQuarter Sustainable Travel, Travelknowhow Scotland, and CoMoUK's mobility hub activities highlighted the importance of providing information, practical support, and local travel planning advice to help individuals reduce reliance on private cars and make more sustainable travel choices.

Capacity and capability

A new indicator framework was developed during 2025/26 to assess outcomes associated with the Capacity and Capability Building theme. The framework was informed by the theme's Theory of Change and includes eleven indicators across five intended outcomes.

Outcome 1: Increased local capacity and knowledge to deliver behaviour change

Indicator 1a: Number of trainings, workshops, mentoring opportunities completed by project staff

Several projects reported staff and volunteer participation in training and development activities intended to strengthen local delivery capacity. Through the Mini-Riders project, Scottish Cycling trained 18 prospective coaches to support future cycling activity.

Sea the Change reported three volunteers achieving Velotech Bronze qualifications, increasing local capacity for bicycle maintenance and repair. Other projects reported staff completing specialist active travel training, including Cycle Trainer, Cycle Ride Leader, Health Walk Leader, Play Together on Pedals, cargo bike, and tandem cycle training.

Evidence suggests that the programme supported both skills development and the growth of local delivery capacity.

> "Good to hear best practice around engagement, monitoring and success."

The evidence suggests that capacity-building outcomes are often embedded through practical delivery experience, peer learning and volunteer development rather than through standalone training activities.

Indicator 1b: Increased staff confidence and capability to plan and deliver active travel behaviour change projects

Project reporting identified examples of increased organisational capacity through dedicated staffing and delivery resource. During 2025/26, the City of Edinburgh Council established a 0.5 FTE active travel communications post, while Cycling UK and FEL Scotland reported recruitment of dedicated project staff to support delivery.

While limited evidence was collected specifically on staff confidence, project reporting suggests that organisations strengthened their ability to plan and deliver active travel initiatives through additional staffing, training, and delivery experience.

Several projects reported that capacity-building outcomes extended beyond the immediate delivery period. For example:

- Transition University of St Andrews combined cycle maintenance training, volunteer development and equipment access, helping build skills among students and volunteers that can continue beyond the funded activity.
- Falkirk Council's cycle maintenance activities enabled participants and staff to develop practical maintenance knowledge and confidence, creating opportunities for ongoing delivery and support.
- Community-led projects including Stow Cycle Hub and Sea the Change reported increasing levels of volunteer involvement, with participants progressing into volunteer and leadership roles.

Evaluation: Positive change, with evidence of increased staff skills and organisational capacity to support active travel delivery.

Outcome 2: Place-based approaches to delivering behaviour change

Indicator 2a: Integration of place-specific priorities into behaviour change delivery

Evidence suggests that projects were designed and delivered in response to local needs, opportunities, and barriers. Travelknowhow Scotland supported organisations to develop Staff Travel Plans based on local travel patterns and workplace needs, while Clackmannanshire Council's Schools Active Travel Programme aligned delivery with local priorities relating to school travel and active lifestyles. Stow Cycle Hub also adapted its offer in response to community demand, expanding from an e-bike loan scheme to include led rides, cycle skills sessions, and support for people with additional mobility needs.

Indicator 2b: Strengthened community engagement mechanisms

Community engagement formed a central component of many projects. Sea the Change worked through local volunteers, events, and bike upcycling activities to engage residents, while Greener Kirkcaldy used community walking and cycling activities to support participation among local residents. Project reporting suggests that these approaches helped ensure activities reflected local needs and priorities.

Evaluation: Positive change, with evidence of locally tailored delivery and community-responsive engagement approaches.

Outcome 3: Improved networking and relationships between stakeholders in the SEStran region

Indicator 3a: Number of new or stronger partnerships and collaborations

Cycling UK's Connecting Communities project reported developing relationships with Midlothian Council's Active Travel Team, residents' associations, health organisations, and local cycling groups. Travelknowhow Scotland worked directly with employers to support travel planning activity, while the Edinburgh BioQuarter Sustainable Travel project brought together stakeholders from across the site to support travel behaviour change initiatives.

East Lothian Council also reported that accessibility audits had strengthened engagement with local communities and supported wider discussions across council teams regarding active travel and accessibility improvements. As one stakeholder reflected:

"Historically, we would just patch up the road, not engaging to the level we do now with active travel. It's been quite positive; we've looked outside our traditional boundaries, and it's motivated good discussions inside and outside the council."

Project reporting highlighted the importance of partnership working in extending project reach and supporting delivery.

Partnership approaches were evident across a range of projects. For example:

- Women's Safety in Public Places brought together stakeholders from active travel, equality, community safety and planning backgrounds.
- School-based projects relied on collaboration between local authorities, schools and national delivery partners.
- Cycling UK's Connecting Communities programme supported networking between community organisations, contributing to new relationships and opportunities for future collaboration.

Projects consistently reported that partnership working enabled access to wider audiences, specialist expertise and additional delivery opportunities.

"Felt connected as a region."

Collaboration appears to have strengthened delivery capacity across the programme and enabled organisations to draw on a wider range of skills, expertise and resources.

Indicator 3b: Strengthened collaboration, awareness, and knowledge sharing through the programme

Evidence suggests that participation in the programme increased awareness of active travel activity being delivered across the region. Organisations reported sharing learning, delivery approaches, and experiences through programme events and stakeholder engagement opportunities.

Indicator 3c: Value of engagement events for collaboration and learning

Shared learning events provided opportunities for organisations to exchange experiences and identify future opportunities for collaboration. A networking and showcase event delivered through Cycling UK's Connecting Communities project contributed to a subsequent funding application by Bridgend Farmhouse, demonstrating how engagement activity can support longer-term partnership development.

Evaluation: Positive change, with evidence of strengthened partnerships, collaboration, and knowledge sharing.

Outcome 4: Local and community leadership

Indicator 4a: Increased empowerment and leadership among local actors

Evidence of local leadership was demonstrated through volunteer participation and community-led delivery. Sea the Change reported 19 active volunteers contributing to bike upcycling, events, and community engagement activities. Greener Kirkcaldy also supported local organisations to develop and deliver cycling activities within their own communities, helping to build local ownership and delivery capacity. As one delivery partner explained:

"We don't know the people in all those areas, but we can support those who do. They can have a bigger impact than we would as an individual organisation."

Indicator 4b: Improved decision-making and governance supporting local leadership

Limited evidence was collected specifically on governance and decision-making processes. However, project reporting suggests that local groups and volunteers played an increasingly active role in supporting project delivery and shaping activities within their communities.

Evaluation: Emerging positive change, with evidence of increased volunteer participation and local ownership of activities.

Outcome 5: Self-sustaining programmes beyond People and Place funding

Indicator 5a: Organisational learning and improved systems for long-term resilience

Travelknowhow Scotland supported organisations to develop Staff Travel Plans and embed sustainable travel considerations within organisational processes. The Edinburgh BioQuarter Sustainable Travel project progressed work relating to travel planning and sustainable travel management, while Scottish Cycling's coach training activity increased the number of trained individuals available to support future delivery.

Supplementary evidence suggests that active travel activity is increasingly being linked to wider organisational and community priorities.

Project reporting demonstrated links between active travel and broader objectives including:

- → Education and attainment.
- → Health and wellbeing.
- → Community development.
- → Equality and inclusion.
- → Environmental sustainability.

Examples included school travel planning activity, women's safety initiatives, and projects supporting access to education, employment and community participation through cycling.

"Learning more about other projects and how they overcome challenges."

Many projects demonstrated that active travel can act as a mechanism for achieving wider social, educational and wellbeing outcomes, helping embed activity within broader organisational priorities.

Indicator 5b: Organisational empowerment and resilience in future projects

Evidence of longer-term sustainability was identified in a number of projects. Within workplace travel initiatives, one walking group continued to organise activities independently through a Microsoft Teams network established during project delivery, with participants arranging walks and encouraging involvement without direct project support. Sea the Change invested in volunteer development and technical qualifications, helping to build skills and capacity that can continue beyond the funding period.

These examples suggest that projects are developing skills, partnerships, and delivery approaches that may support future resilience, although the long-term sustainability of activities remains dependent on future funding and organisational capacity.

Project reporting also suggests growing recognition of the importance of evidence collection and outcome measurement across the programme.

Quarterly reports demonstrated increased use of case studies, participant feedback, stories of change and survey data to evidence project outcomes.

Projects including Cycling UK, Borders Wheels, FEL Scotland and North Edinburgh Arts provided a mixture of quantitative and qualitative evidence, enabling a richer understanding of participant experiences and programme impacts.

The increased availability of participant stories, outcome data and project-level evidence compared with previous years provides an indication of improving evaluation practice across the programme.

"Good to hear about how projects are impacting communities."

While approaches continue to vary between projects, the quality and breadth of evidence available during 2025/26 suggests continued progress in monitoring and evaluation practice across the programme.

Evaluation: Emerging positive change, with evidence of increased organisational learning and resilience, although longer-term sustainability remains uncertain.

Understanding behaviour change

Findings from the evaluation highlight the importance of sustained support, practical interventions, and local accessibility in enabling behaviour change.

Projects that combined multiple forms of support, such as access to cycles, training, social activities, and ongoing encouragement, frequently demonstrated stronger evidence of sustained participation compared with more limited or one-off interventions.

Importantly, the evidence suggests that behaviour change outcomes extend beyond transport mode shift alone. Many projects generated wider outcomes linked to wellbeing, confidence, social inclusion, independence, and community resilience.

Understanding Impact: Lived Experience

To support the quantitative and qualitative insights gathered through the evaluation, this section presents a series of personas and stories of change.

Together, they illustrate how active and sustainable travel interventions are experienced in practice and help demonstrate the impact of the programme.

The personas are illustrative profiles developed from recurring themes identified through stakeholder interviews, project reporting, and participant feedback. They do not represent specific individuals, but instead demonstrate common participant journeys, barriers, motivations, and outcomes observed across multiple projects.

In contrast, the stories of change are based on real examples shared by delivery partners during the evaluation. Together, these approaches provide a richer understanding of how the programme has supported behaviour change, confidence, wellbeing, and participation across the SEStran region.

Personas

The following personas demonstrate how programme activities can support different participants to overcome barriers, engage with active and sustainable travel, and achieve positive outcomes.

Bikes for Refugees: Fraser

Project case study

The Bikes for Refugees project supports refugees and asylum seekers in Edinburgh by providing refurbished bicycles, access to shared cycle pools, cycle repair services, and maintenance workshops. The project works with people living in both community accommodation and hotel settings, helping to address transport barriers faced by those with limited financial resources.

Demand for the service remains consistently high due to the scale of need. Through the New Scots Bike Inclusion Project, Bikes for Refugees distributed 357 bicycles, delivered 27 repairs, and supported over 1,000 volunteer hours through bike refurbishment and maintenance activities across the SEStran region.

Who is engaging and why?

Fraser is an asylum seeker who fled their country and now lives in Edinburgh. They experience extreme financial and social hardship, as they have gone through significant trauma, cannot work, cannot access benefits, and are only given about £7 per day by the government to support their essential living costs.

Since a day ticket for Edinburgh buses is about £6, this limits their mobility, increases social isolation, and limits his ability to travel to essential health and legal appointments, and community support and social activities.

What does engagement look like?

Fraser heard about the programme from a friend, who recommended it because his hotel has a shared bike pool from Bikes for Refugees. They requested a bike and joined the waitlist and after a few months received the bike.

What is the impact on them?

Having a bike enables Fraser to cycle independently to essential health appointments, legal meetings, and other activities. They no longer has to worry about the expense or inconsistency of the buses while attending these important meetings.

Fraser also is able to spend more time outside and believes the activity is important for their wellbeing. The bike has given them greater mobility and autonomy, reduces isolation, and supports integration.

SHRUB Coop: Alex

Project case study

Shrub Coop delivers non-profit cycling workshops that help people develop bike maintenance and repair skills. Activities include puncture repair sessions and the Fix My Own Bike! (FMOB) programme, with a particular focus on creating welcoming spaces for groups traditionally underrepresented in cycling, including women and gender minorities.

Through hands-on support from mechanics and volunteers, participants build confidence, gain practical skills, and become more independent in maintaining their cycles. By reducing financial and knowledge barriers, the project supports more regular cycling while helping participants feel more connected to the wider cycling community.

Who is engaging?

Alex is a woman who has cycled a little bit before but has limited knowledge of bike maintenance and repairs. She often stops cycling for significant periods of time due to punctures and other repairs that she cannot fix on her own, and cannot pay to have fixed immediately. This makes her feel less confident in her abilities, excluded from the cycling community, and as a result, cycles less than she would like to.

Why are they engaging?

Alex joined one of Shrub Coop's Fix My Own Bike! (FMOB) sessions for women and gender minorities because she had an issue with her brakes that she did not know how to fix herself. She booked on the FMOB session because she wanted to learn from one of the mechanics how to fix the problem, so that she could become more confident in bike repairs so that she could learn more about how her bike works, save money, and gain independence.

What does engagement look like?

Alex attended the FMOB session and was assisted by staff and volunteers. She brought her bike to the Wee Spoke Hub and the staff helped her identify the issue, and provided the guidance, tools, and support to help her fix her brakes.

What is the impact on them?

Alex is more confident in diagnosing and repairing her own bike. She uses her practical repair skills to fix minor issues on her own bike, allowing her to cycle more consistently.

She was inspired to attend more sessions and events by the other female mechanics, and since regularly attending events feels apart of the cycling community, and has grown her knowledge significantly.

Alex is now more committed to cycling regularly due to her increased independence and confidence in the reliability of her skills.

Fife Council: Sophie

Project case study

Fife Council delivers a range of active and sustainable travel initiatives, including school travel planning, community cycling activities, and infrastructure improvements. One of the programme's most recognisable elements is the Fresh Air Frankie campaign, which uses creative and child-led activities to encourage young people to think differently about how they travel and to promote active travel within their schools and communities.

Through competitions, travel surveys, and engagement activities, the project helps pupils explore active travel options, contribute their ideas, and develop positive travel habits from an early age.

Who is engaging and why?

Sophie is a Primary 6 pupil who is usually driven to school by her parent. She enjoys being creative and decides to get involved when her school takes part in the Fresh Air Frankie campaign and launches a competition to create a song and video promoting active travel.

What does engagement look like?

Sophie works with her classmates to develop ideas for the campaign and helps create a jingle encouraging pupils to walk, wheel, and cycle to school. Through the project, she takes part in discussions about travel choices, completes school travel surveys, and learns more about the benefits of active travel.

The campaign makes Sophie think more about how she travels to school and encourages conversations at home about alternative ways to make the journey.

What is the impact on them?

After taking part in the project, Sophie begins walking to school more regularly with friends and family. As her confidence grows, she becomes more aware of active travel options and starts to view walking as a normal part of her daily routine rather than something she only does occasionally.

The project also helps Sophie feel that her ideas can contribute to positive change within her school. By taking part in a creative, child-led activity, she develops a stronger connection to the active travel messages she helped promote and becomes an advocate for active travel among her peers.

Stories of Change

The following stories of change demonstrate how participation in the programme has contributed to positive outcomes for individuals and communities, including increased confidence, social connection, skills development, and overall behaviour change.

Connecting Communities Through Cycling

Stow Cycle Hub in the Scottish Borders was initially established to increase access to cycling through an e-bike loan scheme. Over time, the project evolved in response to community demand, expanding to include community rides, cycle skills sessions, a satellite hub in Lauder, recycled cycles for young people, and support for people with additional mobility needs.

The project reported that one of its most significant achievements was not simply increasing cycling activity but creating stronger links between communities and helping people build new social connections. Community rides were designed to accommodate a range of abilities and needs, helping participants develop confidence while exploring local routes and meeting others.

The project also observed wider impacts among participants, including increased confidence, volunteering, and social engagement. People who initially accessed the project through the e-bike hire scheme went on to become regular riders, volunteers, and ride leaders. The programme supported children, older adults, women returning to cycling, and people with disabilities, helping ensure that more people could participate in active travel.

As the project lead reflected:

> "At the beginning we just thought we were getting people on their bikes. Linking communities together has been the best additional benefit."

The project also highlighted the social value of participation:

> "Things people talk about the most is joy of cycling. Getting out in the countryside, seeing it through the seasons. Meeting people in cafes in other villages. All kinds of spin offs. Connecting people and getting people on their bikes and stay on bikes."

This example demonstrates how active travel interventions can generate wider social benefits when they are designed around community needs, creating opportunities for both participation and social connection.

Increasing Independence Through E-bike Access

Mike lives in a rural community where public transport options have reduced significantly over the past decade. Following the loss of local bus services, travelling to nearby towns often depended on lifts from friends and neighbours, hitchhiking, or lengthy walks.

After attending an event run by Stow Cycle Hub, Mike began using an e-bike through the project's hire scheme. What started as a short trial developed into regular use, with Mike cycling almost 700 miles over the course of his involvement. The e-bike enabled him to access shops, public transport connections, and social activities more independently, reducing his reliance on others for everyday journeys.

Participation in the project also helped Mike develop practical cycling and maintenance skills. Through connections made at the hub, he learned how to service bikes himself and was able to purchase and maintain a second-hand electric bike as a long-term alternative.

As Mike explained:

> "It has certainly changed my life. I don't have to rely on other people."

This example demonstrates how access to active travel can support independence, reduce transport barriers, and improve quality of life, particularly for people living in rural communities with limited transport options.

Building Confidence and Community Through Inclusive Cycling Support

A participant involved in cycling activities delivered through North Edinburgh Arts had initially joined the project with low confidence and limited experience of cycling in group environments. Concerns around confidence and feeling out of place within traditional cycling spaces had previously prevented them from participating.

Through regular involvement in inclusive led rides and supportive community activities, the participant gradually became more confident cycling independently and engaging with others. The project provided a welcoming and non-judgemental environment, helping them feel more comfortable participating in active travel activities.

Over time, the participant developed stronger social connections, became more physically active, and reported improved confidence and wellbeing. Stakeholder evidence highlighted that the social and community aspects of the project were particularly important in sustaining engagement and encouraging continued participation.

This example demonstrates the importance of inclusive and community-led delivery approaches in supporting confidence, wellbeing, and longer-term participation in active travel.

> "Participants [have reported] gaining confidence, reducing social isolation and becoming more active"

Improving Wellbeing and School Engagement Through Active Travel

West Lothian Council's Play Along the Way project was delivered through Armadale Hub and aimed to encourage children to walk to school through a structured route that combined active travel with play, social interaction, and a healthy breakfast provision. The project created a largely traffic-free route through Bathville Park and Black Moss, providing opportunities for children to be active and engage with others on their journey to school.

The project was particularly successful in engaging children who benefitted from additional support and routine. Around 10–15 children attended regularly, with positive feedback received from both school staff and the Hub. Project partners reported a range of benefits extending beyond increased walking participation, including improvements in wellbeing, behaviour, and school attendance.

Staff reported:

- → Improved mental health and wellbeing among participating children
- → Reduced behavioural issues
- → Less disruption associated with children arriving at school without breakfast
- → A reduction in recorded late attendance

The success of the project led Armadale Hub to seek additional funding to continue and expand the approach to other schools across West Lothian.

This example demonstrates how active travel interventions can support wider educational, health, and wellbeing outcomes when they are designed around the everyday needs of children and families.

Supporting Skills Development and Re-engagement Through Cycling

Bridgend Farmhouse worked with young people referred through local schools, including individuals who were disengaged from education and facing barriers to participation and confidence-building.

Through the project, participants took part in cycling and bike maintenance activities designed to develop practical skills and provide structured engagement opportunities. Activities included learning to ride, bike maintenance training, and skills development sessions linked to accredited learning pathways.

Stakeholder evidence highlighted that participation helped several young people build confidence, develop routine and structure, and engage more positively with learning environments. The opportunity to achieve accreditation linked to Scottish Vocational Qualification (SVQ)-level skills was viewed as particularly valuable for young people who were struggling within traditional educational settings.

This example demonstrates how active travel projects can support wider educational, developmental, and wellbeing outcomes alongside increasing participation in cycling activity.

> "Referrers have responded positively, highlighting that participants are leaving with practical skills and experience that they can demonstrate to future employers and education providers"

What this tells us about behaviour change

Findings from the evaluation reinforce that participation in active and sustainable travel is often enabled through a combination of practical support, confidence-building, social connection, and local accessibility.

The evaluation highlights that interventions were often most effective where projects provided multiple forms of support simultaneously. For example, projects combining access to equipment, skills development, peer support, and ongoing engagement frequently demonstrated stronger evidence of sustained participation and confidence-building.

The findings also suggest that community-led and locally tailored approaches play an important role in supporting behaviour change. Delivery partners consistently reported that projects were

most successful where activities reflected the specific barriers, priorities, and lived experiences of local communities.

While many projects demonstrated early-stage behaviour change outcomes, stakeholders frequently highlighted the importance of sustained engagement and ongoing support in enabling lasting change over time.

What Works, For Whom, and Why

Key success factors

Stakeholder evidence identified several consistent factors that contributed to successful delivery and participant engagement across the programme.

Community-led and locally tailored approaches emerged as a particular strength, particularly within Accessibility and Inclusion projects, which accounted for a significant proportion of direct participant support activity during 2025/26, including the distribution of approximately 340 cycles and 277 loaned or borrowed cycles. Projects delivered through local organisations including Stow Cycle Hub, Sea the Change, and Thistle Outdoors, demonstrated particularly strong engagement with participants experiencing financial, social, or confidence-related barriers to participation.

Projects that combined practical support with ongoing engagement and social elements also demonstrated particularly strong outcomes. Interventions combining access to equipment, training, social activities, and ongoing encouragement frequently demonstrated stronger evidence of sustained participation than one-off activities alone.

School-based delivery models also continued to provide an effective mechanism for engaging young people and supporting early behaviour change. Schools and Young People projects supported significant infrastructure and access improvements during 2025/26, including the installation of 25 cycle and scooter storage facilities and 29 cycle parking or accessibility improvements.

Collaborative delivery approaches also supported wider reach and more joined-up delivery across several projects, with stakeholders highlighting the value of partnership working between local authorities, schools, community organisations, and delivery partners.

Barriers and challenges

Despite positive outcomes across the programme, project leads and delivery partners also identified several ongoing barriers and challenges affecting delivery and participation.

Project leads consistently highlighted short-term government funding cycles as a significant challenge, limiting opportunities for long-term planning, staff retention, relationship-building, and evidencing sustained behaviour change over time.

Capacity constraints also affected several projects, particularly among smaller organisations and community groups. Limited staffing resources and competing delivery pressures affected the ability of some projects to undertake monitoring, engagement, and evaluation activity consistently throughout the year.

Participants across several projects also continued to experience wider barriers to active and sustainable travel, including financial constraints, limited access to equipment, infrastructure limitations, confidence and safety concerns, and accessibility challenges.

Project leads further highlighted the challenge of sustaining participant engagement beyond initial project activity. While many projects demonstrated strong early engagement, maintaining participation over longer periods was often dependent on continued support and ongoing opportunities for involvement.

For example, several community-based projects described adapting activities throughout the year through additional led rides, social events, maintenance sessions, and informal engagement opportunities in order to sustain participation and maintain relationships with participants over time.

Stakeholders also highlighted some ongoing variation in how monitoring information was collected and recorded across projects. There remains an opportunity to strengthen alignment with programme monitoring guidance and recommended question sets in order to support greater consistency and comparability across the evidence gathered.

Variation in monitoring approaches and reporting quality across projects also continued to present challenges from an evaluation perspective, despite improvements made during 2025/26.

Project leads provided detailed participant outcome evidence and qualitative reflections alongside monitoring returns, while others focused primarily on activity outputs such as attendance figures or infrastructure delivery. This variation affected the level of comparability possible across themes and projects.

Differences across themes / groups

Findings from the evaluation suggest that different delivery approaches were effective for different participant groups and programme themes.

School-based projects frequently generated outcomes relating to confidence, independence, and early behaviour change among young people. Schools and Young People projects recorded more than 50,000 individual engagements with young people during 2025/26, alongside 286 events and activities delivered across the region. Stakeholders highlighted that schools provided a consistent environment for engagement and enabled projects to support wider wellbeing and educational outcomes alongside active travel participation.

Community-based projects often demonstrated particularly strong outcomes relating to social connection, inclusion, and confidence-building. These projects were frequently successful in engaging participants who may not otherwise have participated in active travel activity, particularly where delivery was led through trusted local organisations and informal engagement approaches.

Projects delivered under the Accessibility and Inclusion theme generated some of the strongest qualitative evidence across the programme relating to wider social outcomes, including reduced isolation, improved wellbeing, and increased independence. Many of these projects focused on reducing practical and financial barriers to participation through cycle access schemes, inclusive cycling support, and targeted community engagement.

Workplace projects generally focused more strongly on commuting and everyday travel choices. These projects often generated practical outputs linked to workplace cycle storage improvements, led travel activities, and encouraging greater use of active travel for everyday journeys.

The broadened focus on sustainable travel within the 2025/26 programme also enabled projects to engage participants through a wider range of transport-related activities beyond cycling alone, including workplace travel planning, accessibility initiatives, walking activities, and sustainable travel awareness interventions.

Capacity Building and System Change

Capacity and capability workshop overview

In December 2025, Urban Foresight held an online workshop with project leads and delivery partners to support the development and validation of a new indicator framework for the Capacity and Capability Building theme.

The indicators were developed through a review of the theme's Theory of Change, which identified five intended outcomes:

- Increased local capacity and knowledge to deliver behaviour change
- lace-based approaches to delivering behaviour change
- Improved networking and relationships between stakeholders
- Local and community leadership
- Self-sustaining programmes beyond People and Place funding

For each outcome, a set of qualitative and quantitative indicators was developed to capture changes in organisational capacity, partnership working, leadership, learning, and long-term resilience. The final set of indicators is provided in Appendix III.

The workshop provided an opportunity for project leads to review the proposed indicators and assess whether they were relevant, measurable, and applicable across different project types. Through facilitated discussions and breakout sessions, participants provided feedback on indicator wording, data collection approaches, and the practical challenges associated with measuring organisational and system-level change.

Feedback from the workshop informed the refinement of eleven indicators across the five outcomes. Participants highlighted the importance of capturing learning and knowledge sharing, recognising informal networks and partnerships, reflecting differences between local authority and community-based projects, and measuring organisational resilience alongside project delivery.

The final indicator framework therefore reflects both the programme's Theory of Change and the practical experience of organisations delivering behaviour change projects across the SEStran region.

Capacity and capability building in practice

As part of the Capacity and Capability Building theme, SEStran delivered a programme of shared learning events designed to support knowledge exchange, networking, and collaboration between local authorities, delivery partners, community organisations, and other stakeholders involved in active and sustainable travel delivery.

Event	Participants	Purpose

Local Authority Learning Day (April 2025)	17 local authority representatives from all 8 SEStran local authorities, plus the SEStran team	To reflect on 2024/25 delivery, share learning between local authorities, discuss common delivery challenges, and contribute to the development of monitoring and evaluation approaches.
North & West Shared Learning Event (October 2025)	21 participants	To share project experiences, showcase delivery approaches, and support networking and peer learning.
Edinburgh & Lothians Shared Learning Event (October 2025)	19 participants	To facilitate knowledge exchange, highlight project impacts, and encourage collaboration between organisations.
Borders / South of Scotland Online Learning Event (October 2025)	19 attendees	To share learning across RTP boundaries and explore opportunities for future collaboration.
Local Authority Knowledge Sharing Day (February 2026)	Representatives from all 8 SEStran local authorities	To support planning for 2026/27 delivery, explore opportunities to scale successful projects, share learning, and strengthen collaboration between local authorities.

Shared learning and peer exchange

The events provided opportunities for participants to reflect on project delivery, discuss challenges, share examples of good practice, and learn from approaches being tested elsewhere in the region. Participants in the sessions provided feedback on their value against the themes covered in the sessions, shown below.

Theme	What participants valued (based on their feedback)	What this tells us
Knowledge exchange	Hearing about project impacts, engagement approaches, monitoring practices, and local authority initiatives	Events provided practical learning opportunities and exposure to different delivery approaches across the region

Problem solving	Understanding how other organisations addressed delivery challenges relating to procurement, partnerships, and project delivery	Events helped participants learn from shared experiences and identify solutions to common challenges
Networking and collaboration	Opportunities to connect with new and existing contacts and organisations working in similar areas	Events supported relationship-building and strengthened regional connections
Regional awareness	Learning about projects and activity taking place elsewhere in the SEStran region	Events increased awareness of delivery activity and encouraged cross-area learning

Network and collaboration

Networking emerged as one of the most frequently cited benefits of the events. Beyond making new contacts, participants highlighted the value of connecting with organisations and local authorities facing similar delivery challenges.

The Local Authority Learning Day, attended by representatives from all eight SEStran local authorities, provided a dedicated opportunity for peer exchange on topics including procurement, partnership working, engagement, monitoring, and project delivery.

94% of local authority attendees at the Knowledge Sharing Day in quarter 4 thought that there was sufficient opportunities to network, and all attendees rated the event as good or excellent overall. Participants highlighted the benefit of learning from approaches being tested elsewhere in the region and developing relationships with colleagues working on similar issues.

Across the two in-person shared learning events with local authorities, delivery partners and community groups, 95% of respondents reported that the events provided sufficient opportunities for networking, while all respondents rated the events as either good or excellent. Feedback highlighted opportunities to connect with both new and existing contacts and develop relationships across different sectors and geographic areas.

Networking feedback
Connections, opportunity to chat, and networking opportunities
Opportunities to network with new and familiar faces
Felt connected as a region

Event performance summary

Measure	April 2025 LA Event	February 2026 LA Event	North & West Event	Edinburgh & Lothians Event
Rated excellent/Rated good	100%	100%	100%	100%
Themes relevant	93%	100%	N/A	90%
Sufficient networking opportunities	93%	94%	N/A	95%

Lessons for future delivery

While feedback was generally positive, participants identified several opportunities to strengthen future events. Suggestions included providing more structured networking opportunities, increasing the use of themed sessions, sharing information about attendees in advance, and allowing additional time for presentations and discussion.

Participants also highlighted the importance of balancing accessibility, geographic coverage, and opportunities for in-person engagement when planning future events.

Embedded change and progress since 2024/25

There is evidence that the programme has contributed to longer-term organisational and system-level change, with several areas of progress building on findings from the 2024/25 evaluation. Compared with the previous delivery year, stakeholders reported stronger engagement between SEStran and delivery partners, greater understanding of monitoring and evaluation requirements, and increased recognition of the importance of capacity and capability building.

In 2024/25, the Capacity and Capability Building theme was found to have built foundational infrastructure for long-term change, including plans, staff capacity, tools, local ownership, and cross-departmental collaboration. In 2025/26, evidence suggests that some of this activity had become more embedded within delivery approaches.

For example, Clackmannanshire Council continued to integrate active travel within wider education and wellbeing priorities through the development of school travel planning and engagement activity. Similarly, Edinburgh's Women's Safety in Public Places project strengthened links between active travel, equality, community safety, and urban planning, bringing together stakeholders from multiple sectors to inform future decision-making.

The programme also supported longer-term strategic development within local authorities, with Falkirk Council finalising its Behaviour Change Strategy during 2025/26 and West Lothian Council progressing a strategy expected to be completed in 2026/27.

Partnership working also appears to have strengthened since 2024/25. Last year's evaluation identified demand for more structured opportunities to share learning across the region, including regional events, local authority sessions, and greater visibility of funded projects. During 2025/26, SEStran responded through shared learning events that brought together local authorities, delivery

partners, community organisations, and other stakeholders to exchange learning, discuss delivery challenges, and build relationships. Stakeholders highlighted the value of learning from approaches being delivered in other areas and developing new connections across the region.

Evidence of sustained activity beyond initial interventions was also identified. Living Streets reported that active travel activity had become embedded within participating schools, with travel planning and engagement activities integrated into wider school practices. Greener Kirkcaldy also highlighted how participants continued to use routes, skills, and local networks developed through project activities after formal engagement had ended, helping to sustain participation beyond individual events.

However, stakeholders continued to identify challenges that may affect the long-term sustainability of programme impacts, particularly funding uncertainty, staff and resource capacity, and wider policy and infrastructure constraints. Continued investment in organisational capacity, partnership development, and shared learning will remain important in supporting long-term system change and sustaining behaviour change outcomes across the region.

Reflections on Monitoring and Evaluation

Improvements made in 2025/26

Compared with 2024/25, monitoring and reporting processes were generally viewed more positively by delivery partners. Stakeholders highlighted that reporting expectations were clearer, monitoring templates were more structured, and ongoing engagement throughout the year helped improve understanding of monitoring and evaluation requirements.

The evaluation process also benefited from stronger engagement with project leads compared with the previous year. Delivery partners were generally more responsive to requests for monitoring information, stakeholder engagement, and follow-up discussions than during the previous evaluation process, contributing to greater consistency across projects and stronger qualitative evidence.

Additional qualitative engagement, including stakeholder discussions and stories of change, also provided greater insight into participant experiences and wider programme impacts.

Remaining gaps

Despite these improvements, challenges remain in relation to data consistency, reporting capacity, and evidencing longer-term outcomes.

Monitoring approaches continue to vary across projects, particularly where organisations have differing levels of resource and evaluation experience. The short-term nature of funding also limits the ability to capture sustained behavioural change and longer-term impacts.

Stakeholders also highlighted the challenge of consistently evidencing wider social outcomes, such as wellbeing, confidence, and reduced isolation, through standard monitoring approaches alone.

There is therefore an opportunity to continue strengthening monitoring and evaluation processes in future programme years through continued guidance, template development, and engagement support for delivery partners and proportionate approaches to data collection that reflect differing organisational capacity and project scale.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Overall conclusions

The 2025/26 People and Place Programme has continued to support a broad range of active and sustainable travel interventions across the SEStran region, building on the foundations established during the first year of delivery.

Evidence gathered through this evaluation demonstrates that the programme continues to generate positive outcomes across a broad range of participant, community, and organisational outcomes. Reported impacts include:

- Improved access to active and sustainable travel opportunities
- Increased confidence, skills, and independence
- Reduced transport poverty and social isolation
- Enhanced physical and mental wellbeing
- Stronger community connections and participation
- Increased participation in walking, wheeling, cycling, and wider sustainable travel activity
- Improved access to education, employment, services, and social opportunities
- Strengthened organisational capacity, partnership working, and knowledge sharing

The programme has also demonstrated increasing maturity in both delivery and evaluation processes compared with 2024/25. Improved engagement with delivery partners, stronger reporting consistency, and expanded qualitative evidence gathering have contributed to a more robust understanding of programme impacts and participant experiences.

A key strength of the programme continues to be its flexibility and ability to support locally tailored approaches. Community-led delivery models, trusted local partnerships, and inclusive engagement approaches were consistently identified as important factors supporting participation and behaviour change across different communities and participant groups.

The broadened scope of the programme during 2025/26 has also enabled greater consideration of wider sustainable travel outcomes and accessibility issues. This has strengthened the programme's ability to respond to differing local needs and barriers to participation across the region through a broader range of interventions, including accessibility initiatives, workplace travel planning, walking activities, and sustainable travel awareness projects.

At the same time, the evaluation highlights several ongoing challenges. These include variation in organisational capacity, differences in monitoring approaches across projects, and the limitations associated with annual reporting cycles when seeking to evidence longer-term behavioural change and sustained outcomes.

Strategic recommendations

The 2024/25 evaluation developed a series of short, medium, and long-term recommendations to support the continued development of the programme. As the 2025/26 evaluation has taken place only one year later, many of these recommendations remain relevant and continue to reflect the longer-term direction of travel for the programme. An update on progress against these recommendations is therefore included within the appendices.

Based on the findings from the 2025/26 evaluation, several additional areas for consideration have emerged.

Continue strengthening proportionate monitoring and evaluation approaches

While improvements were identified during 2025/26, variation in reporting quality and monitoring capacity continues across projects. Continued support for delivery partners through clearer guidance, simplified templates, and ongoing engagement will remain important in supporting consistency and reducing administrative burden. There is also an opportunity to further align reporting requirements with project scale, organisational capacity, and the type of activity being delivered.

There is also an opportunity to continue developing approaches for evidencing wider social outcomes, including wellbeing, confidence, social connection, and reduced isolation.

Support longer-term delivery and sustainability where possible

Stakeholders highlighted the challenges associated with short-term government funding cycles, particularly in relation to sustaining staffing, partnerships, participant relationships, and longer-term engagement activity. Stakeholder evidence suggested that several projects required ongoing support and repeated engagement over time in order to sustain participation and behaviour change outcomes.

Where feasible, longer-term funding certainty or multi-year approaches could support stronger strategic planning, workforce stability, and the development of more sustained community relationships and behavioural outcomes.

Continue supporting community-led and inclusive delivery models

Community-led and locally tailored approaches emerged as a consistent strength across the programme. Projects delivered through local organisations were often particularly effective in engaging participants experiencing barriers to participation or who may not traditionally engage with active travel activity.

The evaluation also highlights the importance of revenue funding in enabling this type of delivery. Revenue funding provided community organisations with the capacity to employ staff, build local relationships, deliver ongoing engagement activities, and respond flexibly to community needs. In many cases, these activities formed the foundation for the behaviour change outcomes observed across the programme.

There is therefore value in continuing to support flexible, revenue-funded delivery models that enable organisations to respond to local needs, priorities, and lived experiences while building trust and sustained engagement within communities.

Strengthen opportunities for shared learning and collaboration

Stakeholders highlighted the value of opportunities to share experiences, challenges, and good practice across the programme. Continued facilitation of peer learning, networking, and collaboration between delivery partners could help strengthen programme consistency and support organisational development across the region.

Priorities for 2026/27

Looking ahead, there is an opportunity to build on the progress made during the first two years of the programme and continue strengthening both delivery and evaluation approaches.

Key priorities for 2026/27 include:

- → Maintaining support for community-led and inclusive delivery approaches through flexible funding models, continued partnership working, and locally tailored delivery
- → Continuing to strengthen monitoring and reporting consistency across projects through clearer guidance, shared indicators, and proportionate reporting approaches
- → Supporting longer-term behaviour change through ongoing participant engagement, repeat activities, and continued partnership working
- → Continuing to build the programme evidence base to support future learning and strategic development.

The evaluation demonstrates that the People and Place Programme is delivering benefits that extend beyond transport outcomes alone, contributing to wider social, wellbeing, and community outcomes while supporting a longer-term shift towards more accessible and sustainable travel across the SEStran region.

Appendices

Appendix I: Theories of Change (2024/25)

A Theory of Change is a type of logic model that sets out a hypothesis about how interventions lead to intended outcomes. It provides a structured framework for understanding the mechanisms of change by identifying causal relationships between inputs, activities, outputs, outcomes, and impacts.

Grounding this evaluation in a Theory of Change guided the review of the indicators used and informed the prioritisation and organisation of datasets and the underlying assessment framework.

As the People and Place plan for 2024/25 did not originally include a Theory of Change, Urban Foresight co-developed with SEStran five theories of change to aid this evaluation and provide an overarching framework for delivery partners in future years. Theories of Change mapped the causal pathways between the projects' inputs and their outcomes and impacts, resulting in one for the overall programme and one specific to each of the four programme themes.

The Theories of Change were sense-checked with SEStran in a workshop held in March 2025. During the workshop, SEStran staff were invited to reflect on the draft Theories of Change, and Urban Foresight staff facilitated a conversation on each theory of change to understand how it could be adapted to better reflect each theme's activities, outputs, outcomes, and impacts.

The feedback and comments from this workshop were compiled, and the theories of change were adapted to better align with the Programme goals.

People and Place Programme: Theory of Change

Problem: The region experiences low rates of walking, wheeling, and cycling for everyday journeys and an overreliance on private vehicles, contributing to carbon emissions and health inequalities. This is linked to a lack of awareness about the benefits of active travel and insufficient accessibility and inclusion in transportation for underrepresented groups. Centralised, fragmented and short-term funding has resulted in limited capacity and capability within local authorities and communities to implement effective behavioural change projects and address local needs.

Vision: To create equitable, accessible, and sustainable communities where active travel (walking, cycling, wheeling) is a natural choice for all, fostering healthier lifestyles, inclusive environments, and enhanced mobility.

Inputs

- Transport Scotland People and Place Funding
- SEStran staff time
- Delivery Partners' commitment and time
- Local authority officer time
- External contractors, experts, and provider's time
- Strategic prioritisation of projects
- Pre-existing relationships with stakeholders

Activities

- Develop delivery plan for identified projects
- Develop monitoring and evaluation framework
- Collaboration with Local Authorities, communities and Delivery Partner
- Promotion of active travel

Outputs

- Capital and revenue investment
- Tailored packages of support for promoting and enabling active travel
- Engagement with partners
- Delivery and implementation of equipment
- Minor active travel infrastructure
- Increased resource and capacity dedicated to active travel
- Increased capacity and capabilities
- More accessible and inclusive active travel infrastructure

Outcomes

- Increased access to and use of equipment and facilities that enable active travel
- Improved perceptions of the accessibility of active travel
- Active travel is more accessible and feasible for everyone to make everyday journeys
- Increased amount of people walking, wheeling, or cycling for physical activity
- Increased number of short journeys made by active travel
- Increased capacity and capabilities in Delivery Partners and local authorities
- Better relationships with Delivery Partners and local authorities

Impacts

- Modal shift among target groups, supporting changes to travel behaviour in the long term
- Reduction in car kilometres and road transport emissions
- Improved physical wellbeing and reduced health inequalities
- Reduction in transport poverty
- Reduced congestion
- Safer roads and increased perception of road safety
- Transferrable learning and leadership driving societal change beyond active travel

Schools and Young People

Inputs	Activities	Outputs	Outcomes	Impacts
SEStran People and Place Plan funding Pre-existing relationships with schools and community organisations working with young people Willing and participating schools and organisations Time from school staff, SEStran staff, and other organisations to plan projects	Communication with relevant delivery partners and council departments Procurement of equipment Development of process for requesting or distributing benefits Delivery of cycling and active travel-related training Parent & carer engagement Development of school travel plans	Delivery of bikes, related equipment, and cycle/scooter parking infrastructure in schools Development and dissemination of school travel plans Young people develop cycling skills Young people, school staff, and parents learn more about active and sustainable travel	Increased opportunities for active travel, particularly for children in deprived areas Increased number of journeys taken by active modes by young people and parents/carers to school and other commonly made journeys Positive experiences of active travel among young people Increased confidence and perception of safety for young people using active travel Improved perceptions of accessibility of non-car modes of transport Increased use of active travel infrastructure	Modal shift among young people and their families, supporting changes to travel behaviour in the long term Reduction in car kilometres and road transport emissions from travel to school Increased mobility for young people, unlocking access to extra-curricular and social opportunities Safer roads as a result of increases in active travel Increased use of active and sustainable travel among young people and families who face additional barriers

Workplaces

Inputs	Activities	Outputs	Outcomes	Impacts
SEStran People and Place Plan funding Willing participating organisations Existing workplace travel plans Pre-existing relationships with organisations and employers Existing data (regional travel data)	Engagement with employees to generate and maintain interest in participation Assessment of baseline of active travel and provision of infrastructure Development or updating organisation travel plans Procurement of enabling infrastructure Mapping of potential sites for infrastructure or enabling facilities	Staff awareness of new travel plans New or improved enabling facilities and infrastructure for active travel Increased awareness of the benefits of active travel in terms of health, environment, cost and convenience. Promotion and incentivisation of active travel in workplaces	Active travel is more accessible and feasible to make business journeys Increased number of business journeys taken by active modes Increased use of active travel facilities in workplaces Cultural shift within organisations towards active travel and sustainable behaviour Increased confidence and perception of safety of active travel	Modal shift among employees, supporting changes to travel behaviour in the long term Reduction in car kilometres and road transport emissions from business travel Increased employee health, wellbeing, and productivity Reduced congestion Safer roads as a result of increases in active travel

Accessibility and Inclusion

Inputs	Activities	Outputs	Outcomes	Impacts
SEStran People and Place Plan funding Local Authority officers' time Volunteer time Inclusive design expertise	Engage and build relationships with key community organisations Consultation with the community and key demographic groups Market research on delivery solutions Procurement of equipment and infrastructure Development of accessibility audit framework Targeted range of activities to promote inclusive active travel	Targeted delivery of active travel equipment and infrastructure in deprived areas Accessibility audits Active travel promotion campaigns Support packages (including financial) for individuals to access active travel	Increased access to accessible/ adapted cycles and active travel modes Access to more affordable modes of travel Increased proportion of journeys taken by active modes More positive attitudes and greater confidence using active travel modes Increased perception of safety of active travel	Modal shift among target groups, supporting changes to travel behaviour in the long term Improved physical wellbeing and reduced health inequalities Increased mobility and independence Improved quality of life Reduction in car kilometres and road transport emissions Reduction in transport poverty

Capacity and Capability Building

Inputs	Activities	Outputs	Outcomes	Impacts
SEStran People and Place Plan funding Staff looking to take on additional training Staff time and capacity External technical resources	Recruitment of dedicated behaviour change officers into local authority Provision of training on accessibility and behaviour change leadership Identification of gaps in current capabilities through research and consultation Research on best practice Development of active travel strategies	Dedicated resource for driving the shift to active travel Upskilled officers Active travel strategies Increased organisational learning Workshops, events, and knowledge sharing opportunities Seamless regional active travel networks	Increased local capacity and knowledge to deliver behaviour change Place-based approaches to delivering behaviour change Local and community leadership Self-sustaining programmes beyond the People and Place funding Improved networking and relationships between stakeholders in SEStran region	Transferrable learning and leadership driving societal change beyond active travel Modal shift among target groups, supporting changes to travel behaviour in the long term Active travel embedded as a long-term priority in the region

SEStran People and Place Plan

Inputs	Activities	Outputs	Outcomes	Impacts
Transport Scotland People and Place Funding SEStran staff time Delivery Partners' commitment and time Local authority officer time External contractors, experts, and provider's time Strategic prioritisation of projects Pre-existing relationships with stakeholders	Develop delivery plan for identified projects Develop monitoring and evaluation framework Collaboration with Local Authorities, communities and Delivery Partners Promotion of active travel	Capital and revenue investment Tailored packages of support for promoting and enabling active travel Engagement with partners Delivery and implementation of equipment Minor active travel infrastructure Increased resource and capacity dedicated to active travel Increased capacity and capabilities More accessible and inclusive active travel infrastructure	Increased access to and use of equipment and facilities that enable active travel Improved perceptions of the accessibility of active travel Active travel is more accessible and feasible for everyone to make everyday journeys Increased amount of people walking, wheeling, or cycling for physical activity Increased number of short journeys made by active travel Increased capacity and capabilities in Delivery Partners and local authorities Better relationships with Delivery Partners and local authorities	Modal shift among target groups, supporting changes to travel behaviour in the long term Improved physical wellbeing and reduced health inequalities Reduction in car kilometres and road transport emissions Reduction in transport poverty Reduced congestion Safer roads and increased perception of road safety Transferrable learning and leadership driving societal change beyond active travel

Appendix II: 2024/25 Recommendations and progress summary

2024/25 Recommendation Area	Key Recommendation	Progress in 2025/26
Monitoring and reporting	Standardise data collection tools and templates	Monitoring and reporting templates refined and annual reporting processes strengthened
Capacity and capability building	Introduce outcomes and indicators to measure capacity and capability	New Capacity and Capability indicators developed and piloted through stakeholder workshops
Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI)	Require EDI and follow-up data collection	Ongoing
Training and support	Improve data quality through training and support	Workshops, one-to-one support, and shared learning events delivered throughout the year
Change management	Implement a change control and data audit trail	Risk management and change control process was implemented, although opportunities remain for further formalisation
Case studies and qualitative evidence	Develop case studies (testimonials)	Project interviews, case study videos, personas, and stories of change incorporated into evaluation activities
Digital reporting systems	Introduce a centralised digital reporting portal	Digital portal procured and built, being implemented form 2026/27
Wider impact measurement	Expand indicator coverage to capture wider impacts	Increased use of qualitative evidence and broader outcome reporting, though some gaps remain
Peer learning and knowledge exchange	Facilitate peer learning and data sharing	Regional shared learning and networking events delivered during 2025/26
Value for Money	Value for Money comparison	Initial data foundations strengthened, but a dedicated VfM assessment remains a future opportunity

Appendix III: Capacity and capability outcomes and indicators

The following outcomes, indicators and example questions were developed during 2025/26 to support the monitoring and evaluation of Capacity and Capability Building activity within the People and Place programme.

The framework was developed through a review of programme objectives, stakeholder engagement and feedback from project leads. It is intended to capture organisational and system-level outcomes that are not fully reflected within the existing active travel indicators, including skills development, partnership working, local leadership, organisational resilience and long-term capacity for behaviour change delivery.

The example questions presented below illustrate how the indicators could be measured and adapted for future monitoring and evaluation activities.

Outcome 1: Increased local capacity and knowledge to deliver behaviour change

Indicator 1a: Number of trainings, workshops, mentoring opportunities completed by project staff

Example Questions	Answers
How many trainings, workshops, or mentoring sessions on active and sustainable travel behaviour change have you attended or delivered during the People and Place Funding period? If yes, what type of learning/mentoring did you undertake?	None; 1-3; 4-6; 6+ Free text
People and Place has created opportunities for staff to develop new skills and expertise.	Strongly agree- Strongly disagree
Continuous learning and development have been actively supported as part of People and Place	Strongly agree- Strongly disagree
New training and learning opportunities have emerged directly as a result of People and Place.	Strongly agree- Strongly disagree

Indicator 1b: Increased staff confidence and capability to plan and deliver active travel delivery change projects

Example Questions	Answers
Number of full-time and part-time roles that have been created as part of the programme	Numeric
How confident and capable do you feel in your ability to plan and deliver active and sustainable travel behaviour change projects?	Very confident Confident Not very confident Not confident at all

Outcome 2: Place-based approaches to delivering behaviour change

Indicator 2a: (LAs only) Integration of place-specific priorities into behaviour-change delivery

Example Questions	Answers
How well do your behaviour-change activities reflect regional or local needs and priorities?	Not at all / Somewhat / Mostly / Fully
To what extent were your project activities adapted to suit the local area or community?	Not at all / Slightly / Moderately / Significantly

Indicator 2b: Strengthened community engagement mechanisms

Example Questions	Answers

Were new engagement mechanisms (e.g. workshops, local forums, partnerships) been established through the project?	Very confident - Not confident at all
Has community engagement been strengthened during the course of the project?	Improved a lot - Decreased a lot

Outcome 3: Improved networking and relationships between stakeholders in the SEStran region

Indicator 3a: No. of (new or stronger) partnerships or collaborations (formal or informal)

Example Questions	Answers
Has your organisation developed any new partnerships, connections, networks, or collaborations as a result of the People and Place programme?	Yes/no
If yes, how many?	Numeric value
What level of awareness did your organisation have of other projects, events, or organisations involved in the People and Place programme?	Not aware, Somewhat aware, aware, very aware

Indicator 3b: Strengthened collaboration, awareness, and knowledge sharing through the People and Place programme

Example Questions	Answers
How effective do you consider the partnerships or collaborations developed through the People and Place programme in improving your organisation's ability to deliver projects and share learning?	Not effective / Somewhat effective / Effective / Very effective

Has your organisation's capacity to communicate expertise, share tools, or demonstrate leadership in joint initiatives improved as a result of participation in the People and Place programme?	Yes/No/Not Sure
To what extent has these new events, collaborations, or connections inspired new ways of thinking or innovative approaches?	Not at all / To a small extent / To some extent / To a great extent

Indicator 3c: Value of engagement events for collaboration and learning

Example Questions	Answers
To what extent have events supported collaboration, shared understanding, or the development of new opportunities?	Not at all / To a small extent / To a moderate extent / To a great extent

Outcome 4: Local and community leadership

Indicator 4a: Increased empowerment and leadership among local actors

Example Questions	Answers
How empowered do you feel to take a leadership role in future active-travel or community-based projects?	Not empowered / Somewhat empowered / Empowered / Very empowered
Have any local or community champions emerged or strengthened as a result of participation in the People and Place programme?	Yes / No / Not sure
In what ways have local actors influenced or raised the profile of active-travel behaviour-change initiatives?	Free text

Indicator 4b: Improved decision-making and governance supporting local leadership

Example Questions	Answers
Since the start of [Project], have decision-making or governance processes in your organisation improved?	Not at all / Slightly / Moderately / Significantly

Outcome 5: Self-sustaining programmes beyond People and Place funding

Indicator 5a: Organisational learning and improved systems for long-term resilience

Example Questions	Answers
Participation in the People and Place programme has encouraged innovative thinking and the implementation of new practices that will continue beyond the programme.	Strongly agree – Strongly disagree
Are mechanisms in place to maintain project activities, learning, and outcomes beyond the People and Place funding?	Yes / No / Not sure
How do you plan to retain organisational knowledge and best practice from this project?	Open text

Indicator 5b: Organisational empowerment and resilience in future projects

Example Questions	Answers
How empowered and capable do you feel to take a leadership role in future active travel projects?	Not at all / Slightly / Moderately / Very

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REGIONAL BUS ACTION PLAN

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide an update to the Board on progress of implementation of the Regional Bus Strategy

2. BACKGROUND

2.1 The SEStran Regional Bus Strategy (RBS) sets out a vision for a high-quality, affordable, accessible, and integrated bus network across the region, aiming to boost passenger numbers and satisfaction while supporting social, environmental, and economic development. The strategy was developed through extensive consultation with local authorities, operators, and the public, including a major stakeholder survey that received over 5,000 responses, reflecting strong community engagement and interest in shaping the future of regional bus services.

2.2 Three key policy areas were developed out of the RBS: improving the level of service, affordability, and service quality. Key actions include enhancing network connectivity by settlement type, simplifying and integrating ticketing, targeting fare support for those in transport poverty, and advancing bus priority measures to improve reliability and journey times. The strategy also emphasises the importance of a positive network identity, integrated multimodal ticketing, accessible information, and the development of a region-wide Customer Charter. Additional measures focus on upgrading bus stops and interchanges, decarbonising the fleet, and ensuring safety, security, and inclusion for all users.

2.3 The Regional Bus Action Plan (the Action Plan) provides the framework for delivering the outcomes of the RBS through coordinated, practical actions across South East Scotland. It translates strategic ambitions into a programme of work that combines direct delivery by SEStran, partnership activity with local authorities and operators, and wider advocacy with national agencies and stakeholders. The Action Plan recognises that improving the regional bus network requires collaboration across multiple organisations, and is structured to support this through clear governance, shared evidence bases, and coordinated approaches to planning and delivery.

2.4 The Action Plan is organised around the core themes of level of service, affordability and ticketing, and quality. It aligns closely with wider SEStran regional programmes such as Transport to Employment and Transport to Health. It includes a mix of actions focused on building evidence, testing delivery models, improving coordination, supporting policy and funding change. Overall, the plan aims to deliver a more integrated, reliable, and accessible bus network that supports economic growth, social inclusion,

and environmental outcomes, ensuring that bus services contribute effectively to wider regional priorities rather than operating in isolation.

2.5 In order to direct implement of the Action Plan, a Programme Board has been formed and had its inaugural meeting on 18th May 2026. The key outputs were:

- Approval of Board membership and terms of reference
- Discussion of the RBS and, in particular, levels of service and how successful implementation would be measured
- Agreement that each Board member would submit their proposed year 1 priorities by 22nd May, in order that three could be agreed and taken forward by the team in advance of the next Board meeting, which will take place in September 2026

2.6 The following organisations are represented on the Programme Board:

- Bay Travel
- Borders Buses
- Bus Users UK
- City of Edinburgh Council
- Citylink
- Clackmannanshire Council
- Community Transport Association
- Confederation of Passenger Transport
- East Lothian Council
- Ember
- Falkirk Council
- Fife Council
- Flixbus
- Lothian Group
- McGill's Buses
- Midlothian Council
- Moffat and Williamson (to be confirmed)
- Office of the Scottish Roadworks Commissioner
- Scotland's Railway
- Scottish Borders Council
- SEStran
- Stagecoach
- West Lothian Council

3. NEXT STEPS

3.1 Prior to the next meeting of the Bus Programme Board, the team will

- Consider proposed priorities from Board members and identify three priority actions for year 1
- Finalise drafting a Project Initiation Document to support delivery of these priorities
- Devise measurable benefits to define success following on from Board feedback
- Establish working groups for agreed programme actions
- Build on initial stakeholder engagement to ensure projects are widely communicated
- Begin work on priority actions

4. RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 The Partnership Board is asked to note progress against implementation of the Regional Bus Strategy

Rebecca Smith
Projects Officer
12 June 2026

Appendix 1: Regional Bus Action Plan (Draft)

Policy Implications	Following on from the strategy being approved in November 2026, the action plan is being developed in line with the Regional Bus Strategy and the Regional Transport Strategy.
Financial Implications	The Action Plan proposed requires staff resource and investment to realise the outcomes of the RBS. This has been draft in line with 2026/27 budgets to ensure it is achievable.
Equalities Implications	The Regional Bus Strategy was accompanied by an EqIA, Fairer Scotland Duty, Child Rights and Welfare. Any individual projects will be reviewed via appropriate mechanisms to ensure their impacts are understood.
Climate Change Implications	Without improving our public transport offering, we risk increased private car use with an increase in CO2 emissions having corresponding negative impacts on the climate.

GO SEStran
South East of Scotland Transport Partnership

DRAFT

The SEStran Regional Bus Action Plan

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1. Introduction

This Regional Bus Action Plan (RBAP) sets out how SEStran and its partners will deliver the outcomes of the South East Scotland Regional Bus Strategy (SRBS).

[Visual to be added showing the flow of RTS -> RBS -> RBAP]

The RBAP brings together actions that SEStran will lead directly, actions where it will provide partnership support, and actions where its principal role will be advocacy with national government and other stakeholders. In doing so, it reflects the reality that delivery of regional bus improvements depends on coordinated action with the involvement of multiple stakeholders, such as local authorities, transport operators, Transport Scotland, neighbouring Regional Transport Partnerships (RTPs), and wider partners including NHS Boards, Community Planning Partnerships (CPP), Local Employability Partnerships (CPP), equality groups, and the third sector.

The plan is structured around the key themes of the SRBS (level of service, affordability and ticketing, and quality) and is designed to support implementation through clear workflows, proportionate governance, and a focus on evidence-based prioritisation. Some actions are intended to establish new regional evidence bases or shared approaches, while others are about coordination, testing delivery models, or supporting wider policy and funding changes.

The RBAP is part of a wider programme of regional transport delivery. It is intended to align with the Regional Transport Strategy, ongoing SEStran workstreams, such as the Transport to Employment and Transport to Health programmes. This is important to ensure that bus interventions are not considered in isolation, but instead contribute to wider social, economic, environmental, and public service outcomes across South East Scotland.

Timescales for delivery are set out within the following framework:

- **Ongoing actions**: actions that will continue throughout the life of the RBAP, including partnership working, monitoring and review, and continuous improvement.
- **Priority actions in Year 1:** actions to be progressed in Year 1 to establish momentum, put key enablers in place, and begin delivery of the RBAP.
- **Priority actions in Years 2–3**: actions to be taken forward in Years 2 to 3 to build on early progress and support implementation across the core policy areas.
- **Mid-term actions**: actions to be delivered over the 3-to-7-year period, supporting wider coordination, investment, and service improvement.
- **Long-term actions**: actions to be delivered towards the end of the 10-year RBAP period, reflecting more substantial change, longer lead-in times, or dependencies on broader policy, funding, or infrastructure programmes.

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2. Level of Service

SRBS Actions

The SRBS sets out an aim to establish equitable connectivity standards across the region – recognising that different places need different delivery models—so that people can reliably reach jobs, education, healthcare, and other daily needs. The principle is to: define fair minimum standards; measure current connectivity against them; and create a realistic, prioritised programme of improvements, using flexible and demand responsive transport (DRT) where it best delivers value and inclusion.

TIMELINE	ACTION FROM RBS	ACTION TYPE	FIRST STEP	REF.
Priority Year 1	**Carry out a detailed audit of connectivity against a set of core equitable service standards for settlements in the region**, and some settlements in neighbouring Regional Transport Partnerships. Following this, review the feasibility of potential standards and develop a prioritised programme of improvements, considering factors such as Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD). Service standards will take account of flexible and DRT models, recognising that DRT may be the most effective means of delivering core service levels in rural or low-demand areas, in addition to considering rail service provision.	SEStran Led	Undertake connectivity audit study and present to bus operators and LAs.	**SRBS-LS-01**
Priority Years 2–3	**Informed by the audit and review, engage on the potential implementation of core equitable service standards** for intra-SEStran, inter-urban, and cross-boundary connectivity, including important movements outside of the RTP area.	SEStran Providing Partnership Support	Explore barriers with operators and LAs. Consider pilots to be undertaken based on feedback from partners.	**SRBS-LS-02**

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Overall Approach

What will SEStran Lead?

SEStran will commission and manage a regionwide connectivity audit against a core set of equitable service standards (SRBSLS01), within the SEStran and for key cross boundary movements. The audit will model accessibility by time of day, direct services versus the need to interchange. It will explicitly weight results by deprivation (SIMD) so that improvements prioritise communities with the lowest car access.

On completion of the audit, SEStran will engage with partners to translate the findings into a deliverable improvement programme and agree an implementation path (SRBSLS02). This could include codesigned packages that combine timetable changes, guaranteed interchanges, and flexible Demand Responsive Transport (DRT) in rural/low demand areas, with quick win stop/interchange upgrades where they materially cut walk and wait time.

SEStran Partnership Support

Working with local authorities, operators, and other relevant partners (such as NHS Boards, Community Planning Partnerships (CPPs), and Local Employability Partnerships (LEPs)), SEStran will guide the design of example transport services to turn “standards gaps” into costed interventions.

Advocacy

SEStran will advocate for funding mechanisms that recognise rurality and low demand contexts, advocate for change to improve the ability to provide DRT where it best delivers equity, and shared good practice across LAs.

Workflow for Delivery

SRBS LS 01 will be delivered through Phases A to B of the following workflow, completing a region-wide connectivity audit. Building on that evidence base, *SRBS LS 02* will move into delivery. Through Phases C to E, SEStran will work with partners to co-design, implement, and refine solutions to address the outcomes of the audit.

Phase A – Mobilisation

The SRBS set out an example of regional connectivity principles. The mobilisation for this action will be to translate this into a workflow for an audit (Phase B).

Phase B — Regional Connectivity Audit

SEStran will commission a study to undertake a regional connectivity audit and create an accessibility analysis environment (in Podaris software) for future work.

First the study will test the existing bus network to a set of ‘Level of Service’ standards. An equity lens will be set for these standards, considering factors such as:

- → SIMD deprivation levels.
- → Access to a set of locations (settlements and services, such as healthcare) by time bands which align with travel key periods (part-day, working day, and full day).
- → Direct routing and maximum number of interchanges.
- → Multi-operator interchange requirements.

Outputs will be made available to SEStran in a format which enables engagement with project partners (e.g. LAs and bus operators).

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Phase C — Co-design of interventions and preliminary viability

Using the outputs of the audit, SEStran and partners will agree a prioritised shortlist of network issues (initially the top ten) and develop a set of interventions. For example, these could include timetable and periods of operation adjustments for employment shifts; direct or express links to reduce interchanges and detours; guaranteed interchange windows; or DRT feeders in rural and lower demand areas.

Initially, the top 10 options will be coded and mapped in Podaris, and the network re-tested to measure impacts. Indicative operating costs and potential farebox will be estimated.

Workshops with local authorities, bus operators, and relevant partners will confirm the appropriateness of the options and consider implementation of improvements.

Phase D — Pilot implementation and monitoring

Having identified appropriate interventions, agreed with partners, and suitable funding identified, pilots can be launched. Pilots should be monitored against a set of agreed KPIs, such as usage, cost, revenue, target user feedback, achievement of proposed outcomes (e.g. improved access to employment).

Phase E — Evaluate and Improve

The programme will evaluate the impact of the pilots, the appropriateness of the Level of Service standards, and overall approach to improving the Level of Service, working with partners.

Improvements to the approach can be proposed and implemented, with further improvements through this method explored.

Roles and Governance

- → SEStran: commission the audit; maintain standards; convene sprints; programme and report; coordinate cross-boundary alignment; host regional dashboards.
- → Local authorities/operators: supply data; design and deliver changes; commit to timed connections/guaranteed interchanges; upgrade priority stops/hubs.
- → Neighbouring RTPs: engage on cross boundary movements, as required.
- → Transport Scotland: standards alignment, funding pathways, data access (SBOD/DTDS), and cross regional coordination.

Wider partners, for example for health and education focused interventions:

- → CPPs/LEPs: agree on locations; validate shift/education demand; feedback on pilots.
- → NHS Boards: validate clinic/shift patterns; support on-site improvements; share attendance/DNA metrics for evaluation.

Risks and Mitigations

- → Operator resource constraints: phase changes; combine small timetable tweaks with DRT to cover peaks/off peaks; tie to workforce actions on driver availability.
- → Funding gaps: ready a mix of quick wins and scalable packages; evidence SIMD weighted access gains for bids; align with health/employment funds via CPPs.
- → Cross boundary complexity: use SEStran to convene neighbouring RTPs and commit to shared standards on key corridors; pre agree information/ticketing rules for pilots.

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- Community confidence: communicate early, use fixed change windows, and show “what changed because you said so,” as recommended in the SRBS’s ‘stability’ guidance.

How does this align with the Transport to Employment and Transport to Health Workstreams?

SEStran will aim to link the Level of Service workstream to the Transport to Employment and Transport to Health programmes. As the work develops, this could include elements such as:

- Targeted standards for employment access: set minimum first/last trip times, maximum interchanges, and weekend coverage for corridors serving major employment and training sites, prioritising SIMD-weighted gaps and shift-based demand identified by LEPs. This aligns with the Transport to Employment pillars on rural transport to work and further education, and reducing ticket costs.
- Guaranteed access to hospitals and health campuses: define standards for the most constrained hospital corridors, including clinic peaks, staff shift changes, and visiting hours, and coordinate with patient and community transport. This aligns with Transport to Health evidence on long, multi-stage journeys, poor connections, and the need for more direct routes and better connections.

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3. Affordability and Ticketing

SRBS Actions

The SRBS aims to make fares and ticketing fair, simple, and integrated so buses are competitive with the car and do not penalise users who interchange across operators, modes, or areas.

TIMELINE	ACTION FROM RBS	ACTION TYPE	FIRST STEP	REF.
Priority Year 1	**Lobby Transport Scotland to identify barriers to the uptake of National Entitlement Cards** and best value bus fare options, particularly among young people. Explore ways to improve access to these options for those who need them most.	Advocacy	SEStran to set out position statement.	SRBS-AFF-04
Priority Year 1	Engage with Transport Scotland and other stakeholders to **explore improved integrated ticketing between bus and rail**, building on opportunities created by the public ownership of ScotRail Trains Limited (ScotRail).	Advocacy	SEStran to set out position statement.	SRBS-Q-TICK-04
Priority Year 1	**Engage on the 'Smart, Digital, Integrated Ticketing and Payments Delivery Strategy 2024'** with Transport Scotland and the National Smart Ticketing Advisory Board (NSTAB) to ensure that the strategy meets the needs of the region, and to identify opportunities to maximise the benefits of proposed enhancements to smart and integrated ticketing and payment systems.	Advocacy	SEStran to set out position statement.	SRBS-Q-TICK-03
Priority Years 2–3	**Establish a working group with key stakeholders to undertake a regional fares review** – or take part in national efforts – to develop integrated ticketing and pricing solutions for more affordable and equitable journeys – especially for key strategic movements across the SEStran region. This collaborative work will seek to: → Identify problem areas where users face difficulties accessing affordable bus fares, including comparing bus and car travel costs. → Develop multi-operator, multi-modal, and multi-area fare options that offer 'best value' and do not penalise users who interchange. → Advance smart ticketing solutions, such as auto-capping contactless payments and account-based ticketing, in line with Transport Scotland's Smart, Digital, Integrated Ticketing and Payments Delivery Strategy and the Fair Fares Review. → Promote greater regional consistency and equity in fare structures. Consider a partnership approach to limit price increases over a specified period (e.g. once a	SEStran Led	Scope regional fares review study.	SRBS-AFF-03

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TIMELINE	ACTION FROM RBS	ACTION TYPE	FIRST STEP	REF.
	year) and align them with an appropriate control metric (e.g. operating costs or inflation).			
Priority Years 2–3	**Conduct a ticketing review**, engaging with bus operators, local authorities, and other stakeholders to set out actions which will: → Ensure ticketing supports the delivery of the affordability policies set out in this bus strategy. → Ensure that all operators in the region support contactless payment options. This includes the integration of contactless payment systems with fare capping mechanisms across operators and areas, then modes. → Take actions to simplify the ticketing offer in the region. → Develop frameworks for revenue sharing among operators to support the implementation of integrated ticketing systems. → Ensure that digital ticketing solutions, or alternatives, are accessible to all users, including those in rural areas and those who may not have access to smartphones or the internet. → Explore the potential role of the powers set out in the Transport (Scotland) Act 2019 and other partnership arrangements to deliver improved integrated ticketing any payment in the region. → Provide incentives for operators to participate in integrated ticketing schemes.	SEStran Led	Scope ticketing review study.	SRBS-Q-TICK-02
Mid-term Years 3-7	**Support actions to improve integrated journey planning, payment, and ticketing** for different modes and operators as outlined in Transport Scotland's 'Smart, Digital, Integrated Ticketing and Payments Delivery Strategy 2024'.	SEStran Providing Partnership Support	Actions coming from the regional fares and ticketing reviews.	SRBS-Q-TICK-01
Mid-term Years 3-7	**Champion NSG reform** to meet inflationary pressures on bus operations, thus supporting bus services.	Advocacy	SEStran to set out position statement.	SRBS-AFF-02
Mid-term Years 3-7	**Advocate to the Scottish and UK Governments for fiscal policies that rebalance the cost of travel** in favour of sustainable and public transport options, thereby supporting the competitiveness of bus services.	Advocacy	SEStran to set out position statement.	SRBS-AFF-05
On-Hold	**Conduct a feasibility study and readiness assessment for a bus flat fares pilot.** This study will outline the potential scope, benefits, challenges, costs, key stakeholders, and delivery partners for the pilot scheme.	SEStran Led	Request made for pilot participation – unsuccessful.	SRBS-AFF-01

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Overall Approach

What will SEStran Lead?

SEStran will take forward three tightly linked strands that together aim to deliver simpler, fairer, and more integrated ticketing and fares.

SEStran will lead a regional fares review (SRBS-AFF-03) focused on affordability and improved equity.

In parallel, SEStran will lead a regional ticketing review (SRBSQTICK02) that translates affordability policy into practical delivery. The review will set out how the concepts presented in the SRBS can be achieved, e.g. best value options, such as auto capping, and/or simplifying available products set so that users can intuitively access the best deal. Taken together, the ticketing and fares reviews will provide a coherent package that can be taken forward with partners (see section below).

Advocacy and engagement with partners (as discussed below) will be a third aspect to this, ensuring that the reviews above and outcomes are aligned to the opportunities available across the region and nationally.

While SEStran will maintain a readiness position on flat fares, a feasibility study will not be progressed at this time (SRBS-AFF-01), recognising that current pilot funding has been allocated elsewhere. The regional ticketing and fares reviews will retain the option to move forward with a flat-fares pilot should this be supported by those studies.

SEStran Partnership Support

SEStran will convene a working group to undertake the regional fares and ticketing reviews (SRBS-AFF-03, SRBS-Q-TICK-02). This will help to identify affordability gaps, design options, and consider mechanisms to deliver changes.

The outcomes of the regional ticketing and fares reviews will enable SEStran to also support actions to improve integrated journey planning, payment, and ticketing in line with Transport Scotland's Smart, Digital, Integrated Ticketing and Payments Delivery Strategy 2024 (SRBS-Q-TICK-01).

Advocacy

SEStran will champion NSG reform to reflect inflationary pressures (SRBS-AFF-02), lobby to remove barriers to National Entitlement Card and best-value product uptake (especially among young people) (SRBS-AFF-04), and advocate for fiscal measures that rebalance the cost of travel in favour of public transport (SRBS-AFF-05). SEStran will also engage with NSTAB and Transport Scotland on the 2024 Ticketing and Payments Strategy (SRBS-Q-TICK-03) and explore improved bus–rail integration opportunities under ScotRail public ownership (SRBS-Q-TICK-04).

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Workflow for Delivery

SRBS-AFF-03 and SRBS-Q-TICK-02 will be delivered through Phases A to D of the following workflow, producing an evidence-based regional fares and ticketing package. In parallel, SRBS-Q-TICK-01/03/04 and SRBS-AFF-02/04/05 will run as national engagement and advocacy. Building on that evidence base, pilots will move into delivery in Phase E. Through Phase F, SEStran will work with partners to evaluate, scale, and embed successful solutions.

Phase A – Mobilisation (Duration 2 months)

This phase will establish the scope, team, and governance structure to deliver the affordability and ticketing programme:

- Assemble a SEStran-led Affordability & Ticketing partnership with representatives from local authorities, representatives from bus operators, Transport Scotland, including a liaison to the National Smart Ticketing Advisory Board (NSTAB).
- Consider a wider partner team, based on requirements and specialist topics being considered: RTPs where cross-boundary movements are material, ScotRail for intermodal and action SRBS-Q-TICK-04; LEPs/CPPs, NHS (for health access), and equalities/accessibility groups, such as MACS.
- Confirm specialist support, e.g. policy, legal/competition, commercial/revenue apportionment, ticketing/payments/ICT, customer insight, equalities and inclusion, communications.
- Set out a delivery plan and initiate the following three interlinked workstreams, within the remit of the team above with an RACI for each:
    - 1. Regional fares review (SRBS-AFF-03)
    - 2. Regional ticketing review (SRBS-Q-TICK-02)
    - 3. National engagement & advocacy (SRBS-AFF-02/04/05; SRBS-Q-TICK-03/04),

Phase B – Evidence base, co-design, and technical and legal groundwork (Duration 6-8 months)

This phase will build the evidence base for the three workstreams and co-designed options for improvements with stakeholders.

Build the evidence base:

- Define the affordability metrics to be used in the study. This could include, for example:
    - Commute cost as a % of minimum wage by area/corridor/settlement type.
    - What is the travel threshold an individual can access on X% of an average/minimum/sector specific wage by public transport/bus.
    - How does this affect employment opportunities.
    - Comparative bus vs car costs.
    - Impacts for shift work and rural users, etc.
- Compile baseline data on fares and ticketing products, prices, capping/usage rules, and inter-operator penalties/combined products; map factors such as young person concession uptake and gaps.
- Use origin–destination patterns (e.g. TTW, operators' demand data, TomTom and/or NEC data where available), socio-economic data (e.g. SIMD, employment), and corridor priorities to identify "pressure points" where price/complexity most suppresses travel and limits opportunities (e.g. to access employment).
- Initiate appropriate Impact Assessments (e.g. EqIA and CRWIA).

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Undertake technical and legal groundwork:

- → Map current payment and back office stacks (ETMs, cEMV, validators, apps), settlement processes, and data standards; identify gaps to deliver capping and inter-operator settlement.
- → Obtain legal advice on the use of Transport (Scotland) Act 2019 powers for ticketing schemes and on competition law for multi operator fares and revenue sharing.

Undertake stakeholder co-design of the principles to be applied:

- → Conduct targeted engagement with:
  - → Operators (commercial, community transport), Transport Scotland, NSTAB, ScotRail, and LAs on constraints, back office capabilities, and operational realities.
  - → User groups: e.g. low paid/shift workers, young people, rural communities, disabled passengers and Thistle Assistance users, and hospital patients/visitors/workers.
- → Codesign principles for the regional fares and ticketing options, building on the principles set out in the SRBS, such as, simplicity, flexibility, auto best value, nondigital parity, revenue fairness, and interoperability.

Decision Gateway: Board and partner endorsement of the evidence pack and design principles for preferred options.

Phase C – Design Preferred Regional Package (Duration 4–9 months)

Translate the evidence into an implementable regional package(s) through the fares and ticketing reviews:

- → Regional fares review (SRBS-AFF-03) package options could result in:
  - → Defining a core "best value" proposition for strategic movements: e.g. multi operator bus caps (day/week) with fare neutrality across operators; a package for bus+rail products for key corridors.
  - → Developing options for partnership based price change protocols (e.g., annual limit aligned to an agreed index such as operating cost inflation), subject to operator agreement.
  - → Packages related to impact assessments (ridership, revenue, equity, and cause displacement).
- → Ticketing review (SRBS-Q-TICK-02) package options could result in:
  - → Defining capping specifications (rules across operators/areas; daily/weekly caps; treatment of transfers) and back office settlement logic; account based ticketing options, where feasible.
  - → Revenue sharing frameworks: evaluate models (e.g., "apportion by taps/time/distance," hybrid rules for express/local, minimum revenue floors), ensuring transparency and auditability.
  - → Accessibility commitments: maintain cash acceptance pathway, smartcard parity with cEMV, retail top-up network in rural/deprived areas, and accessible information.
  - → Define incentives for operator participation (marketing, co-funded validators, data-sharing reciprocity, phased adoption).

Throughout the above reviews, consider the interfacing with national programmes, engaging with Transport Scotland and NSTAB to:

- → Align designs with Transport Scotland's Smart, Digital, Integrated Ticketing and Payments Delivery Strategy 2024.
- → Seek technical guidance.

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- → Consider funding and potential grant alignment, as well as co-operation with other areas.

Decision Gateway: Board and partner approval of the preferred regional package (fares, ticketing, revenue sharing, accessibility commitments), go/no-go for business case stage.

Phase D – Business Case, Commercial, legal, and technical enablement (Duration 7–12 months)

Put the enabling arrangements in place to deliver.

- → Depending on the scale and scope of the preferred packages, and the funding options, develop a proportionate Business Case. Guidance can be sought from Transport Scotland, should this seek national funding.

Prepare commercial, legal, and technical enablers:

- → Partnership agreements and Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)
  - → Draft and agree non-statutory partnership agreements, e.g. for auto-caps and integrated ticketing products, pricechange protocols, data-sharing (performance and settlement), dispute resolution, and branding/communications.
- → Procurement/readiness
  - → If needed, procure back office services for multi operator capping and settlement (build on existing operator stacks where possible); specify standards to futureproof and reduce integration costs.
  - → Confirm equipment upgrades (cEMV readers, software updates) and a migration plan that minimises disruption.
- → Complete Impact Assessments (e.g. EqIA and CRWIA).

Decision Gateway: Board and partner approval of the Business Case, technical certification, and agreements.

Phase E – Delivery and monitoring

- → Procurement and deployment of preferred scheme – details of which to be informed by the previous phases.
- → Include appropriate communications and customer support, e.g. consistent, accessible messaging across operators, stops, websites, and apps.
- → Undertake monitoring activities.

Phase F – Evaluation and improvement

Evaluate the changes and undertake improvements:

- → This links to the data and monitoring approach set out in the SRBS.
- → Consider publishing outputs to improve transparency.

Undertake Advocacy actions as evidence emerges:

- → NSG reform aligned to operating cost inflation (SRBS-AFF-02).
- → Removing barriers to National Entitlement Card and best value product uptake, especially among young people (SRBSAFF04).
- → Wider fiscal measures to rebalance costs in favour of sustainable transport (SRBS-AFF-05).
- → Maintain visibility on any future funding options, such as further flat fares pilot windows (SRBS-AFF-01**)**.

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Roles and Governance

SEStran:

- Convene and chair the partner working group and manage the programme.
- Lead the regional fares review and ticketing review; explore technical/legal work on competition law, revenue apportionment, and back office interoperability.
- Coordinate alignment with national programmes and the National Smart Ticketing Advisory Board (NSTAB).

Local Authorities and Bus Operators:

- Participate in the reviews and co-design outputs.
- Participate in ticketing schemes and facilitate enabling measures.

Transport Scotland, NSTAB, ScotRail:

- Provide technical guidance on standards, data, and interoperability; advise on legal frameworks and potential funding routes; ensure coherence with the Smart, Digital, Integrated Ticketing and Payments Delivery Strategy 2024.
- Collaborate on bus rail integrated offers and back office enablement; share demand insights for corridors where intermodal products are proposed.

Cross boundary Governance:

- Where products span RTP boundaries, SEStran will convene joint RTP sessions to agree product rules, data standards, and communications, ensuring consistency on shared corridors.

CPPs, LEPs, NHS Boards, Equalities/Access Groups (e.g., MACS):

- Advise on affordability metrics, outreach, and inclusion; validate employment/health access use-cases and support evaluation.

Risks and Mitigations

- Operator participation risk: mitigate with phased onboarding, fair and transparent revenue apportionment discussions, and incentives (co-marketing, shared tech funding).
- Technical interoperability risk: adopt open standards and staged cutovers; align closely with the national strategy and NSTAB guidance.
- Equity risk: maintain non-digital pathways (cash, smartcard, retail top-up), retail network in rural/deprived areas, and targeted outreach.
- Lack of funding: engage on potential funding avenues throughout the workstreams, closely consider the financial case as part of the overall Business Case.
- Legal/competition risk: secure advice early; use permissible ticketing scheme frameworks and clear governance.

How does this align with the Transport to Employment and Transport to Health Workstreams?

- Clear affordability metrics liked to employment opportunities: e.g. proportion of minimum-wage take-home pay spent on commuting; trip-chaining and capping design so workers paying for childcare or multi-stop journeys are not penalised.
- Targeted fare pilots for priority employment corridors and healthcare access (e.g. integrated “to hospital” products, shift alignment, fare discounts in SIMD areas), backed by KPIs on uptake and employment/attendance outcomes.

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- Support for users without digital access: paper and smartcard parity, cash acceptance pathway, and retail top-up locations aligned to deprived areas and rural settlements.
- Codesign and cofunding: develop interventions with Community Planning Partnerships, Local Employability Partnerships, and NHS Boards, using labour market and clinic/shift intelligence. Explore evidence outcomes to make the funding case.

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4. Network Performance and Stability

SRBS Actions

Reliable, punctual, and stable bus services are the foundation for passenger growth. The strategy will push forward bus priority and road space reallocation, while strengthening the fleet, workforce, and operational processes that underpin day-to-day performance.

TIMELINE	ACTION FROM RBS	ACTION TYPE	FIRST STEP	REF.
Ongoing	Continue to engage on and support **initiatives which reduce car use and reduce the impacts of traffic congestion on bus services**.	SEStran Ongoing Work	Communications work programme linked to real world actions.	SRBS-Q-NPS-08
Ongoing	Progress the policies and actions set out in the RTS related to bus priority, road space reallocation, and bus rapid transit. Where barriers have been met in the delivery of these, such as due to the pause in Transport Scotland's Bus Partnership Fund, work with stakeholders to explore alternative avenues for delivery within the means available to funding partners.	SEStran Ongoing Work	Identify BIF opportunities. Engage on 10-year plans to understanding wider scope.	SRBS-Q-NPS-01
Priority Year 1	Engage with local authorities and bus operators to **review and strengthen procedures for making changes to the bus network**, with the goal of enhancing network stability. This should include improved processes for managing service change rates, consultation, communication, and information-sharing with key stakeholders, including utilising provisions under the Transport (Scotland) Act 2019 for sharing information on local service changes. Additionally, opportunities related to the upgrade of legacy Traveline Scotland services as part of Transport Scotland's Digital Travel Data Services (DTDS) project should be explored in partnership with Transport Scotland.	SEStran Providing Partnership Support	Set out LA issues with the existing arrangement and co-draft a regional service change protocol proposition.	SRBS-Q-NPS-05
Priority Years 2–3	**Develop a framework to guide a balanced approach to road space reallocation** between bus and active travel schemes. This should consider an increased role for bus operators in the development of road space reallocation proposals.	SEStran Led	Scope study with potential partners.	SRBS-Q-NPS-02
Priority Years 2–3	**Engage with stakeholders to identify collaborative actions and share knowledge** to: → **Improve vehicle reliability and availability** for the delivery of services, including assistance in developing robust and ambitious fleet renewal and upgrade plans. → **Overcome driver availability issues**, such as joint training, recruitment, and retention efforts across the industry within the region. Some early progress has been made on this through the	SEStran Providing Partnership Support	Operator working group.	SRBS-Q-NPS-03

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TIMELINE	ACTION FROM RBS	ACTION TYPE	FIRST STEP	REF.
	Bus Driver Recruitment Roadshow, facilitated by the Workforce Mobility Project as part of the Edinburgh and South East Scotland City Region Deal.[1] → **Improve incident and issue reporting and response procedures** affecting reliable and punctual bus operations across the region, including enhanced enforcement where problems are affecting the movement of buses for key regional movements.			
Priority Years 2–3	Engage with local authorities, bus operators, and community service providers to **identify how short-term funding affects the stability of supported, community, and third sector services**, and agree on actions to address these barriers.	SEStran Providing Partnership Support	Review transport for health outputs and use this as an example for a partner workshop discussion.	SRBS-Q-NPS-06
Mid-term Years 3-7	**Explore rationalisation and optimal siting of bus stops** to improve network efficiency and legibility, ensuring an appropriate balance between coverage and journey time.	SEStran Providing Partnership Support	Understand the current work that has been undertaken at LA level.	SRBS-Q-NPS-07
Long-term	Work with local authorities and bus operators to **improve the transparency for users of bus reliability and punctuality performance** across the region, along with the actions being undertaken to monitor and mitigate cases where performance falls below acceptable levels.	SEStran Providing Partnership Support	SBODS engagement, operator working group.	SRBS-Q-NPS-04
Long-term	**Explore the application of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and advanced analytics** as outlined in the section *Data and Monitoring*, to support improvements in network performance, stability, and resilience by optimising timetables, predicting and mitigating reliability issues, enhancing incident response, and informing targeted interventions for areas most at risk of service disruptions.	SEStran Providing Partnership Support	Engage with operator working group on use and value.	SRBS-Q-NPS-09

[1] Bus Driver Recruitment Roadshow | SEStran Website, 2024

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Overall Approach

What will SEStran Lead?

SEStran will progress RTS policies on bus priority, road space reallocation, and BRT (SRBS-Q-NPS-01), and where external constraints exist, broker alternative delivery avenues within available means.

SEStran will develop a framework to balance road space between bus and active travel, with a stronger operator role in scheme design (SRBS-Q-NPS-02).

SEStran Partnership Support

SEStran will convene **operator and local authority working groups** (with guest stakeholders as required) to begin collaborative actions to:

- → Improve fleet reliability and accelerate renewal and upgrades (SRBS-Q-NPS-03).
- → Address driver availability via joint recruitment, training, and retention (SRBS-Q-NPS-03).
- → Enhance incident reporting and response protocols and enforcement to protect bus movement for key regional flows (SRBS-Q-NPS-03).
- → Improve transparency through regional reliability/punctuality dashboards (SRBS-Q-NPS-04), working with data custodians (e.g., SBOD).
- → Strengthen service change processes to enhance network stability, using Transport (Scotland) Act 2019 provisions and leveraging DTDS upgrades (SRBS-Q-NPS-05).
- → Assess how short-term funding affects supported and community services and agree mitigations (SRBS-Q-NPS-06).
- → Explore rationalisation and optimal siting of stops to balance coverage with journey time (SRBS-Q-NPS-07).
- → Apply AI and analytics to optimise timetables, predict reliability issues, and inform targeted interventions (SRBS-Q-NPS-09).

Advocacy

SEStran will advocate for sustained, multi-year operational and capital funding that supports bus priority and service stability; for tools that enable enforcement of bus lanes; and for national support to adopt open performance metrics, enabling fair comparisons and accountability.

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Workflow for Delivery

In relation to *SRBS-Q-NPS-01* and other RTS-linked actions, SEStran will continue to align this workstream with the most up-to-date position on bus priority, road space reallocation, and Bus Infrastructure Fund and related delivery opportunities across the region. This should include maintaining an overview of corridor studies, local authority schemes, wider RTS interventions, and any emerging delivery opportunities through relevant funding programmes.

For the **working group actions**, SEStran will lead a coordinated programme that brings together findings from recent studies and channels them into discussions within operator and local authority working groups, inviting guest stakeholders when helpful. Through regular event, these groups will aim to tackle the specific actions outlined in the SRBS.

SEStran will lead a study (SRBS-Q-NPS-02) to **develop a regionally applicable framework for balancing road space between bus priority and active travel**, embedding the sustainable travel hierarchy, measurable user benefit, and a stronger operator role in scheme design. The framework will help standardise how options are generated, assessed, approved. This type of approach draws on the prioritisation principles of place/movement classification, outcome-led scoring, and transparent trade-offs that have been implemented in other areas of the UK and should be adapted to SEStran's context and SRBS and RTS policy objectives.

The study scope should cover SEStran corridors and centres with material bus–active travel conflicts or opportunities, including cross-boundary links. This includes interactions between sustainable transport interventions for the reallocation of general traffic in favour of bus lanes/gates, signals, stops/stands, and active travel schemes such as segregated cycleways, crossings, improved footway width/surface, and safer junctions. This aligns with the SRBS emphasis on reliable, competitive bus journey times, enhanced active travel, and structured reallocation criteria linked to deliverability and enforcement readiness.

The following phases will help guide the development of the framework.

Phase A — Purpose and Principles

Define the purpose of the framework: to guide balanced allocation of road space between bus priority and active travel across SEStran, embedding the sustainable travel hierarchy, measurable user benefit, and a stronger operator role in scheme design. Adopt core principles for place/movement classification, outcome-led scoring, and transparent trade-offs.

Phase B — Scope and Applicability

Work with partners to specify where and how the framework applies, such as corridors and centres with material bus–active travel conflicts or opportunities. Consider the scope of the interventions involving reallocation, e.g. from general traffic to bus lanes/gates, signal priority, stops/stands, and active travel measures such as segregated cycleways. Clarify that the scope of the framework in terms of process, e.g. that it standardises option generation, assessment, decision-making and funding, and monitoring.

Phase C — Evidence Base and Typologies

Define the evidence the framework expects to use, for example: bus punctuality and speed, dwell and stop spacing, cancellations; pedestrian and cycle flows and safety proxies; junction delay; kerbside demands; street typology and place/movement functions; accessibility and equality needs; utilities and enforcement feasibility. Where possible, this should consider consistent data sources, with potential data custodians being consulted, e.g. through SBOD.

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Establish a simple typology that links street function (place vs movement) to default design priorities and minimum protection levels. This should allow local preferences to be captured, e.g. alignment with bus and active travel strategies.

Phase D — Option Generation Method

Standardise how options are generated so each corridor/location considers balanced multimodal packages. Require generation of contrasting but feasible concepts and staged variants (rapid/interim/permanent), ensuring both bus and active travel measures are tested in constrained contexts.

Encourage co-design sessions so operators and active travel stakeholders shape viable, complementary packages rather than competing single-mode schemes. For example, operators can provide input on stop locations, agree service changes aligned to new priority.

Phase E — Appraisal and Trade-offs

Define a consistent appraisal approach that makes trade-offs explicit and repeatable. Use a transparent scoring matrix with weighted criteria, for example:

- Movement outcomes: bus journey time and variability; excess wait/headway adherence; active travel continuity/protection; pedestrian crossing delay and comfort.
- Equity and inclusion: SIMD-weighted access gains; kerb-free routes; Blue Badge/loading; bus stop accessibility.
- Place impacts: town centre vitality, public realm, air quality, noise.
- Deliverability: cost, phasing, utilities, TROs, enforcement readiness, maintenance.
- Include sensitivity tests, for example: peak vs off-peak performance, displacement effects, and resilience under disruption.

Phase F — Framework Products

Deliver a concise, reusable toolkit including such elements as:

- Method and governance guide
- Data specification and typology
- Option generation templates
- Scoring matrix with example weights and thresholds
- Decision rules and minimum standards
- Reporting templates for monitoring and review

Phase G — Monitoring and Iteration

- Specify common KPIs and reporting so schemes can be compared and refined over time.
- Require pre/post evaluation and publication of “what changed and why,” with periodic reviews to update the framework.

Roles and Governance

SEStran would lead the regional co-ordination of the study, working closely with partners such as:

- Local authorities (design/enforcement)
- Bus operators (co-design/ops input)
- Sustrans, local groups (design)
- Transport Scotland (standards, data, alignment with appraisal and funding processes)

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- Equality/access groups (MACS/Thistle Assistance)
- CPPs/LEPs/NHS (priority destinations)
- Police Scotland (enforcement)

Risks and Mitigations

- Consensus on the framework and priorities: encourage buy-in at each stage to ensure groups are aligned, e.g. operators and active travel groups. Consider opt-in pilot corridors.
- Evidence and data quality: validate using sample corridors and engage with relevant data holders.
- Stakeholder capacity: Give operators and other stakeholders structured co-design roles and explore ways to reduce burden in the process.

How does this align with the Transport to Employment and Transport to Health Workstreams?

- Priority and reliability improvements focused on corridors serving hospitals and major employment sites, with enforceable KPIs, e.g. reliability of bus travel to ensure on-time shift starts for healthcare workers.
- Pilots such as early and late serving buses to hospital campuses and industrial estates, with guaranteed connections and DRT feeders where fixed routes cannot viably meet times.
- The potential for pump-primed stability measures for supported services connecting deprived areas to work and health, with a clear taper and a legacy plan.

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5. Network Identity

SRBS Actions

A clearer, regionally coherent identity can reduce confusion where journeys cross operator and boundary lines, making travel feel like one network. This identity should be inclusive of other sustainable modes and built around simplicity, legibility, and trust.

TIMELINE	ACTION FROM RBS	ACTION TYPE	FIRST STEP	REF.
Long-term	Collaborate with key stakeholders to initiate **discussions aimed at establishing a regional network identity** for buses and other sustainable modes of transport. This will address the key questions outlined in the SRBS.	SEStran Providing Partnership Support	Establish a Network Identity Working Group and scope priorities.	SRBS-Q-NI-01
Long-term	**Identify** major travel patterns which cross established operator or area boundaries, and result in **"confusion" for users** because they involve multiple identities, complex ticketing options, etc.	SEStran Providing Partnership Support	Consider learnings from the fares and ticketing reviews.	SRBS-Q-NI-02

Overall Approach

What will SEStran Lead?

SEStran will consider the outcomes of the fares and ticketing reviews (SRBS-AFF-03, SRBS-Q-TICK-02) and consider situations and patterns that create user confusion due to multiple brands and complex products (SRBS-Q-NI-02). Insights will inform proposals for brand, information, and integrated ticketing simplification to be discussed with partners (SRBS-Q-NI-01), as below.

SEStran Partnership Support

SEStran will convene discussions on a regional network identity for buses and other sustainable modes (SRBS-Q-NI-01), exploring scope, opt-in options for operators, co-branding with local identities, accessibility standards, and the relationship with integrated ticketing and fares.

Advocacy

SEStran will advocate for brand implementation where it demonstrably improves legibility and integrated use.

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Workflow for Delivery

As these are long-term actions, a detailed workflow for delivery will be developed at a later date, based on the outcomes of related working group actions and studies, such as the fares and ticketing reviews (SRBS-AFF-03, SRBS-Q-TICK-02). As noted in the SRBS, a clear network identity requires integration of services in a practical sense.

Initial workflow following from the fares and ticketing reviews would be for SEStran to convene a Network Identity focused Working Group to explore whether, how, and where a regional identity would materially improve legibility and confidence for cross-boundary/operator bus travel and other sustainable modes. Using the SRBS's suggested questions as a guide, the group's purpose could be to:

- → Assess user benefits and necessity (e.g., do confusion hotspots justify intervention?)
- → Define what a regional identity could look like in practice (information, wayfinding, ticketing interfaces, at-stop/digital assets, optional co-branded vehicle treatments)
- → Test whether "regional" is the right geography or if corridor/cluster approaches are preferable.
- → Gauge willingness to participate among operators, authorities, and partners, and identify feasible opt-in/co-brand models.
- → Specify the enabling changes required (information and data standards aligned with DTDS/Traveline; alignment with integrated ticketing workstreams; customer accessibility standards)
- → Appraise feasibility, costs, risks, and resourcing pathways.
- → Recommend a proportionate, pilot-led roadmap focused first on high-impact cross-boundary movements (e.g., hospitals, job hubs, colleges) with clear success measures (reduction in ticketing/validity queries; improved awareness and legibility; consistent presentation across channels)

As partnership support, SEStran could facilitate evidence packs from the fares and ticketing reviews, coordinate user co-design with accessibility groups, and prepare an adoptable identity toolkit for pilots, while keeping participation voluntary and benefits-led.

Risks and Mitigations

- → Limited operator/authority buy-in: keep participation voluntary with clear co-brand options; demonstrate quick wins on pilot corridors; couple identity with fares and ticketing simplification benefits.
- → Identity outpacing integrated products and creating confusion: sequence identity deployment with real-world integration measures.
- → Accessibility and inclusivity gaps in design: apply inclusive design principles; co-design with disability and equalities groups.
- → Inconsistent adoption across boundaries and modes: prioritise cross-boundary pilots; offer a toolkit; agree minimum standards.
- → Funding and maintenance of physical assets: start with low-cost, high-visibility materials; use shared procurement frameworks; define maintenance responsibilities in MOUs.
- → Legal/competition concerns around branding and information: keep identity non-discriminatory and optional; seek early legal advice.

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How does this align with the Transport to Employment and Transport to Health Workstreams?

→ Coherent signage and real-time information at hospitals and employment hubs, including accessible formats and multi-operator consistency.

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6. Information, Customer Service, and Feedback

SRBS Actions

People need accurate, accessible, and consistent information before and during travel, and clear ways to give feedback that lead to visible improvements. A region-wide approach can lift standards, simplify experiences, and build trust.

TIMELINE	ACTION FROM RBS	ACTION TYPE	FIRST STEP	REF.
Ongoing	**Promote a unified source of information** to enable users to easily access accurate, comprehensive, and consistent travel details across all stages of their journey.	Advocacy	Review current regional and national information channels and agree the role SEStran can play in promoting a clearer single source of journey information.	SRBS-Q-INF-01
Ongoing	**Ensure that information provision, customer service, and feedback mechanisms are accessible and inclusive**, catering to the diverse needs of all users. This includes promoting equitable access to public transport services and the feedback process, with proactive engagement of hard-to-reach groups to ensure all voices are represented in decision-making.	Advocacy	Engage equality, accessibility, and community representatives to identify priority improvements for inclusive information and feedback channels.	SRBS-Q-INF-02
Ongoing	**Promote data accuracy and expand the provision of real-time information** across all media channels to ensure users have reliable and timely access to travel updates.	SEStran Led	Scope a review of current real-time information accuracy, coverage, and data quality issues with operators and LAs.	SRBS-Q-INF-05
Priority Years 2–3	**Enhance the collection and analysis of feedback data across the regional network** to identify common issues and areas for improvement. This will enable more effective and efficient service delivery and foster a culture of continuous improvement.	SEStran Led	Scope a shared regional feedback/data approach.	SRBS-Q-INF-04
Mid-term Years 3-7	**Prioritise accessibility, convenience, consistency, and regional integration** by learning from successful practices adopted by individual areas, operators, and other proven initiatives. These elements should support both strategic and cross-boundary movements, as well as local travel – particularly where multi-operator journeys are involved.	SEStran Providing Partnership Support	Compile “what works” evidence pack and draft regional principles.	SRBS-Q-INF-03

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TIMELINE	ACTION FROM RBS	ACTION TYPE	FIRST STEP	REF.
Long-term	**Standardise customer service procedures** to provide users with clear expectations regarding response times and recourse options, thereby enhancing user trust, satisfaction, and confidence in the bus network.	SEStran Providing Partnership Support	Consider feasibility through working groups and agree a point at which this should be progressed to align with real-world conditions.	SRBS-Q-INF-06
Long-term	**Work towards a region-wide Customer Charter in the longer-term**, by: → Identifying common standards and commitments across bus operators, covering areas such as passenger rights, conditions of carriage, health and safety, accessibility, and customer service. → Assessing where shared standards are currently lacking and exploring options to address these, considering the diversity of operators and service areas. → Establishing a framework for the Customer Charter, including approaches to accountability, enforcement, funding, resources, and the potential for measurable targets and public reporting.	SEStran Providing Partnership Support	Consider feasibility through working groups and agree a point at which this should be progressed to align with real-world conditions.	SRBS-Q-INF-07

Overall Approach

What will SEStran Lead?

SEStran will enhance feedback data collection and analysis across the region (SRBS-Q-INF-04), undertaking a study to consider appropriate steps for this and the role of SEStran in this, aligned with the SRBS.

SEStran Partnership Support

SEStran will work with partners to prioritise accessibility, convenience, and regional integration by scaling proven practices and aligning approaches where multi-operator journeys are common (SRBS-Q-INF-03). In the longer term, SEStran will consider support for standardising customer service procedures (SRBS-Q-INF-06), and the potential for a region-wide Customer Charter, setting shared standards, accountability, and reporting (SRBS-Q-INF-07).

Advocacy

SEStran will promote unified information for accurate, end-to-end travel detail (SRBS-Q-INF-01) and ensure inclusion in information and feedback mechanisms, proactively engaging hard-to-reach groups (SRBS-Q-INF-02).

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Workflow for Delivery

Phase A - Immediate priorities and studies

SEStran will take forward action SRBS-Q-INF-04 in line with the SEStran Regional Bus Strategy, "Information, Customer Service, and Feedback" policy intent, SRBS-Q-INF-04 will set out a shared regional feedback/data approach. The study will map current channels and datasets, agree common use-cases, and explore minimum data standards. This can inform a protocol for regular reporting and dashboards for use by partners.

In parallel, *SRBS-Q-INF-05* should be taken forward as a focused review of real-time information quality and coverage across the region. This should examine current data quality issues, differences in provision between operators and areas, and the extent to which passengers can access timely updates across apps, websites, roadside displays, and other channels. The review should identify priority actions to improve consistency, accuracy, and coverage, while aligning with wider work on DTDS, open data, and customer information standards.

Phase B - Partnership Working Groups

SRBS-Q-INF-03 will be progressed through a working group. SEStran will compile a "what works" evidence pack from operators and councils and translate it into draft 'regional principles', particularly for cross-boundary, multi-operator journeys. These principles can then be used to guide discussions around long-term actions.

Phase C - Long-term evolution and monitoring

SRBS-Q-INF-06 and SRBS-Q-INF-07 will be monitored while conditions mature. As real-world consistency improves via the mid-term principles and the feedback/data backbone, the working group will consider if and when to move toward standardised customer service procedures and, ultimately, the feasibility and scope of a region-wide Customer Charter, including accountability and reporting.

Ongoing Advocacy and Engagement

SRBS-Q-INF-01 and SRBS-Q-INF-02 continue as standing actions. SEStran will advocate for a unified information source and inclusive, accessible channels—digital and nondigital—aligned to the strategy's commitments on information quality and accessibility.

SEStran's immediate role should be to convene the relevant partners, clarify where regional coordination can add value, and ensure that this work aligns with wider digital, ticketing, and customer information developments. Roles and governance should remain proportionate to the scale of delivery, with SEStran leading evidence gathering and coordination, operators and local authorities informing practical improvements, and Transport Scotland engaged where action depends on national systems, DTDS, or wider policy development.

Risks and Mitigations

- → Data consistency: collaboration with relevant stakeholders, including Transport Scotland and NSTAB.
- → Inclusion risk: undertake Impact Assessment (e.g. EqIA) and targeted user testing on potential changes.
- → Readiness: longer term actions require monitoring before moving forward, to consider whether the operating context is appropriate.

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How does this align with the Transport to Employment and Transport to Health Workstreams?

- → Integrated, accessible information for employment sites, hospital access, and shift-based travel.
- → Co-design with health boards and employers, including staff.

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7. Interchanges and Bus Stops

SRBS Actions

High-quality, consistent stops and interchanges reduce anxiety, improve accessibility, and cut end-to-end travel time. A typology-led design hierarchy enables targeted investment and predictable user experience.

TIMELINE	ACTION FROM RBS	ACTION TYPE	FIRST STEP	REF.
Priority Year 1	Investigate the implementation of an interchange and bus stop typology-based design hierarchy to enable the targeting of appropriate resources, facilities, and design standards to deliver consistency across the region.	SEStran Led	Scope study.	SRBS-Q-HUB-01
Priority Year 1	Undertake a critical review of all existing bus-based Park and Rides and consider whether action is required to enhance their effectiveness.	SEStran Led	Scope study.	SRBS-Q-HUB-03
Priority Year 2-3	Consider the potential for region-wide procurement of bus stops provided, such as those provided by advertising companies, which may offer advantages such as cost efficiencies, improved maintenance, and greater consistency in design and facilities across the region.	SEStran Providing Partnership Support	Build working group.	SRBS-Q-HUB-02

Overall Approach

What will SEStran Lead?

SEStran will investigate a design typology with minimum standards for each category of stop and interchange (SRBS-Q-HUB-01) and critically review Park & Ride sites to determine if interventions are required to raise performance (SRBS-Q-HUB-03).

SEStran Partnership Support

SEStran will work with partners to explore region-wide procurement for stop infrastructure to achieve cost efficiencies, better maintenance, and consistent design (SRBS-Q-HUB-02).

Advocacy

SEStran will advocate for capital support to improve interchanges and bus stops.

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Workflow for Delivery

This work should be linked closely to ongoing *SEStransit work*. For example, building on work on hubs, SEStran will scope the typology study, identify and audit priority sites, and develop minimum standards for each category of stop and interchange. In parallel, SEStran will convene a working group with relevant partners to assess options for region-wide procurement, maintenance models, and delivery responsibilities.

As this work progresses, SEStran should ensure that the focus on higher-footfall interchanges through *SEStransit* is complemented by a proportionate approach for smaller and rural locations, so that quality improvements are not concentrated solely in the busiest places. The overall workflow should therefore support both strategic hubs and a wider network of stops that are essential for local access.

[additional detail can be provided, if SEStransit outputs are available].

Risks and mitigations

- → Improvements may be delivered unevenly across the region, resulting in an inconsistent passenger experience between areas and between different types of stop and interchange. This can be addressed through buy-in to the development and application of a clear regional typology and associated minimum standards, providing a common framework for design, facilities, accessibility, and information provision while still allowing proportionate responses to local context and differing levels of demand.
- → Funding may be secured for initial stop or interchange upgrades without sufficient provision for ongoing maintenance, repair, and renewal, leading to declining asset quality over time. This can be addressed by considering whole-life costs, maintenance responsibilities, and long-term funding arrangements at the point of design, specification, and procurement, including through any region-wide contracting or asset management models.
- → Smaller and more rural locations may be deprioritised if investment is focused primarily on high-footfall sites through *SEStransit*. This can be addressed by ensuring that the typology and wider investment approach include appropriate quality standards and proportionate improvement pathways for lower-demand locations, so that rural communities and smaller settlements also benefit from safe, accessible, and good-quality waiting environments.

How does this align with the Transport to Employment and Transport to Health Workstreams?

- → Prioritise early upgrades at hospital campuses and employment hubs. Work with LAs, CPPs and LEPs to consider these.

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8. Safety, Security, and Inclusion

SRBS Actions

A safe, inclusive network is non-negotiable. This means better training, better reporting, a zero-tolerance culture, and attention to the design of vehicles and infrastructure that welcomes all users.

TIMELINE	ACTION FROM RBS	ACTION TYPE	FIRST STEP	REF.
Ongoing	**Ensure there is proactive consultation** between SEStran and equality and welfare groups, seeking guidance to ensure effective engagement.	SEStran Led	Structured engagement approach with equality and welfare groups.	SRBS-Q-SSI-01
Priority Year 1	**Ensure there is specialised training** across the region for bus drivers to address specific mobility, disability, or information needs, and to develop conflict resolution and de-escalation techniques for safety and security.	SEStran Providing Partnership Support	Engagement with operator working group	SRBS-Q-SSI-02
Priority Year 1	Work with operators and authorities to **promote a zero-tolerance approach** towards harassment, discrimination, and violence against passengers and bus drivers, for example by: → Launching a public awareness campaign to educate passengers about the unacceptability of harassment, discrimination, and violence. → Implementing a confidential reporting system for passengers to report incidents of harassment or discrimination. → Ensuring there is training for bus drivers and staff on recognising and addressing harassment, discrimination, and violence. Explore opportunities for collaboration with Police Scotland to ensure action is taken against perpetrators of harassment, discrimination, violence, and anti-social behaviour.	SEStran Providing Partnership Support + Advocacy	Establish working group	SRBS-Q-SSI-04
Mid-term Years 3-7	Work with operators and authorities to **explore enhanced vehicle standards** across the region, improving safety, security, and inclusion. Additionally, collaborate to establish standards for bus stops, stations, and interchanges—such as the integration of audio-visual systems.	SEStran Providing Partnership Support	Engagement with operator working group	SRBS-Q-SSI-03
Mid-term	**Establish and enhance passenger and driver safety and security reporting systems**,	SEStran Providing	Engagement with operator	SRBS-Q-

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TIMELINE	ACTION FROM RBS	ACTION TYPE	FIRST STEP	REF.
Years 3-7	enabling the easy reporting of safety and security concerns, suspicious activities, or incidents in real-time, and ensuring prompt responses to such reports.	Partnership Support	working group	SSI-05
Mid-term Years 3-7	**Explore the potential for dedicated transport policing services** for buses in the region.	SEStran Providing Partnership Support	Initiate as part of SRBS-Q-SSI-04, recognising a long-term delivery timeline.	SRBS-Q-SSI-06
Long-term	**Consider measures such as a "Safe Places" scheme**, where key interchanges, stops, and buses (amongst other locations) can offer help if someone is anxious, scared or at risk while they are out and about and need support. An example of such a scheme is the Safe Places National Network.	SEStran Providing Partnership Support	Investigate as part of SRBS-Q-SSI-04, considering this as a potential option.	SRBS-Q-SSI-07
Long-term	**Monitor issues to identify the scale of problems and the responses required** and provide clear performance metrics to regularly assess the effectiveness of safety, security, and inclusivity measures.	SEStran Providing Partnership Support	Investigate during SRBS-Q-SSI-04, then monitoring an agreed approach.	SRBS-Q-SSI-08

Overall Approach

What will SEStran Lead?

SEStran will ensure proactive consultation with equality and welfare groups (SRBS-Q-SSI-01) and promote region-wide specialised driver training covering disability awareness, information needs, and de-escalation (SRBS-Q-SSI-02).

SEStran Partnership Support

SEStran will work with operators and authorities to raise vehicle, stop, and interchange standards, including AV systems and consistent accessibility features (SRBS-Q-SSI-03). It will help establish real-time safety and security reporting systems with prompt responses (SRBS-Q-SSI-05), explore dedicated transport policing options (SRBS-Q-SSI-06), and consider "Safe Places" schemes at key hubs (SRBS-Q-SSI-07). SEStran will also work with partners to monitor issues and publish performance metrics to assess the effectiveness of safety, security, and inclusivity measures (SRBS-Q-SSI-08).

Advocacy

SEStran will promote a zero-tolerance stance on harassment and violence, support public awareness campaigns, encourage confidential reporting, and coordinate with Police Scotland to ensure action (SRBS-Q-SSI-04).

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Workflow for Delivery

SRBS-Q-SSI-01, *02*, and *04* will be progressed first through Phases A to C of the following workflow, establishing the foundations for wider delivery. Building on that work, Phases D to F will support development of the longer-term actions on standards, reporting systems, "Safe Places", policing, and monitoring.

Phase A – Mobilisation and taskforce set-up

This phase will establish the governance and partnership structure for the workstream.

- → Establish a multi-agency taskforce involving operators, local authorities, Police Scotland, equality and welfare groups, and other relevant partners.
- → Agree the role of this group in overseeing delivery and informing priorities.
- → Confirm links to related work on vehicles, stops, interchanges, driver training, and passenger information.
- → SRBS-Q-SSI-02: review current driver training provision and begin development of a shared approach to specialised training on disability awareness, information needs, conflict resolution, and de-escalation.
- → SRBS-Q-SSI-01: maintain proactive consultation with equality and welfare groups, establishing a structured approach to engagement that can inform the wider workstream on an ongoing basis.

Phase B – Priority Years 2–3 action development

This phase will build on the Year 1 foundations to progress the Priority Years 2–3 action on zero-tolerance measures.

- → Review current incident reporting arrangements, public communications, safeguarding approaches, and relevant existing campaigns across the region.
- → Gather evidence from operators, Police Scotland, equality and welfare groups, and other partners on the main gaps and priorities.
- → SRBS-Q-SSI-04: develop common principles for a zero-tolerance approach towards harassment, discrimination, violence, and anti-social behaviour affecting passengers and drivers.
- → Explore options for public awareness activity, confidential reporting routes, and alignment with existing partner-led work.
- → Ensure that any proposed campaign or reporting approach is informed by specialist expertise and lived experience.

Phase C – Mid-term development and pilot activity

This phase will support the Mid-term Years 3–7 actions, moving from early partnership development into more structured proposals and pilot activity.

- → SRBS-Q-SSI-03: work with operators and authorities to explore enhanced vehicle, stop, station, and interchange standards that support safety, security, and inclusion, including features such as audio-visual systems.
- → SRBS-Q-SSI-05: develop options for more consistent passenger and driver safety and security reporting systems, with a focus on accessibility, ease of use, and prompt response arrangements.
- → SRBS-Q-SSI-06: explore the feasibility of dedicated transport policing services for buses in the region, informed by the experience of the earlier zero-tolerance and reporting work.

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- Identify where pilot measures may be appropriate to test new reporting arrangements, campaign materials, or infrastructure and vehicle-related improvements.
- Review funding, delivery responsibilities, and governance requirements for wider implementation.

Phase D – Long-term rollout and monitoring

This phase will support the Long-term actions once earlier stages of work have matured and there is sufficient evidence to support wider rollout.

- SRBS-Q-SSI-07: consider the role of "Safe Places" approaches at key interchanges, stops, and buses, informed by the outcomes of earlier pilot activity and partnership work.
- SRBS-Q-SSI-08: develop a more mature monitoring framework to identify the scale of issues, track responses, and assess the effectiveness of safety, security, and inclusion measures over time.
- Review whether there is a case for wider regional rollout of selected interventions and identify the practical conditions required to support this.
- Continue to refine the overall delivery approach in response to evidence, partner feedback, and changing operational conditions.

Risks and Mitigations

- Weak partner buy-in: address through early multi-agency engagement, with clear roles and shared ownership.
- Measures not informed by expertise and lived experience: address through proactive consultation with relevant experts and representative groups.
- New initiatives duplicating or conflicting with existing work: address by mapping current activity early and aligning with partner programmes.
- Inconsistent adoption of training, reporting, and zero-tolerance measures: address through shared expectations and common delivery principles.
- Underused reporting systems: address by making routes simple, accessible, confidential, and supported by visible follow-up.
- Longer-term proposals dependent on coordination, funding, or cross-agency agreement: address through phased development, early feasibility work, and continued partnership working.

How does this align with the Transport to Employment and Transport to Health Workstreams?

- Prioritise hospitals and employment hubs, considering the feeling of safety around early/late shifts.
- Zero-tolerance approach linked to healthcare sector.
- Align driver training with patient and staff needs, e.g. including mobility assistance and wayfinding to healthcare sites.

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9. Fleets, Depots, and Bus Drivers

SRBS Actions

Performance and customer experience depend on high-quality, reliable vehicles, well-equipped depots, resilient energy supplies, and a well-supported workforce. Decarbonisation should be planned to protect service viability and enhance quality, with potential blockers identified well in advance. This allows long-lead solutions, such as grid enhancements, to be developed and delivered in time.

TIMELINE	ACTION FROM RBS	ACTION TYPE	FIRST STEP	REF.
Ongoing	Work with and support the activities of the **Workforce Mobility Project** in enabling and supporting projects including Data lead Public Transport First Approach (Data based decision making for revenue and capital investment); bikes on buses investment; Key regional Employer Sustainable Transport Options to Optimise Shift Patterns (Green Travel and Recruitment Plans); and Regional Transport Strategy Deliver Plan. These projects enable organisations to be better informed and develop travel planning, supported by a public transport system that understands and responds to actual travel demand	SEStran Ongoing Work	Partnership delivery of Workforce Mobility Project between City Deal and SEStran. Align forum agendas and share evidence of best practice; identify joint actions and reporting regularity.	SRBS-Q-FDBD-08
Ongoing	Engage with bus operators within the SEStran region to **address current and future challenges in bus driver recruitment, retention, training, and passenger satisfaction.** Identify opportunities for collaboration and partnership to overcome these challenges across the region. This includes promoting knowledge sharing and other forms of learning between smaller and larger operators, as well as among commercial operators, the third sector, and council operations, where appropriate. Build on the successful programme in 2024 Bus Driver Careers Helix and learnings from regional SCOT-ZED project.	SEStran Providing Partnership Support	Establish an operator workforce forum; agree shared actions on recruitment pipelines, training modules, and retention incentives.	SRBS-Q-FDBD-05
Priority Year 1	**Seek an update** from the Department for Transport to determine the status of their response to the consultation **on the Review of the Public Service Vehicles Accessibility Regulations 2000 (PSVAR),** which was due to be published in 2024. This will ensure that SEStran remains informed and can further contribute to the development of inclusive and accessible public transport policies.	Advocacy	Submit formal request for PSVAR consultation status; schedule follow-up engagement and update regional standards accordingly.	SRBS-Q-FDBD-09
Priority Year 1	**Conduct a comprehensive study to identify the challenges and enablers of decarbonisation** within the region, encompassing all scales of bus operation. This study	SEStran Led	Scope and procure the regional decarbonisation	SRBS-Q-FDBD-02

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TIMELINE	ACTION FROM RBS	ACTION TYPE	FIRST STEP	REF.
	should consider factors such as funding, energy, skills, and broader resource requirements necessary for upgrading fleets, depots, and supporting infrastructure. → Include high-level forecasting of potential energy and depot needs for the phased decarbonisation of the bus network. Highlight grid capacity and other energy source issues to be resolved. Engage with Distribution Network Operators (DNOs) and other energy sector stakeholders to consider the potential to accommodate future decarbonisation needs. This may involve exploring cost-effective sources of electricity and hydrogen and harnessing renewable energy and storage solutions to manage supply, demand, and ensure energy resilience. This should include engagement with operators and authorities that have begun decarbonising their fleets and depots, as well as those involved in broader energy innovations. One such innovations is the Levenmouth Energy Park's renewable hydrogen production and use in Fife Council's hydrogen-diesel hybrid refuse collection fleet, local offices, and housing.		challenges/enablers study; define data needs and secure DNO/operator participation.	
Priority Year 1	Work with operators and authorities to **review and improve welfare facilities for drivers**, including those needed while drivers are on duty and away from the depot. This includes assessing current facilities at depots and on-route locations, identifying priority areas for enhancement, and promoting improvements to support staff well-being, health, and retention.	SEStran Providing Partnership Support	Work with operators to audit existing welfare facilities; prioritise gaps by route and depot; agree a delivery plan and funding options with partners.	SRBS-Q-FDBD-06
Priority Year 2-3	**Identify appropriate support mechanisms for vehicle sharing** to improve fleet utilisation and service viability across sectors such as health and social care, education, and community transport. Initially, engage with local authorities and other stakeholders regarding their studies in this field.	SEStran Providing Partnership Support	Map existing vehicle-sharing studies and assets; run a cross-sector workshop to identify quick-win sharing arrangements and governance.	SRBS-Q-FDBD-04
Mid-term Years 3-7	**Develop a regional decarbonisation plan** for bus fleets, depots and related infrastructure, based on the outcomes of this study.	SEStran Led	Translate study outputs (SRBS-Q-FDBD-02) into a draft regional plan; convene partners to agree phasing, funding asks,	SRBS-Q-FDBD-03

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TIMELINE	ACTION FROM RBS	ACTION TYPE	FIRST STEP	REF.
	→ Consider mechanisms for knowledge sharing and support between different bus operators, as well as authorities, to facilitate the exchange of communal experiences in decarbonisation. → Consider opportunities for shared and/or public ownership of depots and supporting infrastructure. Note that a Scotland-wide shared charging network is proposed through ScotZEB2; engagement on the scope of this should be undertaken. → Consider actions to minimise the impacts of energy cost changes on bus operations, allowing for better forward planning and confidence in fleet decarbonisation proposals. → Engage with the national government on potential future funding sources for decarbonisation post-ScotZEB2. Emphasise the importance of an application process that ensures funding reaches the areas and organisations most in need.		and ownership models.	
Mid-term Years 3-7	Engage with key stakeholders in the region to **establish standards that enhance the consistency of vehicle quality** across all scales of bus operation, including fixed-route services and other delivery models such as DRT, community transport, and the wider third sector. → This should consider a typology approach for route types, addressing aspects such as appropriate vehicle size, capacity, onboard facilities, information technology ticketing systems (and their interoperability), and enhanced accessibility standards. → For information, ticketing, and payment systems, engage with Transport Scotland regarding their 'Smart, Digital, Integrated Ticketing and Payments Delivery Strategy 2024'. → This should also include ensuring alignment of vehicle accessibility standards with on-street infrastructure standards to improve accessibility across the regional network.	SEStran Providing Partnership Support	Form a regional standards working group; draft a vehicle/route-type typology and test against priority corridors and DRT/community use cases.	SRBS-Q-FDBD-01
Mid-term Years 3-7	Investigate opportunities to **establish a set of regional values for quality related to bus drivers**, aimed at improving passenger satisfaction and addressing other barriers to bus use. This should include consideration of the means to achieve these values, such as through driver training, technologies, and other forms of assistance.	SEStran Providing Partnership Support	Co-design a draft set of regional driver quality values; pilot enhanced training/tech support on selected corridors.	SRBS-Q-FDBD-07

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Overall Approach

What will SEStran Lead?

SEStran will deliver a comprehensive decarbonisation challenges/enablers study (SRBS-Q-FDBD-02), including energy and depot needs forecasting, grid capacity constraints, and DNO engagement. It will draw on live innovations—such as Levenmouth's hydrogen projects—and produce a regional decarbonisation plan (SRBS-Q-FDBD-03), with knowledge sharing across operators and authorities, options for shared/public depot ownership, and actions to mitigate energy price volatility. It will seek clarity on future funding streams in Scotland.

SEStran Partnership Support

SEStran will work with stakeholders to set consistent vehicle quality standards across route types and models (fixed route, DRT, community) (SRBS-Q-FDBD-01), aligning on-board accessibility and IT/ticketing capabilities with on-street infrastructure. It will identify support mechanisms for vehicle sharing across sectors (health, education, community) (SRBS-Q-FDBD-04) and tackle driver recruitment, retention, training, and welfare facilities (SRBS-Q-FDBD-05/06). It will explore regional values for driver quality and passenger experience (SRBS-Q-FDBD-07) and support the Workforce Mobility Group (SRBS-Q-FDBD-08).

Advocacy

SEStran will seek updates on the PSVAR review status from the Department for Transport to ensure alignment with forthcoming accessibility requirements (SRBS-Q-FDBD-09).

Workflow for Delivery

Phase A - Evidence and Alignment

Delivery begins with establishing a clear and shared understanding of the current position across fleets, depots and the workforce (SRBS-Q-FDBD-02). This involves consolidating existing data on vehicle quality, infrastructure readiness and workforce challenges (SRBS-Q-FDBD-05), alongside aligning with ongoing initiatives such as the Workforce Mobility Project (SRBS-Q-FDBD-08). Engagement with operators, local authorities and partners is used to validate issues, identify common barriers such as energy constraints and recruitment pressures, and agree a coordinated approach through structured forums and governance arrangements.

Phase B: Standard, Prioritisation and Delivery

Building on this foundation, partners work collaboratively to define regional standards for vehicles, depots and driver quality to improve consistency and passenger experience (SRBS-Q-FDBD-01). This includes developing a route-based typology, setting expectations for accessibility, onboard technology and interoperability, and establishing a shared set of values for driver quality supported through training and technology. These standards are then used to identify and prioritise interventions across fleets, infrastructure and workforce, ensuring that actions are aligned with regional needs, deliverable within existing constraints, and supported by clear responsibilities and coordination mechanisms (SRBS-Q-FDBD-07).

Delivery focuses on implementing a coordinated regional programme across fleets, depots and workforce. This includes progressing a regional decarbonisation plan and supporting knowledge sharing between operators and authorities (SRBS-Q-FDBD-04). Opportunities for shared or public ownership of depots are explored, alongside engagement with

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national initiatives such as ScotZEB2 and consideration of energy cost impacts. Regional standards for vehicle quality are applied across service types and aligned with national ticketing and accessibility frameworks, while driver quality values are taken forward through training, technology and wider support measures. Ongoing engagement with national government on future funding and continued collaboration ensures delivery remains coordinated and responsive over time.

Risks and Mitigations

- → Incomplete decarbonisation evidence or limited operator data sharing: agree data requirements early and use a proportionate evidence-gathering approach.
- → Grid constraints, depot limitations, uncertain fuel pathways, and long lead times: engage early with Distribution Network Operators and energy stakeholders, supported by high-level forecasting.
- → Uneven progress across different operator types and scales: ensure the actions reflect all scales of operation.

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10. Data And Monitoring

SRBS Actions

A modern bus system benefit from data being shared, standardised, and used to drive decisions. SEStran will lead improved coordination in data collection, transparency, and its use to deliver the policies of the SRBS.

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TIMELINE	ACTION FROM RBS	ACTION TYPE	FIRST STEP	REF.
Priority Year 1	**Undertake a review of data and monitoring in the SEStran region**, considering ways to collect, share, analyse, and monitor data to the benefit of the bus network and users, including integration with other modes, where relevant. This should also consider opportunities for specific uses in the region, such as the potential for improving the transparency of bus network performance metrics. The review should also identify mechanisms for actioning improvements, noting the expected need for formal agreements with key stakeholder and partnership working.	SEStran Led	Scope study with potential partners.	SRBS-Q-DATA-02
Priority Year 1	**Enable Workforce Mobility Project** in data focused projects including **transport, employment, and spatial data** to support evidence-based planning and targeted interventions. This includes travel demand and behaviour insights which support bus patronage by understand commuting patterns and inform interventions such as modal shift, behaviour change, and workplace-based programmes.	SEStran Led	Enable continue project delivery and expansion.	SRBS-Q-DATA-03

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TIMELINE	ACTION FROM RBS	ACTION TYPE	FIRST STEP	REF.
Priority Year 1	**Engage with Transport Scotland on their 'Smart, Digital, Integrated Ticketing and Payments Delivery Strategy 2024'** on the data aspects of their strategy and set out opportunities for application in the SEStran region. This should include such considerations as: → Consulting on legislation under the Transport (Scotland) Act 2019. → Data standardisation and interoperability. → Collection, utilisation, and transparency, including the potential for open data sharing and the applications of this. → Maximising the use of Digital Travel Data Services (DTDS) enhancements to such areas as information, real time updates, and disruption alerts. → Opportunities around the enhanced Concessionary Travel Scheme data collection and analysis proposals, such as origin and destination data. → Continuous improvement of smart ticketing and integrated travel initiatives, including monitoring and evaluation to ensure that the initiatives are meeting their objectives and to provide data-driven insights for future enhancements.	Advocacy	Seek update and align engagement with the review of data and monitoring in the region.	SRBS-Q-DATA-01

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Overall Approach

What will SEStran Lead?

SEStran will review data and monitoring across the region (SRBS-Q-DATA-02), setting standards for collection, sharing, and action. This will include options for a public performance dashboard, formal data-sharing agreements, and clear governance to ensure improvements are implemented.

SEStran Partnership Support

SEStran will coordinate with partners to work on, and implement actions from, the data and monitoring review.

Advocacy

SEStran will engage with Transport Scotland on the Smart, Digital, Integrated Ticketing and Payments Strategy (SRBS-Q-DATA-01), including legislation under the Transport (Scotland) Act 2019, data standardisation and interoperability, open data where possible, the use of DTDS, enhanced concessionary data analysis (e.g. patterns of movement), and continuous improvement frameworks with evaluation included.

Workflow for Delivery

SRBS-Q-DATA-02 will be delivered through Phases A to C of the following workflow, establishing a regional approach to data collection, sharing, analysis, and reporting. In parallel, *SRBS-Q-DATA-01* will continue as an advocacy action with Transport Scotland, helping to align regional priorities with national data, digital, and legislative developments.

Phase A – Scope, governance, and baseline

SEStran will scope the review with key partners, including local authorities, operators, Transport Scotland, and relevant data custodians. This phase should agree the main use-cases for the work, such as performance monitoring, transparency, accessibility, fares and ticketing analysis, and evaluation of interventions. It should also identify the main datasets and systems currently available across the region, including operational performance data, timetable and real-time information, fares and ticketing data, concessionary travel data where available, customer feedback, accessibility information, and relevant contextual datasets such as employment and health destinations.

Phase B – Gap analysis and framework development

Using the baseline review, SEStran will identify the main gaps and barriers affecting the collection, sharing, analysis, and use of data across the regional bus network. This should include issues relating to data consistency, interoperability, transparency, reporting, and governance, as well as where formal data-sharing agreements may be required. The main output of this phase should be a regional data and monitoring framework, setting out priority indicators, possible dashboard and reporting products, governance arrangements, and a phased approach to implementation.

Phase C – Implementation planning and alignment with national work

SEStran will work with partners to identify how the review findings should be taken forward in practice, including any early actions, pilot use-cases, or reporting arrangements that can be implemented in the short term. This phase should also inform SEStran's engagement with Transport Scotland under *SRBS-Q-DATA-01*, helping to ensure that regional priorities are reflected in wider discussions on data

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standardisation, DTDS, concessionary travel data, open data, and monitoring and evaluation requirements within national smart and integrated ticketing initiatives.

Risks and mitigations

- → Data inconsistency: ensure this is a core part of the data review, coordinate with DTDS.
- → Commercial sensitivity: use aggregation/anonymisation; define publication thresholds in a MOU.
- → Capacity constraints with partners: start with small use-cases to test the concepts of data sharing and use, and try to reduce burden on partners, e.g. LAs, operators.

How does this align with the Transport to Employment and Transport to Health Workstreams?

- → Use data to target affordability, reliability, and service gaps for key employment and health corridors.
- → Evaluate impacts of pilots on employment access, clinic attendance, and reduced “did not attend” rates, feed learning into future funding bids.
- → Work with CPPS and LEPs on data dashboards. For example, CPPs could host transparent dashboards that track access to employment and healthcare by time of day and settlement, alongside reliability to shift times (SRBS-Q-DATA-02). LEPs could integrate labour market and employability outcomes (e.g., starts and sustainment), while NHS boards could share relevant attendance metrics (e.g., DNAs) under appropriate data-sharing agreements.

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11. Cross-topic Programme

→ Once agreed on the approaches above, set out the overlapping streams (e.g. working groups, advocacy), set out the timescale, schedule of events, etc.

→ Set out a visual representation of the workflows.

→ Set out costing envelopes.

→ Overall governance approach and set of stakeholders.

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South East of Scotland Transport Partnership
Area 3D (Bridge)
Victoria Quay
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EH6 6QQ

TRANSPORT TO EMPLOYMENT FUNDING DECISIONS

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 This report updates the Board on progress made on Transport to Employment since the last meeting.

2 BACKGROUND

2.1 Towards the end of January, Transport Scotland approached the RTPs to support delivery of part of a new funding package to support the reduction of child poverty. Of this funding, just over £19million has been set aside for transport related actions, of which £9.5million will be delivered through Local Employability Partnerships (LEPs, part of each local authority's Community Planning Partnership), and £9.8million will be allocated to the seven RTPs. Whereas the funding being given to the LEPs is intended to be more focused on person-centred interventions for parents to access employability training and/or progressing to employment, funding for RTPs is expected to be used to effect change at a 'systemic' level.

2.2 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 by supporting 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).

2.3 At present, it is believed that this funding pot will be for a single year only, and planning assumes that there will be no funding to follow in 2027/28. Proposals have been carefully selected to minimise the risk of projects ending on 31st March 2027, disadvantaging those who have come to rely on them.

3 BOARD APPROVALS

3.1 A paper was presented to the Board on 13th March which set out current thinking on funding allocations and the shape of the delivery programme. The final recommendation of that paper was for the Board to:

- Note the contents of this report and the proposed delivery programme for 2026/27, including the intention to further engage on this with LEPs and wider local authority teams
- Approve the draft Transport to Employment Grant Eligibility and Assessment Criteria attached at Appendix 2, and delegate authority to update these to the Partnership Director in discussion with the Chair, in line with the urgency provisions of the Grant Standing Orders
- Note that a further detailed update will be provided to the Project and Strategy Delivery Oversight Subgroup at its next meeting

3.2 Since then the proposed delivery programme has changed due to:

- Feedback received from Transport Scotland
- Engagement with the 8 LEPs and LA transport teams which due to time constraints had not begun before the Board meeting. LAs also now had the opportunity to share their local priorities and engage with stakeholders such as bus operators
- Revenue funding for People and Place being reduced by 60%

4 CHANGES TO DELIVERY AREAS AND BUDGETS

4.1 The below details the changes that have been made to the high level programme delivery areas since the Board meeting.

4.2 Working with School Communities (formerly School to Skills Pathways)
Previously this delivery area was aimed at supporting school leavers who experience child poverty into work or further education, with the aim of delivering longer term impacts on outcomes. Transport Scotland have since indicated that parents need to be the core audience for this programme, with impact expected to be demonstrated in 2026/27, rather than looking to reduce child poverty in future years. As such, this programme has been reshaped to work with school communities to target parents, with some ancillary work taking place with young people as a way to engage parents. Projects now include bespoke travel advice and training for parents, paid work experience placement in the transport sector, and engaging with young people and parents around transport as a career option. Projects here also support wider sector capacity by retaining (repurposed) roles in school-based projects as a result of the People and Place funding reduction. The budget for this area has decreased from £480,000 to £215,676, 8% of the programme budget.

4.3 Transport to large workplaces
This is a new delivery area that has been added in following engagement with the LEPs. This will include larger scale projects to provide public transport connections to large employment sites across the region where public transport routes are either non-existent or where work connections are limited by timetables. Examples include new Sunday services to major retail employment sites and connections to the Edinburgh BioQuarter. The budget for this area is £665,700, 26% of the programme budget

4.4 Rural Transport to Work and Further Education
The scope of this area remains as per the previous Board paper to focus on providing access to employment and training for those living in more rural parts of the region.
The budget for this area has decreased from £850,000 to £572,000, 22% of the programme budget. It should be noted however that a number of projects included in the new transport to large workplaces area will also support rural access.

4.5 LEP Delivery Support (formerly Targeted action to reduce ticket prices)
Following discussion with LEPs which currently provide ticketing support, there is felt to be limited need for this at a regional level. This area has therefore been reshaped to provide additional funding to support LEPs on a limited basis when requested, such as to provide paid transport related work placements. The budget for this area has decreased from £400,000 to £106,000, 4% of the programme budget.

4.6 Transport to Healthcare Pilot Projects

The scope of this area remains as per the previous Board paper to support a small number of high priority pilot projects that can be used to demonstrate the value of specific interventions to access healthcare settings for employment, with benefits also felt for those accessing appointments. The budget for this area has decreased from £500,000 to £320,000, 12% of the programme budget. It should be noted however that a number of projects included in the new transport to large workplaces area support travel to major hospital sites.

4.7 Capacity and Capability (formerly Future Development & Programme Management)

This area of work has been expanded beyond its initial focus, and now also takes in some additional staff roles within LAs to support delivery in the year with a focus on engaging with employers around transport to support parents into work and with existing roles. The SEStran capacity element has also been increased to represent full recovery of costs from running this programme as opposed to just the additional staff costs. The budget for this area has increased from £280,000 to £496,887, 19% of the programme budget.

4.8 In summary, changes are as follows:

Programme	Starting Budget	Current Budget	Variance
Working with School Communities	£480,000	£215,055	-£264,945
Transport to large workplaces	n/a	£665,700	£665,700
Rural Transport to Work and Further Education	£850,000	£572,000	-£278,000
Targeted action to reduce ticket prices	£400,000	£106,000	-£294,000
Transport to Healthcare Pilot Projects	£500,000	£320,000	-£180,000
Capacity and Capability	£280,000	£496,887	£216,887
Unallocated	£77,740	£212,098	£134,358
Total	**£2,587,740**	**£2,587,740**	**£0**

4.9 In line with the Standing Orders List of Officer Powers, these budget virements have been approved by the Partnership Director.

4.10 8% of the programme budget, £212,098, remains unallocated. Discussions are ongoing with City of Edinburgh Council around priorities for spend within the city, which will hopefully be finalised soon. Depending on the outcome of this, there is currently one reserve project on a waiting list for funding which can be quickly progressed.

5 PROJECTS TO BE FUNDED

5.1 A full list of grant awards is presented in paper B5.

5.2 Project selection has been led by discussions with local authority LEPs and transport teams, utilising spare capacity with some delivery partners as a result of People and

Place funding reductions, and supporting the Workforce Mobility Project to expand existing workstreams.

5.3 The grant fund proposed in the paper presented to the Board in March did not go ahead due to updated feedback from Transport Scotland that the scope of these may not be eligible for funding. In line with this feedback, the scope of these grants has been reduced and their focus has been shifted to work with parents only in 2026/27 (previously they were aiming to work with young people who experience poverty to secure employment and training, thereby supporting longer term change). Instead, 4 smaller grant awards have been made to external delivery partners:

- Three awards have been made as extension of existing People and Place projects, which aim to repurpose capacity at risk of being lost due to People and Place funding reductions. This will include pilot work with parents using existing school hubs in Clackmannanshire and Grangemouth, formal cycle repair training for parents, and work with parents employed by NHS Fife.
- One new grant award has been made to Powering Futures, who will access all the schools in the SEStran area that are signed up to their 2026/27 Challenge programme, with a particular focus on schools situated in the lower SIMD deciles. By working with businesses, students and parents they will raise awareness of the breadth of careers within the transport sector while also building the skills, knowledge and confidence required to use transport to access employment more broadly. As this award was for under £50,000, it was awarded under a closed process in line with the Grant Standing Orders.
- These grant awards total £240,055.

5.4 A total of £1,690,587 of funding has been allocated to local authorities. These awards include new or enhanced bus services to major trip generators including hospitals and retail centres, expansion of demand responsive transport services, new roles to support engagement with businesses and parents around transport challenges such as flexible working and shift times, and support for travel to afterschool care to reduce this barrier to work.

5.5 The final section of the funding, £445,000, is being spent directly by SEStran. As well as programme management costs, this includes work to support data collection from employers as part of the Workforce Mobility Project, as well as the next steps of the transport to healthcare work.

5.6 To support the evaluation of the programme, and in line with our emerging approach to Public Sector Reform, four RTPs have come together to commission a joint piece of work to develop an evaluation framework and to evaluate the programme outcomes against this. SEStran is leading the procurement of this contract, with a timeline to report on the final evaluation to the June 2027 Board meeting.

6 RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 The Board is asked to note the contents of this report and the changes made to the programme

Michael Melton
Programme Manager

Policy Implications	Whilst tacking child poverty is not a specific action within the RTS, the programme will support the wider RTS vision. There is also clear alignment with national policy and local level strategies, especially work of Community Planning Partnerships.
Financial Implications	Project management costs for 2026/27 will be included in the overall programme budget, so there is no anticipated financial impact of this programme on the core SEStran budget.
Equalities Implications	In supporting people to access employment, training and healthcare, this programme should have a positive impact on equalities. All projects delivered with this funding will be expected to fulfil the public sector equality duty.
Climate Change Implications	As projects will generally support access to sustainable transport, this will support the transition to net zero.

TRANSPORT TO HEALTH CASE FOR CHANGE

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Since October 2025, SEStran has been working closely with its four NHS Boards and NHS Scotland Assure, with consultancy support from Urban Foresight, to produce a Case for Change on Transport to Health in South East Scotland; the final report is attached as Appendix 1.

1.2 This paper was presented at the last Board meeting in March 2026, however, due to time constraints, it was not discussed in full. It will therefore be presented again in June 2026 to allow adequate time for discussion.

2. BACKGROUND

2.1 Transport to Health is an opportunity to reduce transport barriers to accessing healthcare services where and when people need them, reducing missed appointments and improving individual health outcomes. RTPs have a duty under the Transport (Scotland) Acts 2005 and 2019 to work with their Health Boards in considering Transport to Health.

2.2 At a national level in Scotland, Transport to Health has achieved more attention in recent years following a report from the Mobility and Access Committee for Scotland (MACS) in 2019, which found that little progress had been made following an Audit Scotland report in 2011 recommending major improvements to the way older and disabled people accessed healthcare.

2.3 In late 2024, the Scottish Government responded to the MACS report with its Transport to Health Delivery Plan. Among other things, the delivery plan strengthens calls on RTPs to meet with local NHS boards to discuss access to healthcare as well as developing regional plans for transport to healthcare. SEStran is well placed to deliver these commitments, having established an informal learning network with the region's four Health Boards in early 2024. We continue to liaise with Transport Scotland and the Primary Care Directorate to highlight RTPs' role in driving change in Transport to Health. Transport to Health is complex as it falls partially within the remit of many agencies and bodies, given the nature of health service delivery, not to mention the complexities of the transport sector. It is therefore often seen as 'someone else's duty', with no clear responsibility holder.

2.4 This low base of current provision and increasing political profile offers SEStran an opportune moment to develop a Transport to Health Strategy for the south east of Scotland. It is necessary to understand what's happening, and not happening in our region, what we can learn from further afield and engage our Health Boards and other key players in a shared vision. This led us to develop a Transport to Health Literature review in spring 2025, which

outlined key challenges and opportunities as well as identified research and data gaps.

2.5 Main challenges included a lack of transport connectivity, costs associated with transport, additional barriers faced by disabled people and organisational and policy-related barriers. Main opportunities consisted of increased political attention demonstrating potential for a better cooperation across the board, the use of digital technologies to improve transport and health services, and the provision of virtual services.

2.6 The Literature review was the stepping stone for our Case for Change and helped us to identify where the focus should be, based on the current data gaps. In October 2025, we commissioned Urban Foresight to support the delivery of our Case for Change. This saw the delivery of:

- A desktop review and spatial analysis
- A 6-week public consultation receiving over 1,500 individual responses
- In-person pop-up sessions to engage with patients and staff
- Stakeholder engagement initiatives with the Learning network and beyond

3. FINDINGS OF THE CASE FOR CHANGE

3.1 Key findings from the Transport to Health Case for Change are:

- Access to healthcare across the SEStran region is strongly shaped by transport availability, journey time and reliability
- Public transport journeys to hospital care are typically significantly longer and more complex than equivalent car journeys
- Centralisation of acute and specialist services has increased travel distances and cross-boundary journeys for many patients
- People without access to a car face disproportionate barriers to attending healthcare appointments
- Transport barriers are contributing to missed and delayed appointments, particularly for outpatient and repeat care
- Accessibility challenges continue to limit the suitability of public transport for some disabled people and those with long-term conditions
- Community and demand-responsive transport play a critical role but are unevenly available and not fully integrated
- There is a clear opportunity to better align healthcare planning, appointment scheduling and transport provision
- Improving Transport to Health supports wider objectives on health inequalities, public health and sustainable travel

4. CONCLUSIONS

4.1 There is a clear need to improve Transport to Health in our region. The issues identified in the Case for Change highlight the inequality of access and subsequent negative impacts.

4.2 To address the issues highlighted, it is necessary to develop a Transport to Health Strategy in partnership with our Health Boards, NHS Assure, Transport

Scotland, the Primary Care Directorate, Local Authorities, our Partnership Board and expert stakeholders.

5. NEXT STEPS

5.1 We're currently developing a Programme Initiation Document for the development of an Outline Business Case and an implementation plan. Our plan of action will involve the development of a clear and shared vision with our stakeholders, the development of a long list of actions aligned with the findings of the Case for Change and the development of outline business cases reflecting the prioritisation of a shortlist of interventions.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 To note and discuss the findings of the Case for Change report.

Sandra Lavergne
Project Officer
19th June 2026

Appendix 1: Transport to Health Case for Change report

Policy Implications	Progressing the Strategy will deliver policies for the region in Transport to Health.
Financial Implications	This work is budgeted for within the SEStran project budget.
Equalities Implications	Improved and joined up regional direction for Transport to Health would have a positive impact for all. With that said, particular consideration will be needed to make sure that the Strategy actions are appropriate for under-served groups like disabled people and those facing transport poverty. An EqIA has already been done as part of the Case for Change report.
Climate Change Implications	A more joined up Transport to Health approach, and a shift to sustainable modes will contribute to addressing climate change challenges.

Transport to Health – Case for Change

FINAL REPORT

GO SEStran
South East of Scotland Transport Partnership

Urban Foresight

Executive summary

This Case for Change sets out the evidence base for developing a Regional Transport to Health Strategy across the South East of Scotland Transport Partnership area, covering NHS Borders, NHS Fife, NHS Forth Valley and NHS Lothian.

It responds to national policy expectations for closer collaboration between Regional Transport Partnerships and Health Boards and provides a shared understanding of how transport affects people's ability to access healthcare across the South East of Scotland.

Transport to Health focuses on non-emergency journeys to healthcare (i.e. not emergency ambulances). This ranges from journeys to acute tertiary and secondary care hospitals to local primary care services like GP surgeries, pharmacies and dentists.

The study draws together demographic and socio-economic analysis, travel-time modelling, public consultation evidence from over 1,500 respondents, and engagement with NHS partners, local authorities and community transport providers. Together, this evidence shows that while access to primary care is generally good across much of the region, transport barriers to hospital-based and specialist care are widespread, unevenly distributed, and fall disproportionately on people without access to a private car.

Why Transport to Health matters in the SEStran region

The SEStran region includes dense urban areas, expanding commuter towns, coastal settlements and extensive rural communities. While GP services are largely community-based, secondary and tertiary care is increasingly concentrated in a small number of hospital sites. As a result, many residents must travel long distances, often across local authority or Health Board boundaries, to access hospital care.

Travel-time modelling shows that public transport journeys to hospitals are typically two to four times longer than equivalent car journeys and frequently involve indirect routes, multiple interchanges and extended waiting times. These challenges are hardest felt by older people, disabled people, carers and those attending regular outpatient appointments.

Public consultation evidence demonstrates that these barriers affect access to care. Around one third of respondents across the region reported missing or delaying a healthcare appointment due to transport issues, rising to over 40% in NHS Fife. Unreliable or infrequent services, indirect routes, parking pressures and accessibility barriers were the most commonly cited factors.

These issues reinforce wider inequalities, particularly for people without access to a private car, disabled people and residents of rural and semi-rural areas.

What the evidence shows

Across all four Health Boards, a consistent set of challenges emerges:

- Travel to centralised acute hospital facilities by its nature presents greater challenges to patients than local primary care journeys, requiring careful planning to ensure complex and long journeys can be made with maximum convenience and efficiency.
- People without access to a private car face disproportionate barriers, reinforcing transport-related health inequalities.
- Transport barriers contribute to missed and delayed appointments, especially for outpatient and specialist care.
- Accessibility issues limit the suitability of public transport for some users, even where services exist.
- Parking pressures at major hospitals increase stress for drivers, but do not necessarily reduce car use, as many patients and visitors remain reliant on private cars due to limited, practical alternatives.
- Community and demand-responsive transport play a critical role, but capacity, funding and coordination constraints limit their effectiveness.

Problems, Opportunities, Issues and Constraints

Using a Problems, Opportunities, Issues and Constraints (POIC) framework in line with Scottish Transport Appraisal Guidance, the report identifies:

- Key problems, including long and indirect hospital journeys, car dependency, transport-related non-attendance and accessibility barriers.
- Opportunities to better align healthcare planning and transport provision, strengthen community and demand-responsive transport, improve information and booking, and reduce avoidable travel through more local or digital care delivery where appropriate.
- Issues requiring further consideration, such as misalignment between appointment scheduling and transport availability, fragmented transport information and under-integration of community transport.
- Constraints, including rural geography, service centralisation, funding limitations and institutional boundaries across transport and healthcare systems.

This structured assessment provides a clear bridge between the evidence base and the development of future interventions.

Transport Planning Objectives

Drawing directly from the POIC analysis, the report sets out a focused set of Transport Planning Objectives. These focus on reducing journey time and complexity for hospital care, improving access for people without a car, addressing accessibility barriers, reducing transport-related missed appointments, improving coordination and clarity of information, strengthening community and flexible transport, and supporting a more sustainable and efficient Transport to Health system.

These objectives provide a clear framework for the next stage of work and will guide option generation, sifting and appraisal.

Next Steps

This Case for Change establishes a shared evidence base and clear rationale for intervention. The next stage will focus on developing a Regional Transport to Health Strategy, including refining Transport Planning Objectives, identifying and appraising potential interventions in line with Scottish Transport Appraisal Guidance, and working with partners to develop a coordinated and deliverable approach.

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Introduction

Purpose of the report

SEStran is the statutory Regional Transport Partnership for the South East of Scotland and is responsible for setting the strategic direction for transport across its eight constituent Local Authorities. National policy now sets clear expectations for Regional Transport Partnerships and Health Boards to collaborate on improving Transport to Health. In response, SEStran and the four Health Boards (NHS Borders, NHS Fife, NHS Forth Valley and NHS Lothian) in the region have agreed to develop a regional Transport to Health Strategy. This Case for Change represents the first stage in that process.

A transport system that enables people to reach healthcare when they need it is fundamental to individual wellbeing, social equity and the effective functioning of the health service. This report presents the evidence base for the Transport to Health Case for Change in the South East of Scotland. It brings together demographic, socio-economic, geographic and transport data, alongside public and stakeholder insight, to understand how people currently travel to primary, secondary and specialist care, and the barriers they encounter.

The report provides a comprehensive assessment of existing Transport to Health challenges across the SEStran region and establishes the foundation for developing a coordinated regional approach.

Scope of the study

The study covers all eight local authority areas within the SEStran region, encompassing the City of Edinburgh, Clackmannanshire, East Lothian, Falkirk, Fife, Midlothian, the Scottish Borders and West Lothian. Together, these areas reflect a wide range of urban, semi-urban and rural contexts in which Transport to Health challenges vary significantly.

The study examines transport access to a range of healthcare services, including:

- GP practices and primary care services
- Secondary care and hospital outpatient departments
- Tertiary and specialist care services
- Community-based and non-emergency services

For the purposes of this study, primary, secondary and tertiary healthcare services are defined in line with Scottish Government and NHS Scotland usage. Primary care refers to community-based services that are typically the first point of contact with the NHS, such as GP practices, community nursing, pharmacy and allied health professionals. Secondary care comprises specialist services, usually delivered in hospital settings and accessed by referral from primary care, while tertiary care refers to highly specialised services provided in regional or national specialist centres.

The study considers journeys undertaken by patients, carers and people attending appointments on behalf of others, but does not include staff travel. All modes of transport are within scope, including public transport, community transport, demand-responsive services, active travel, private car use and taxi travel.

Why this work matters

Transport shapes whether people can reach care in a timely way. The South East of Scotland contains a mix of dense urban neighbourhoods, expanding commuter towns, coastal settlements and remote rural communities. Across such varied places, people have very different experiences of travelling to healthcare.

Those who rely on public transport, who have mobility impairments or who live far from major hospitals face the greatest pressures. Appointment times that do not match available services, indirect routes, long journeys and reliance on informal lifts were all highlighted during this study.

These challenges have direct consequences for both individuals and the wider healthcare system. Difficulties accessing healthcare can lead to delayed or missed appointments, which in turn can result in conditions worsening before treatment is received. This affects individuals' health outcomes and quality of life, and can increase the need for more complex and costly interventions at a later stage.

Car parking at major hospitals often operates near capacity and contributes to delays, missed appointments and stress for patients and staff. Across the region, around 130,000 outpatient appointments are missed each year. Although transport is not the only reason for non-attendance, it is recognised as a significant contributing factor.

There is no single Scotland-wide estimate of the financial cost of missed appointments, but commonly cited benchmarks provide an indication of scale. NHS England estimates that each missed outpatient appointment costs £30 to £40, while NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde reports average costs of £233 per missed appointment. Applying these ranges to the SEStran region suggests that missed appointments may cost the NHS between £4.1 million and £31.3 million annually, noting that only a proportion of these missed appointments are transport related.

A literature review of existing Transport to Health research was undertaken by SEStran earlier in 2025 to inform the initial understanding of regional challenges. The review found that while there is substantial national commentary on transport barriers and missed appointments, evidence specific to the South East of Scotland is limited.

Much of the available work focuses on national averages or single care settings and provides little insight into local travel behaviour, cross boundary flows, the role of different transport modes or the lived experience of patients and carers. The review also highlighted gaps in data, including the cost of transport related missed appointments and the accessibility of non-emergency services. These gaps reinforced the need for a more detailed, region-specific evidence base, which this Case for Change sets out to achieve.

Better Transport to Health provision helps promote fairness, improves overall public health and reduces unnecessary strain on clinical services. It also supports broader regional and national goals related to climate change, air quality and social inclusion. Although the region already hosts a mix of public transport, community-based provision and demand responsive services, availability remains inconsistent. Service patterns are often poorly aligned with the location or scheduling of healthcare and innovative practices are not yet applied consistently.

A regional approach is needed to address these challenges. The findings presented in this report create a clear and shared understanding of where the most significant access challenges lie and where improvements could deliver the greatest benefit. This will support the development of a regional Transport to Health Strategy in the next phase of work.

How this report will be used

This Case for Change will be used to identify and organise the problems, opportunities, issues and constraints associated with Transport to Health across the region. It will also shape Transport Planning Objectives that are consistent with national appraisal requirements and guide the development of future options. The work will be taken forward in collaboration with NHS Boards, Local Authorities, transport operators, community organisations and other partners involved in supporting access to healthcare.

This Case for Change is supported by a set of companion documents. The full Equality Impact Assessment and the detailed Survey Response Overview are published as a separate Appendix document. In addition, the evidence summaries for each of the four Health Board areas - NHS Lothian, NHS Fife, NHS Borders and NHS Forth Valley - are also published as standalone documents, drawn directly from the relevant chapters of this report. Together, these documents form the complete evidence base for the Case for Change.

Policy context

Transport to Health is shaped by a wide range of national, regional and local policy commitments. Together, these set the strategic direction for improving accessibility, reducing inequalities and supporting the delivery of a more efficient and sustainable health and transport system. The policy context for this work is summarised below.

National policy

Transport (Scotland) Act 2005

The transport (Scotland) act 2005 established Regional Transport partnerships (RTPs) as statutory bodies with responsibility for preparing and delivering regional transport strategies. The act places duty on RTPs to develop transport strategies that contribute to sustainable development, improve social inclusion and promote equal opportunities.

While the act does not place direct transport delivery duties on Health Boards, it provides the statutory framework within which RTPs, and Health Boards are expected to cooperate. In practice, this creates a shared responsibility to ensure that regional transport planning supports access to key services, including healthcare. The Act therefore supports the collaborative working between RTPs, local authorities and NHS boards in improving access to health services across Scotland.[1]

Transport (Scotland) Act 2019

The 2019 Transport (Scotland) Act gives Health boards several responsibilities to consider non-emergency patient transport. One of the policies stated is as follows:

> **120. Health boards:** duty to have regard to community benefit in non-emergency patient transport contracts

[1] Transport (Scotland) Act 2005: https://www.legislation.gov.uk/asp/2005/12/contents

This requires Health Boards to consider, in addition to the contract's primary purpose, the economic, social, and environmental wellbeing impacts of non-emergency transport agreements.

The Transport Act also states the following policy:

> **120. Health boards:** duty to work with community transport bodies

This requires Health Boards to work with community transport organisations in their jurisdiction when providing non-emergency patient transport services. The policy additionally requires Health Boards to publish an annual report which demonstrates the steps they have taken to comply with this policy. The report should also demonstrate how effective and cost-effective non-emergency transport services have been in the board area.

This report will engage will community transport organisations and Health Boards to assess the constraints and opportunities of improving coordination between community transport organisations and Health Boards. This includes the utilisation of regional forums through the Regional Transport Partnership.

Scottish Government Transport to Health Delivery Plan (2024[2])

This plan sets out commitments to tackle the issue of Transport to Health including 16 commitments which describe how Health Boards should work alongside RTPs:

- Commitment 11 states that NHS Delivery Plans should include consideration of how best to work with Regional Transport Partnerships and transport officers from Local Authorities
- Commitment 12 states RTPs should convene stakeholder groups with a remit on Transport to Health and Regional Transport Strategies should include appropriate consideration of Transport to Health Issues
- Commitment 19 states the Scottish Government will support RTPs to develop their own plans around Transport to Health.

Other actions to be taken by the Scottish Government include reviewing the Scottish Ambulance Service' (SAS) Equalities Impact Assessment of Patient Transport, and to review the Patient Needs Assessment which determines if patients are eligible for transport.

Working through the Re-mobilise, Recover, Re-design Framework and the Digital Health and Care Strategy the Scottish Government will seek to offer a greater number of accessibly designed digital services and care closer to home, reducing the need to travel.

[2] https://www.gov.scot/publications/transport-health-delivery-plan/

The Scottish Government will stipulate in Health Boards' Annual Delivery Plans that patients must have access to all information on relevant transport, community transport and reimbursement entitlement. On top of this the potential for appointment transport information to be incorporated into the NHS inform app and Traveline will be considered.

Overall, the plan sets out a variety of commitments that seek to improve collaboration and coordination between different sectors and organisations to improve transport journeys to healthcare as well as overall public, patient and community transport accessibility.

National Transport Strategy 2 (NTS2)

The National Transport Strategy 2 maps the vision for Scotland's transport system to 2040. The four main priorities of the strategy are:

- To reduce inequalities
- To take climate action
- To help deliver inclusive economic growth
- To improve our health and wellbeing

The strategy mainly focuses in improving health and wellbeing through increasing activity levels through active travel and reducing air pollution. However, under the reducing inequalities by providing fair access to services remit the strategy does commit to:

> "Improve sustainable access to healthcare facilities for staff, patients and visitors"
>
> **NTS2**

The Scottish Government views the path to improving Transport to Health as a way of reducing inequalities. It places an emphasis on the challenges faced by older and disabled people:

> "As a society, it is important that older and disabled people can plan and get to their GP or hospital without facing physical barriers and enduring distress, anxiety or additional transport costs."

The strategy states the Scottish Government will ensure that sustainable access is embedded in the planning process for hospitals and health services. A different approach to planning and delivering health services will also reduce the need to travel to healthcare.

Strategic Transport Projects Review 2 (STPR2)

The equality impact assessment (EqIA) for the STPR2 includes consideration of how projects will improve access to services, including healthcare. When accessing each strategic project one of the objectives is "Health and Health Inequality". Included in this is the guide question:

> "Will the option/intervention/package improve access to healthcare, in particular for those with protected characteristics and demographic groups facing structural inequalities?"

This demonstrates that Transport to Health is a consideration when assessing major strategic transport projects.

National research and evidence

Mobility and Access Committee for Scotland (2019)

The issue of Transport to Health has risen in prominence again since the Mobility and Access Committee for Scotland (MACS) produce the Transport to Health and Social report in December 2019.[3] The report focused on barriers disabled and older people face when accessing health and social care facilities, it brought together a roundtable including Disabled People's Organisations, Community Transport Association, Transport Scotland, NHS Boards and surveyed over 1,000 disabled people.

Some selected findings of the report include:

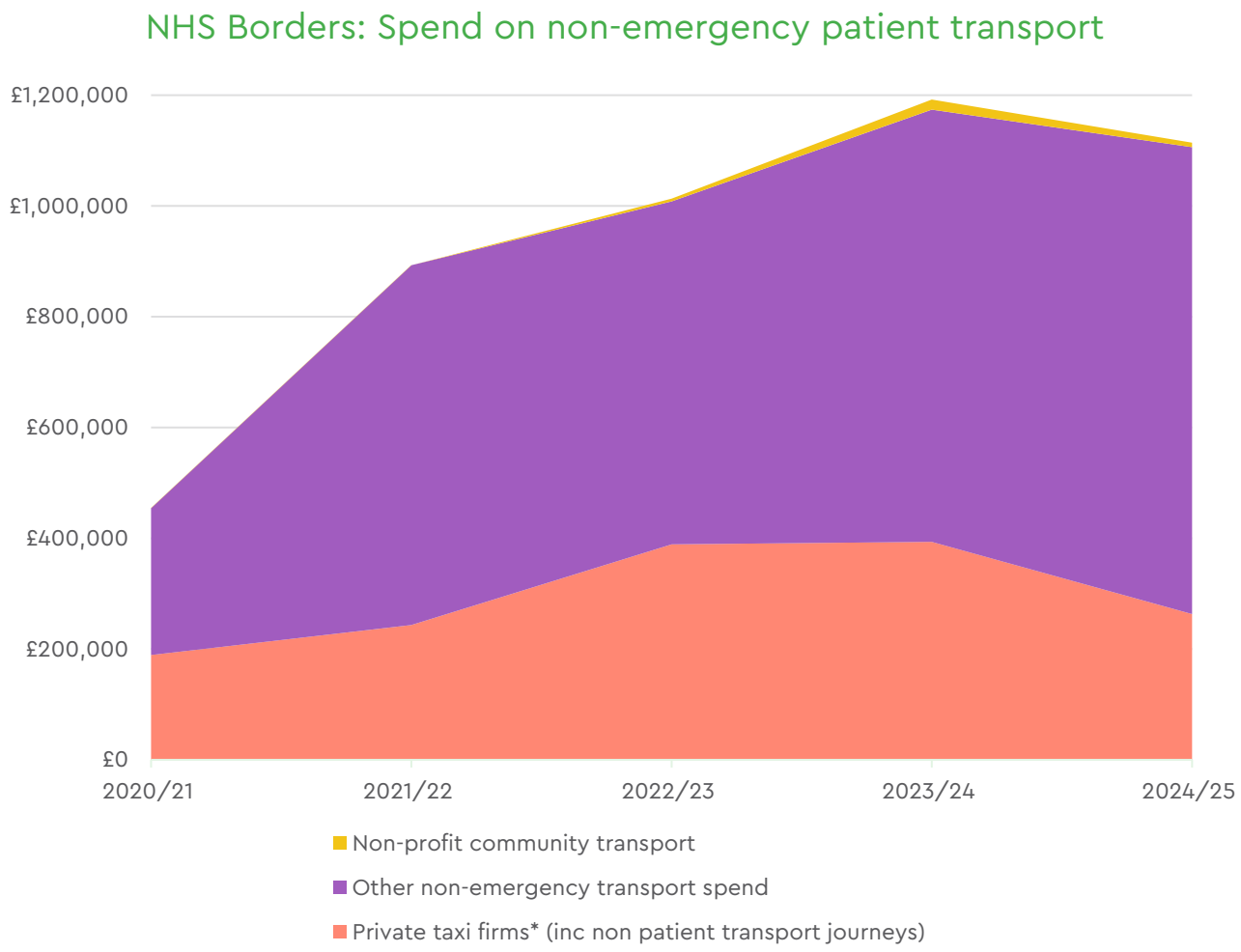
- No progress had been made on this issue since the 2011 Audit Scotland report on the same issue
- **98%** of 849 older and disabled people surveyed said they faced transport barriers accessing health and social care appointments
- A lack of coordinated planning between the NHS, Local Authorities, the Scottish Ambulance Service, Regional Transport Partnerships and Community Transport Providers
- Poor signposting to alternative transport organisations
- Scottish Ambulance Service (SAS) patient transport is increasingly targeted towards those with the greatest clinical need. Changes to Patient Needs Assessment and the removal of the voluntary car scheme have reduced the number of journeys SAS can provide.
- Community Transport organisations are filling in some of the gaps, but their work goes unacknowledged. Some requests they received go unfulfilled and they have to charge passengers by the mile making the service unaffordable to many
- The overall public transport system and infrastructure is not designed towards disabled and older people accessing healthcare

[3] Mobility and Access Committee, 2019, Transport to Health Report

Community Transport Association (CTA)

In 2025 the Community Transport Association published a report based on a series of Freedom of Information requests to NHS boards in Scotland.[4] It focused on the provision in the Transport (Scotland) Act 2019 which stated that Health Boards have a duty to work with community transport bodies. The report found that most NHS boards are either only partially compliant or non-compliant with the legislation.

The FOIs included some information on non-emergency transport spend. However, this information varies between Health Boards and spend on taxis for patient transport is not differentiated from taxi spending on other operational requirements. NHS Borders is one the Health Boards which had more complete data on non-emergency transport spending:



[4] https://ctauk.org/healthy-communities-scotland

Regional policy and related schemes

SEStran Regional Transport Strategy (RTS)

The Regional Transport Strategy for SEStran provides the strategic framework for management and investment in the transport network to 2035. One key aspect for the next 10 years the strategy considers is the trend of increasing demand for travel to healthcare.

The RTS states that services should be located with connectivity to deprived areas in mind (e.g. health provision should be located with connectivity to health-deprived communities in mind). Analysis as part of the RTS found that areas with both poor connection to public transport and high health deprivation included areas postcodes around the periphery of Edinburgh, as well as in the Scottish Borders, Clackmannanshire and Levenmouth in Fife.

SEStran Regional Bus Strategy

The SEStran Regional Bus Strategy (SRBS) sets out the policy vision for all public bus services in the region. This has significant relevance for Transport to Health, since bus transport is the second most common method of travel to healthcare appointments.

The strategy aims for transport governance to have stronger integration with economic, planning, and health priorities. The vision is underpinned by three key areas of improvement:

- Improve level of service
- Improve affordability
- Improve service quality

To improve the level of service the strategy commits to engage on the potential implementation of core equitable service stands for intra-SEStran, inter-urban, and cross boundary connectivity, including important movements outside of the RTP area. These service standards will be based on an audit of the connectivity of settlements in the region. Additionally, RTS Policy 9.2g states:

> "Bus improvements should support access to healthcare facilities where practical and appropriate."

SRBS policies aimed at improving the level of service, service affordability and service quality will help to make bus services which connect healthcare more accessible and convenient.

SEStran Transport to Health literature review

The Transport to Health literature review completed by SEStran previous to this report identified several research gaps. This report addresses some of the research gaps identified; the extent and nature of this coverage are outlined in Table 1 below:

Table 1: Research gaps and report coverage.

Research Gap	Description	Addressed by this report?
Transport mode share for different types of journeys to healthcare services in the SEStran region.	The last SHS Transport and Travel report to capture this information was in 2011 at a national scale, but even then, it does not appear to have been provided at the RTP or Local Authority level, potentially due to sample sizes.	The response to the survey by over 1,500 SEStran residents includes questions on: → Transport mode share to reach healthcare appointments (primary and secondary modes) → Self-reported journey times to different types of health care appointments (GP, pharmacy etc.) → Frequency of travel to different types of healthcare appointments
Car and public transport distances to other types of primary care.	Analysis carried out using SIMD data has focused on access to GP services and hospitals in the SEStran region. While important, other types of healthcare are not captured by this analysis, such as pharmacies and dental practices.	The self-reported journey times to each type of healthcare (pharmacies, dentists etc.). 1,340 of the responses contain postcode district data which can be confidently assigned to Local Authorities and on the postcode district level to gain a spatial understanding of journey times. This data can be further split into those who primarily use car or public transport.
Alternative modes of transport to healthcare sites	While the 2023 SHS asks how people get to the GP and asks people who always drive to the GP if they can use any other modes of transport, it does not ask about other types of healthcare service. It also does not provide a breakdown of the data for the SEStran region. Another insight missing from the data is how many people own a car but choose to take another mode of transport to healthcare.	The survey doesn't provide data on mode share by type of appointment. However, the survey contains car ownership data and primary and secondary mode choice preference for healthcare journeys, so the proportion of car owners who choose to use public transport can be calculated.

Research Gap	Description	Addressed by this report?
Quantifying the scale of the parking problem at hospital sites.	At the moment there is plenty of anecdotal evidence around parking issues at NHS sites. Further research could attempt to quantify on a more rigorous basis how long patients spend trying to find parking and what implications this has.	This report does not include automatic number plate recognition (ANPR) data. However, the proportion of respondents who cite parking as a barrier to accessing healthcare has been provided through the survey.
Transport cost barriers to accessing healthcare services	There is little research examining the cost of transport specifically, as opposed to transport more generally, as a barrier to accessing healthcare in a Scotland or UK context.	Our survey asks respondents to say if transport costs affect their ability or decision at attend healthcare. Responses to this question can be filtered by a number of characteristics including car access and bus pass recipients.
Quantifying the cost to the NHS of transport-related missed appointments in the SEStran region.	While the reasons for missing appointments are complex, if transport can be pinpointed as a reason for particular missed appointments, this could provide motivation for the NHS to fund transport services.	Our survey asks respondents, "Have you ever missed or delayed a healthcare appointment due to transport issues?". As well as the reason for missed / delayed appointments has been given. The cost to the NHS of these missed appointments could be extrapolated but the proportion of all missed/delayed appointments that are due to transport issues cannot.
People who avoid booking healthcare appointments altogether.	Inherently a difficult phenomenon to capture, understanding how many people are put off by poor transport from booking appointments could provide further basis for a Transport to Health strategy.	The survey doesn't ask about those who avoid booking healthcare appointments altogether. However, an analysis of qualitive responses could provide some information as to the extent of this phenomenon.

SEStran People and Place Programme

The SEStran People and Place Programme provides an important complementary context for Transport to Health across the region. In 2024/25, SEStran received £5.3 million to deliver a wide range of projects aimed at increasing walking, wheeling and cycling and improving local accessibility.

Over 100 projects were supported, including cycle training, access to bikes, community-led walks, street audits and public realm improvements. Many of these initiatives directly support Transport to Health objectives by improving confidence, safety and physical accessibility for short everyday journeys, including travel to GP practices, pharmacies and community health facilities.

Several projects also focused on improving the accessibility of streets and walking environments near health and social care sites, helping to reduce physical barriers for older people, disabled people and those with long-term health conditions. By strengthening local connections and enabling more people to travel actively where appropriate, the programme contributes to reducing car dependency for shorter healthcare trips and supports wider public health outcomes.

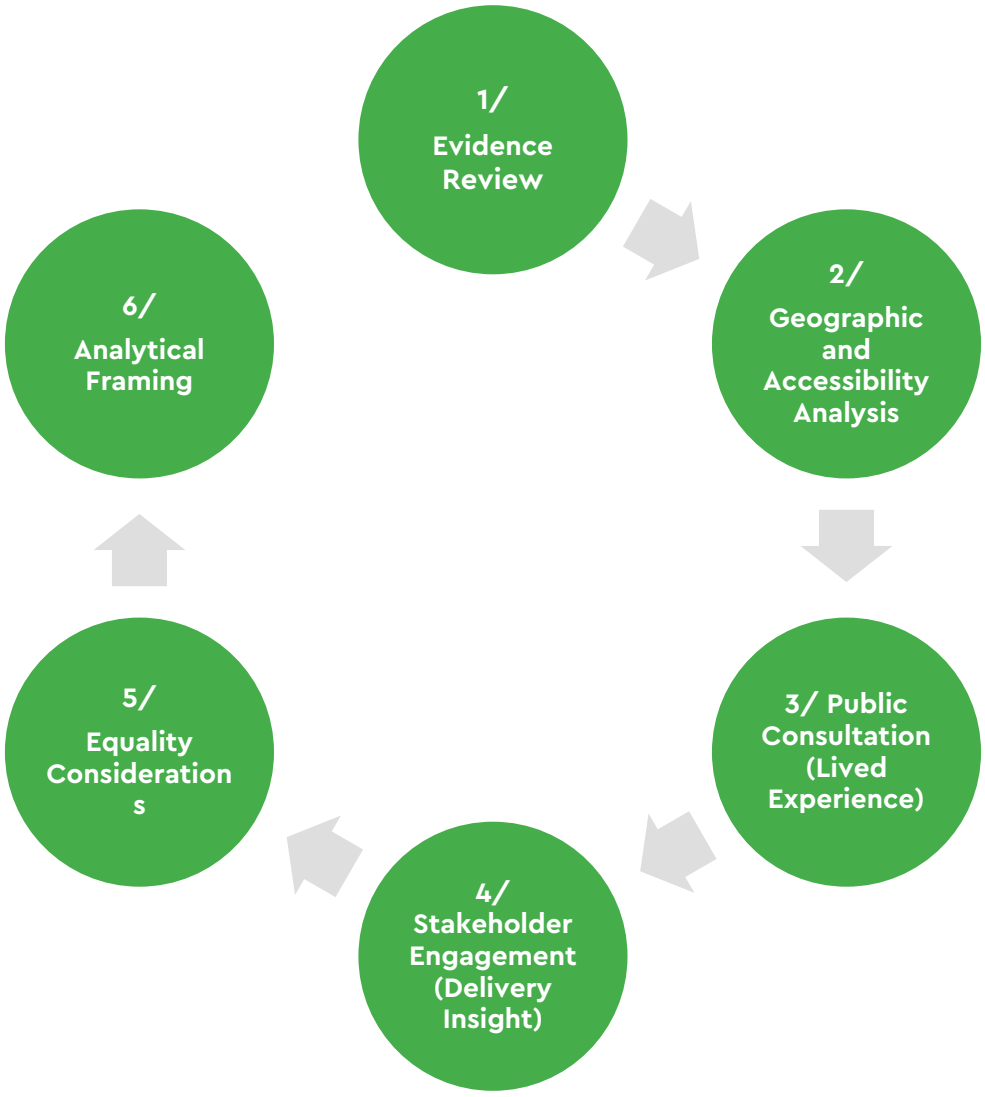
The People and Place Programme therefore provides a practical delivery mechanism that aligns closely with the objectives of this Case for Change and demonstrates how place-based transport interventions can support improved access to healthcare, particularly at a local and community level. The programme is ongoing and will continue to deliver benefits into 2026/27 and beyond.

Approach and methodology

This Case for Change has been developed through a structured, evidence-driven and iterative process that brings together quantitative analysis, spatial modelling, public insight and engagement with organisations involved in Transport to Health.

The approach reflects Scottish Transport Appraisal Guidance (STAG) principles and builds on the findings of the Literature Review undertaken earlier in 2025.

The methodology used for this study is summarised below:



Evidence review

A wide range of existing datasets and published material was reviewed to develop a consistent baseline for the SEStran region. This included demographic and socio-economic indicators, health activity data, transport network information and relevant national and regional policy documents.

The Literature Review identified several gaps in available research, particularly around local travel behaviour, missed appointments and the lived experience of users, which helped inform the design of the remaining stages of the study.

Geographic and accessibility analysis

Geographic Information Systems (GIS) were used to analyse how people across the SEStran region currently access healthcare services. Spatial analysis combined healthcare site locations, population and demographic data, and details of the region's public transport and road networks. Travel time modelling was undertaken to compare access by different modes, including public transport, private car and active travel.

This analysis provided a detailed understanding of how accessibility varies between urban, semi-rural and rural areas, and where transport related barriers are most likely to occur. It also highlighted cross boundary travel patterns between Local Authorities and Health Boards. The outputs of this work provide the geographic foundation for the Problems, Opportunities, Issues and Constraints (POIC) assessment and help explain how transport barriers vary between places and population groups.

Public consultation and stakeholder insight

A region wide public consultation was carried out between October and November 2025. More than **1,500 responses** were received, providing a substantial evidence base of lived experience across all eight Local Authority areas.

The consultation explored how people travel to healthcare, what challenges they face, how these differ by type of appointment and the impact of cost, journey duration and transport reliability. Both quantitative and qualitative responses were analysed, with postcode data used to generate insights at local authority and Health Board level and to test geographic patterns identified through the spatial analysis.

Stakeholder engagement

Engagement was carried out with a range of organisations involved in Transport to Health across the region. This included NHS Boards, Local Authority transport teams, community transport operators, public transport providers and members of the SEStran Transport to Health Learning Network, which brings together representatives from NHS Scotland Assure, the Scottish Ambulance Service and partner Health Boards.

Stakeholder input was used to sense-check emerging findings, provide operational context, and identify practical opportunities and constraints affecting delivery. Their perspectives were used to complement and contextualise the findings from the geographic analysis and public consultation.

Equality considerations

An initial Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) has been undertaken to inform this Case for Change, reflecting its early appraisal stage.

Equality and socio-economic considerations have been embedded throughout the evidence review, analysis and engagement activities. This has supported the identification of potential inequalities in access to healthcare and transport across the SEStran region, with particular regard to groups more likely to experience transport disadvantages.

The EqIA has informed the identification of problems, opportunities and issues within the Case for Change and highlights where further evidence, mitigation and engagement will be required at subsequent option development and appraisal stages. The assessment has been undertaken in line with STAG, the Equality Act 2010 and the Fairer Scotland Duty.

Analytical framing

All findings were synthesised using a Problems, Opportunities, Issues and Constraints framework, in line with STAG guidance. This ensures that the challenges identified in the evidence base are considered alongside future opportunities and practical constraints. The POIC framework also provides a clear structure for developing Transport Planning Objectives in the next phase of work.

Regional context

Transport to Health in the South East of Scotland is influenced by the region's geography, demography, socio-economic conditions, transport infrastructure and the configuration of healthcare services.

Understanding these factors is essential to explaining why transport barriers emerge in some areas and why experiences vary across the region. This section provides an overview of the wider context that influences access to healthcare for people living in the SEStran area.

Transport system overview

The SEStran region is served by an extensive road network and a varied but uneven public transport system. The left-hand map in Figure 1 illustrates the strategic road hierarchy, including motorways, A roads and B roads that form the backbone of regional and cross-boundary travel. These corridors provide generally good connectivity to major towns and to the region's acute hospitals although reliance on the road network is significantly higher in rural areas where alternatives are limited.

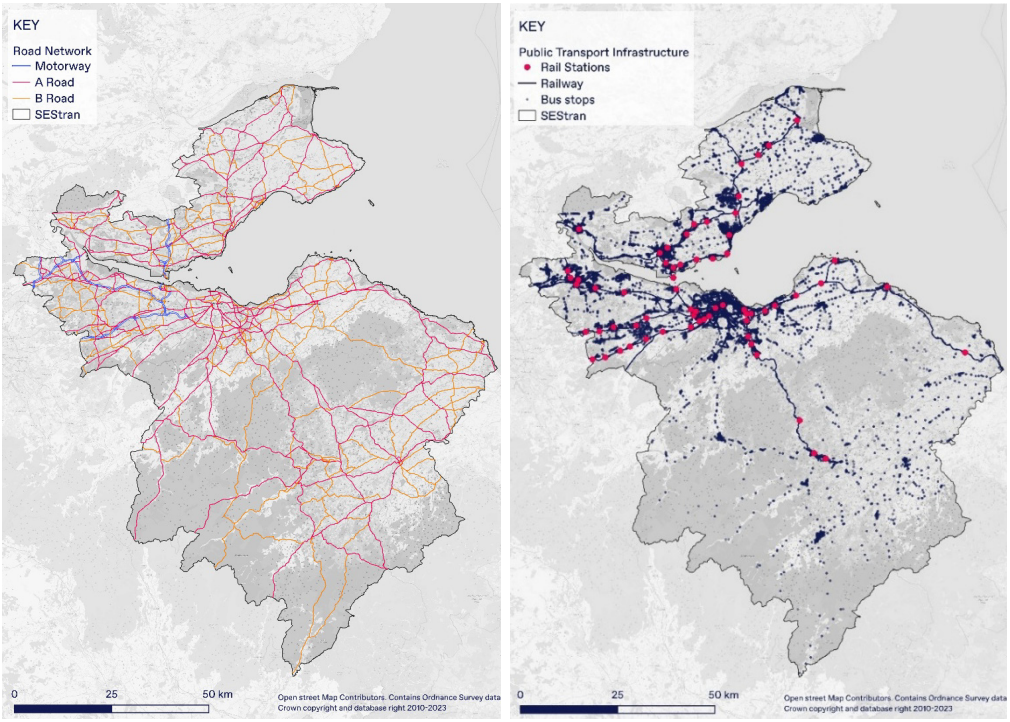


Figure 1: SEStran Road Network (Left) and Public Transport Infrastructure (Right)

The right-hand map shows the distribution of public transport infrastructure. Rail stations are rail corridors are concentrated around Edinburgh, Fife, Falkirk and the Borders railway corridor, providing strong links into the capital and between major settlements. In contrast, much of rural Fife, Clackmannanshire and the Scottish Borders sit at considerable distance from the rail network.

Bus stop density is highest in Edinburgh, West Lothian, Midlothian and the larger towns in Fife and Falkirk. However, the map also highlights large areas with sparse bus coverage, especially in rural parts of the Borders and north-eastern Fife. These patterns illustrate the structural challenges faced by residents who depend on public transport, particularly when travelling to hospital sites located outside their immediate communities.

Healthcare system overview

Healthcare provision across the SEStran region comprises a network of GP surgeries, community hospitals and health centres, supported by several major acute hospitals located in each of the four NHS Board areas. Figure 2 illustrates the distribution of these facilities and shows the geographic footprints of NHS Borders, NHS Fife, NHS Forth Valley and NHS Lothian, highlighting the spatial relationship between population centres and the healthcare estate.

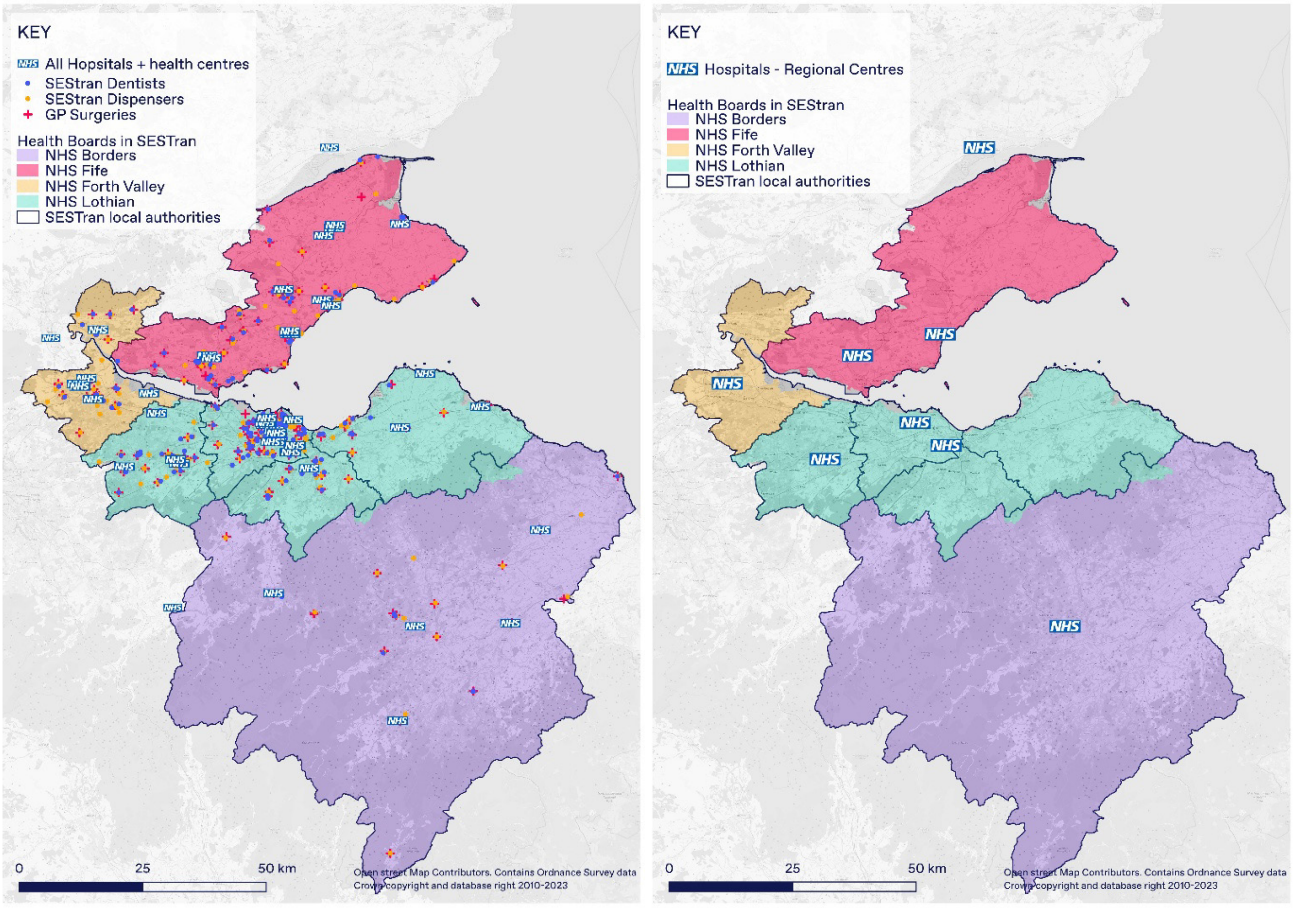


Figure 2: Primary Healthcare (Left), Regional healthcare centres providing Secondary and Tertiary Care (Right)

GP surgeries are generally widespread and closely aligned with where people live, providing relatively local access for routine primary care. However, smaller settlements in rural areas, particularly in parts of the Scottish Borders, Clackmannanshire and eastern Fife, sit at greater distances from their nearest GP practice. For residents without access to a car, this can increase reliance on public, community or family transportation to attend healthcare appointments.

Major hospitals, shown in Figure 2 as NHS hospital markers, are more spatially concentrated.

Acute and specialist care is delivered from key sites including the Royal Infirmary of Edinburgh and Western General Hospital in Edinburgh, Victoria Hospital in Kirkcaldy, Forth Valley Royal Hospital in Larbert and Borders General Hospital in Melrose. This degree of centralisation is necessary for clinical quality and efficiency, but it also means that many residents must travel beyond their local authority area, and in some cases beyond their Health Board boundary, to access hospital-based or specialist services.

Community hospitals and healthcare centres supplement this network by offering local outpatient clinics and minor procedures, but the availability and scope of services vary between sites. As a result, patients often still travel to acute hospitals for diagnostics, specialist appointments and higher-level care.

Regional geography and settlement patterns

The SEStran region spans eight local authority areas with diverse settlement patterns, ranging from dense urban neighbourhoods in Edinburgh and Falkirk to dispersed rural communities in the Scottish Borders, Clackmannanshire and eastern Fife. These spatial differences strongly influence the types of transport options available to residents and the practicality of accessing healthcare without a private car.[5]

Figure 3 illustrates this variation, showing the Scottish Government's Urban-Rural Classification (left) alongside population density (right) across the region. The maps highlight the concentration of larger settlements along key transport corridors and the extensive areas where population is dispersed across small towns, villages and remote rural settings.

Urban areas typically benefit from more frequent and comprehensive bus services, while rural areas experience lower service density and reduced availability, particularly outside peak times.[5][6] However, journeys to major hospitals can still be indirect, often requiring interchange or travel through congested corridors.[7]

[5] Scottish Government (2020) Scottish Household Survey – Travel and Transport in Scotland

[6] Transport Scotland (2025) Scottish Transport Statistics 2024: Chapter 2 – Bus and Coach Travel

[7] SEStran (2025) Regional Bus Strategy – Case for Change

Semi-rural and commuter towns in West Lothian, Midlothian and coastal East Lothian typically have reasonable daytime bus provision during core hours, but service frequency often reduces significantly in the early morning, evening and at weekends.[8] Residents in these areas may therefore rely more heavily on private cars for hospital appointments located outside their immediate communities.

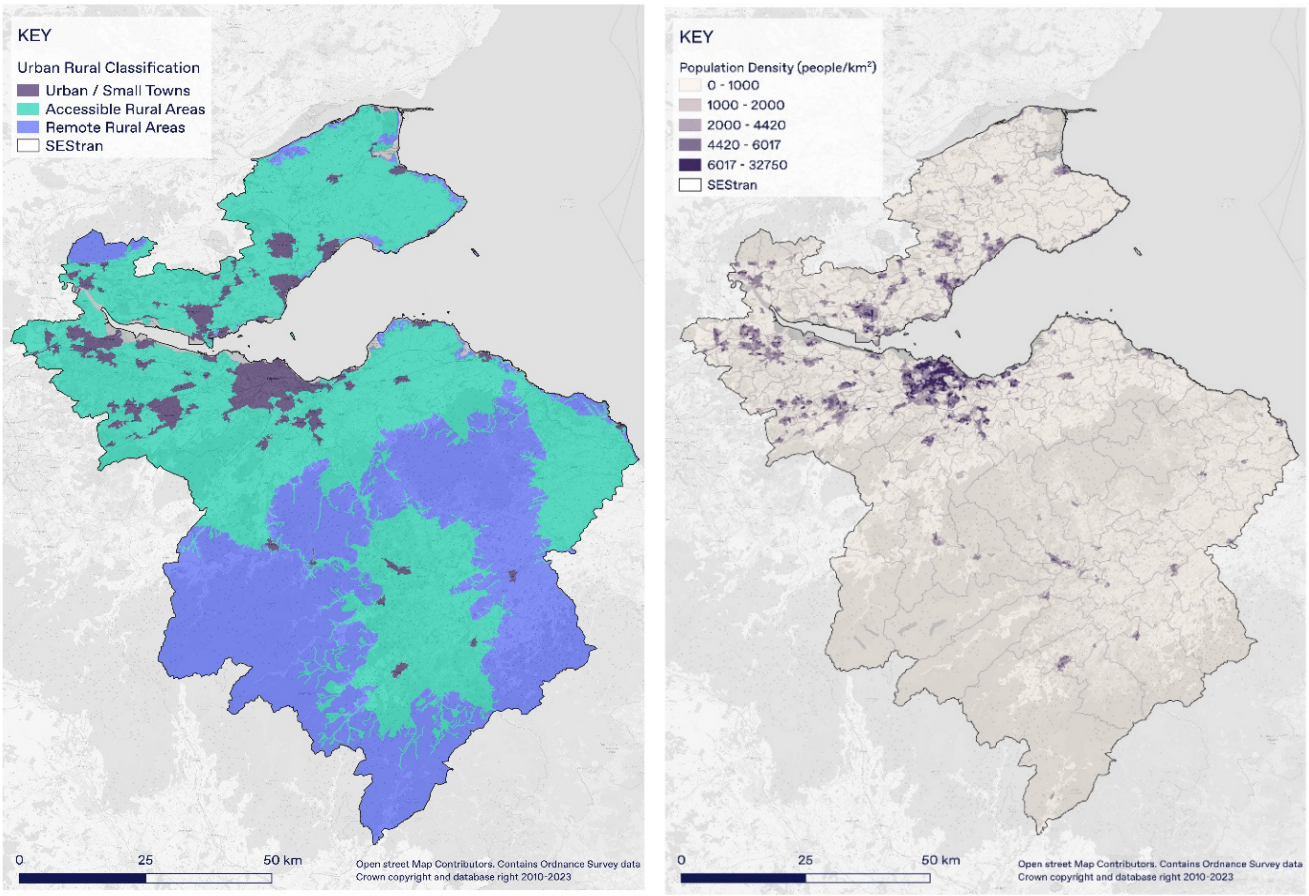


Figure 3 Urban–Rural Classification (left) and Population density (right) across the SEStran region

These constraints mean that many rural residents depend on private, community or informal transport to reach healthcare. In this context, informal transport refers to privately arranged, unpaid or non-commercial travel outside statutory services. This reliance can exacerbate disadvantage for people without access to a car, those with mobility impairments, and those who require frequent appointments.[9]

[8] SEStran (2025) Transport to Health Literature Review

[9] https://publichealthscotland.scot/population-health/environmental-health-impacts/transport-and-health/why-is-transport-important-for-health/

Demographics and population change

The SEStran region is home to over 1.6 million people. but demographic trends vary significantly between local authority areas. These differences directly influence travel demand, patterns of healthcare use and the types of Transport to Health support required.

Figure 4 shows the proportion of residents aged over 75, highlighting large areas in the Scottish Borders, Clackmannanshire and eastern Fife where older populations are most concentrated and which coincide with more rural settings. Typically, public transport frequency declines and distances to services increase in these settings. This age group is particularly relevant, as older adults tend to require more regular healthcare appointments and are less likely to continue driving long distances as they age, increasing dependence on public, community or informal transport networks.[10]

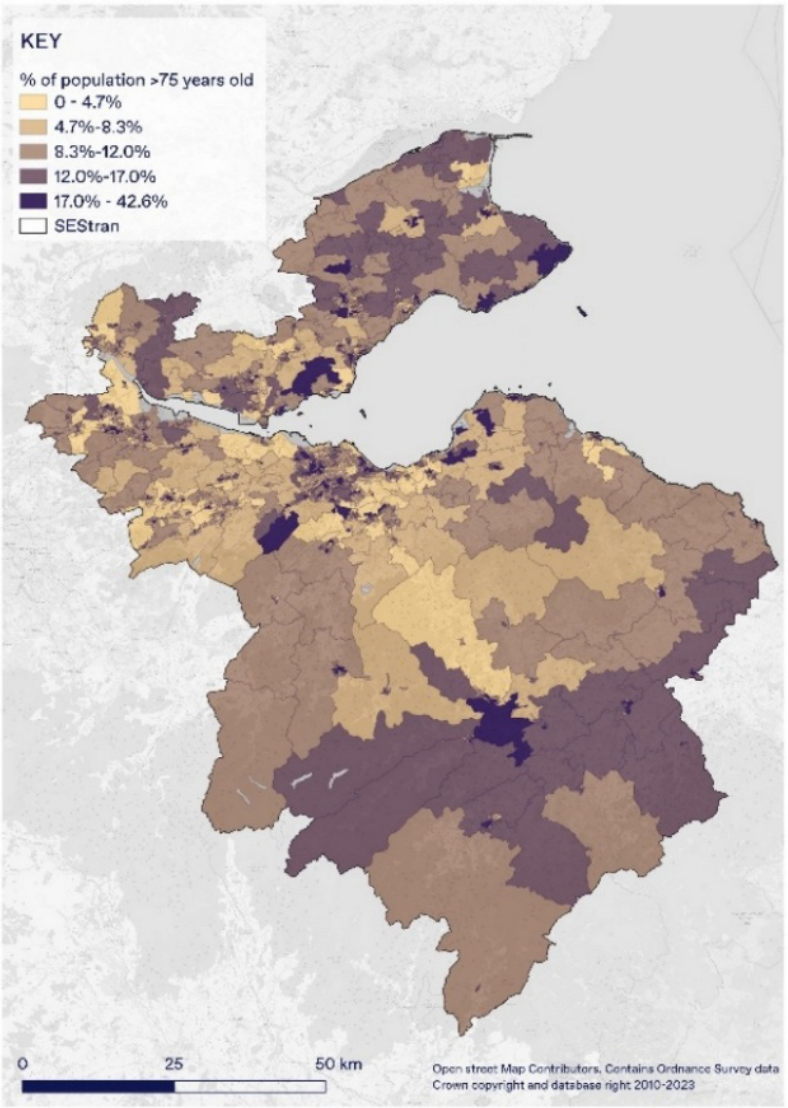


Figure 4: Proportion of residents aged 75 and over by area

[10] https://www.transport.gov.scot/publication/health-inequalities-impact-assessment-hiia-nts-delivery-plan/key-issues-and-evidence

Figure 5 presents the wider age structure by local authority. Edinburgh has the youngest profile, with a high proportion of working-age adults and comparatively fewer residents aged over 65 and over. West Lothian, Falkirk and Midlothian also show younger age distributions, reflecting continued residential expansion. In contrast, the Scottish Borders and Clackmannanshire have some of the highest proportions of older adults in the region, contributing to elevated transport need for primary and secondary care.

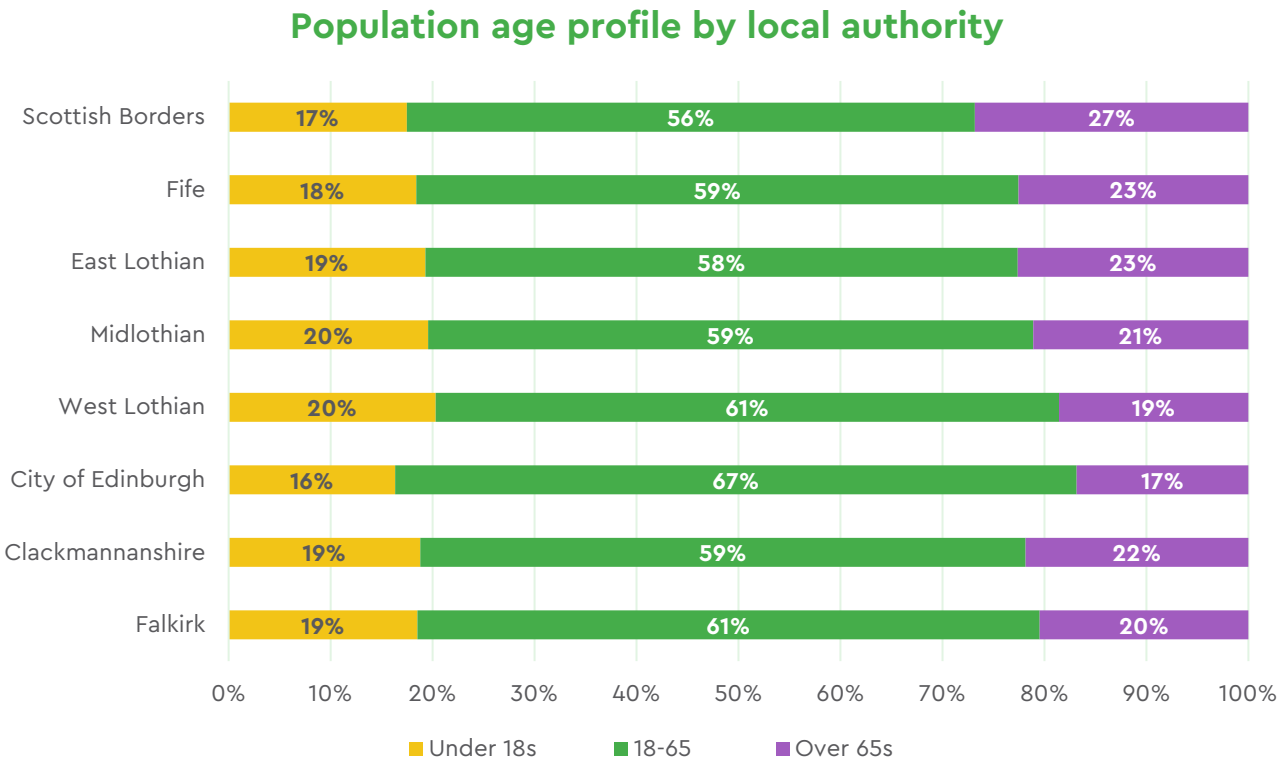


Figure 5: Population age profile by local authority

Population change across the region is uneven. National Records of Scotland projections indicate sustained growth in Edinburgh, Midlothian and East Lothian to 2032, driven by continued housing development and inward migration.[11] Many rural areas, however, show stagnation or decline, which can exacerbate vulnerability where transport services are already limited.[12]

Midlothian is currently one of the fastest-growing areas in Scotland. The emerging Midlothian Local Development Plan 2 identifies land for approximately 8,851 new homes across the 2027–2037 plan period, reflecting a sustained period of residential expansion.[13] This scale of planned growth is expected to generate additional travel demand. Without corresponding improvements in public transport, active travel infrastructure and Transport to Health provision, increased car use may exacerbate congestion on key corridors, including those linking Midlothian to major hospitals in Edinburgh.

[11] National Records of Scotland (2025) Subnational Population Projections: 2022-based

[12] National Records of Scotland (2025) Council area profiles

[13] Midlothian Council (2025) Midlothian Local Development Plan 2

Socio-economic inequalities and transport poverty

Socio-economic inequalities play a significant role in shaping how people access healthcare across the SEStran region. Levels of deprivation vary widely, with concentrations in parts of Edinburgh, coastal towns, and areas of rural Fife, West Lothian and Clackmannanshire. These patterns have a direct bearing on transport needs and the options available to residents.

People living in more deprived areas are:

- More likely to have complex health needs
- Less likely to own a private car, and
- More likely to live in communities with weaker, less frequent or less reliable public transport links.

Public Health Scotland defines Transport poverty as:

> "The lack of transport options that are available, reliable, affordable, accessible or safe that allow people to meet their daily needs and achieve a reasonable quality of life." [14]

A key driver of transport poverty is the dominance of the private car within the transport system. Where household car access is low, residents have fewer alternatives when public transport is limited, indirect or expensive. Deprivation and transport poverty therefore tend to reinforce one another.

Figure 6 illustrates these relationships. Areas with higher deprivation also show the highest proportions of households without access to a private car. This overlap identifies communities where reliance on public or community transport is greatest and where long or complex journeys to healthcare are most likely to be experienced as a barrier.

[14] Public Health Scotland, 2024, Transport Poverty Briefing

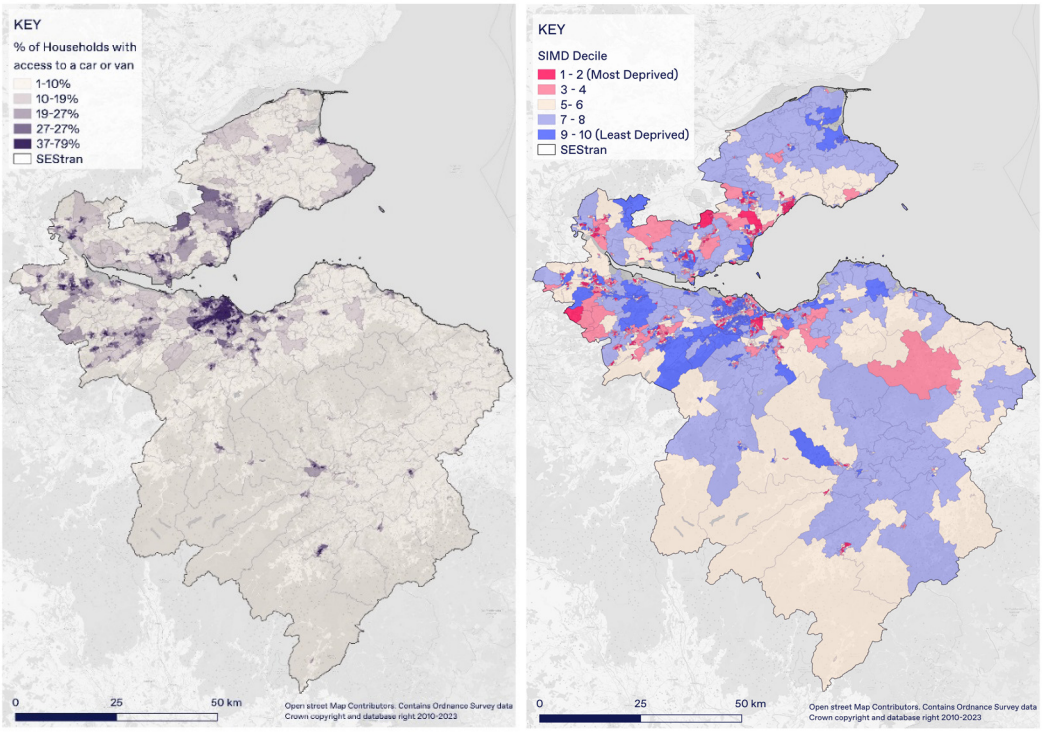


Figure 6: Deprivation and car access across the SEStran region

Figure 7 strengthens the disparity by showing that households in the most deprived deciles are significantly more likely to have no access to a car than those in more affluent areas.

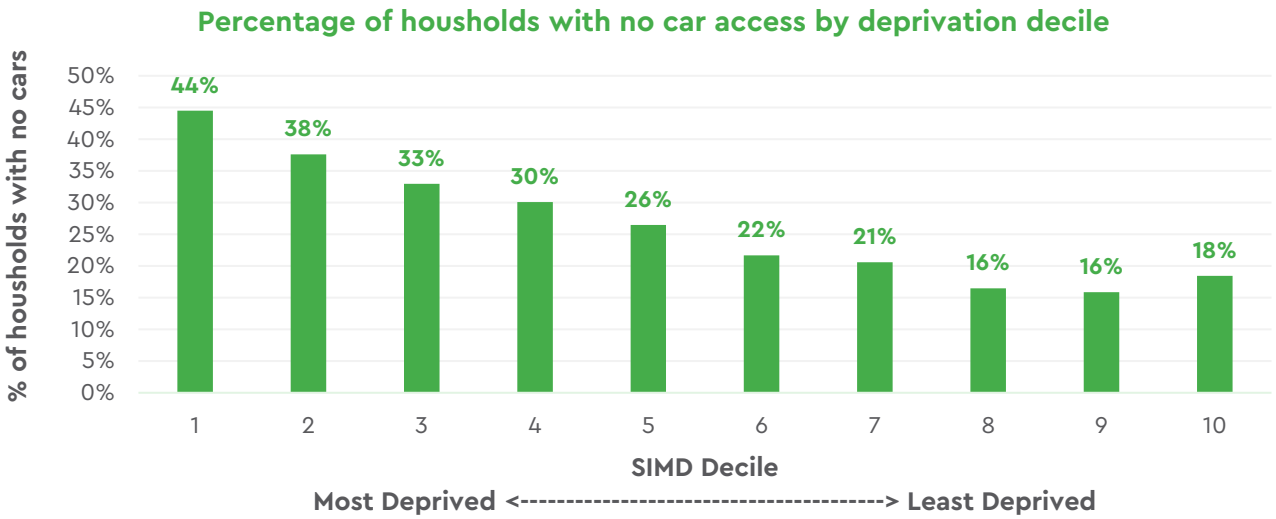


Figure 7: Car access by deprivation decile

As a result, residents in the most deprived communities are disproportionately reliant on public transport and therefore more exposed to long travel times, limited-service availability and indirect routes to both primary and hospital-based care. For those with chronic conditions, mobility impairments or frequent appointments, these barriers can lead to missed or delayed care and increased pressure on informal support networks.

Taken together, these findings highlight where transport-related disadvantage is most concentrated and provide a strong foundation for identifying the communities where improvements in Transport to Health provision will have the greatest impact.

Transport network characteristics and access to primary care

Public transport and driving travel times

Access to primary care (community-based, first-contact NHS services) across the SEStran region is shaped by the structure of the transport network and the significant differences in journey times between travel modes. Travel-time modelling shows clear and consistent disparities between public transport and driving when accessing GP surgeries.

Across most of the region, travelling to a GP by public transport takes between two and three times longer than travelling by car. This pattern is evident in urban, semi-rural and rural settings, reflecting the indirect nature of many bus routes, interchange requirements and variable service frequencies. The maps in figure 8 illustrate the distribution of public transport journey times to GP surgeries, compared with the equivalent driving times.

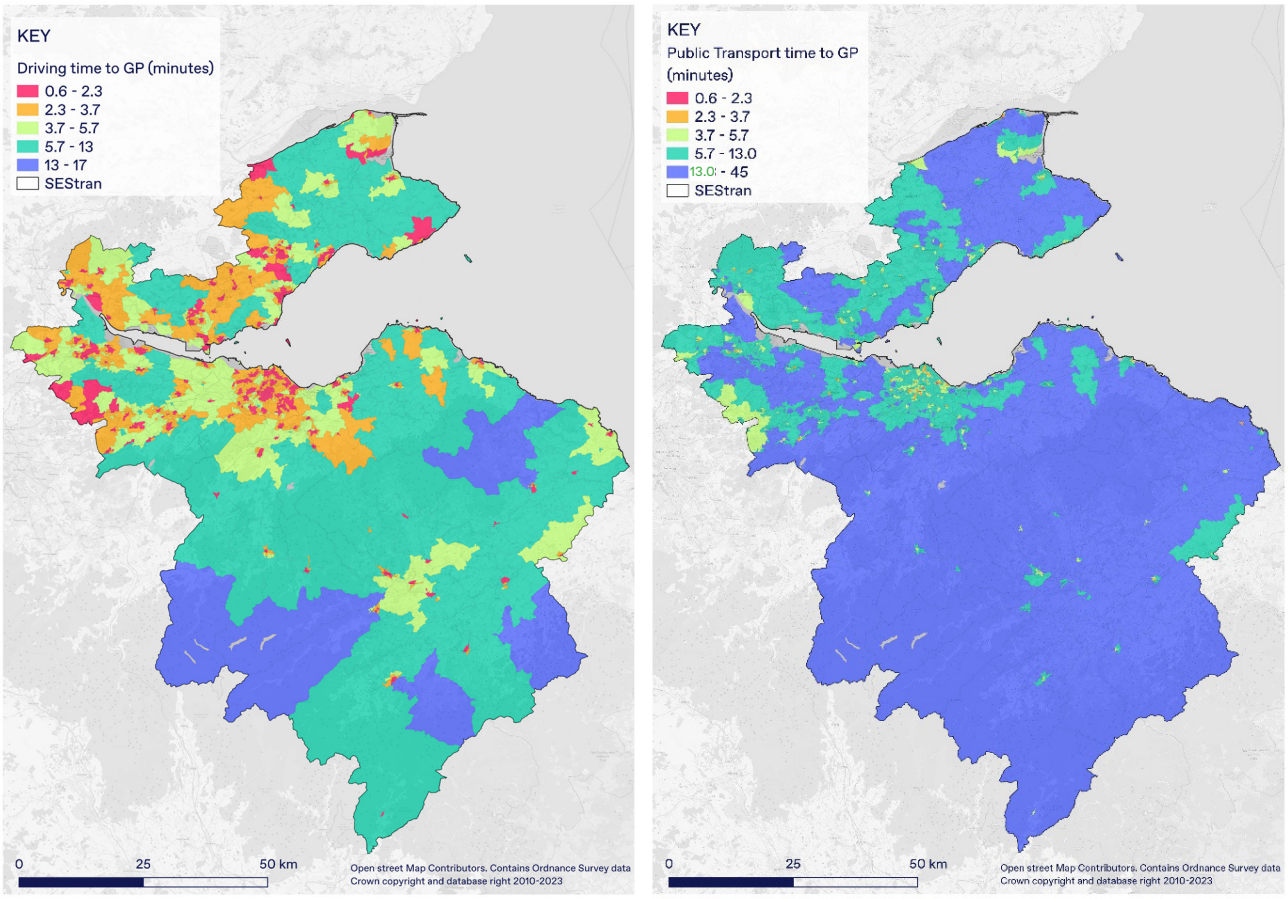
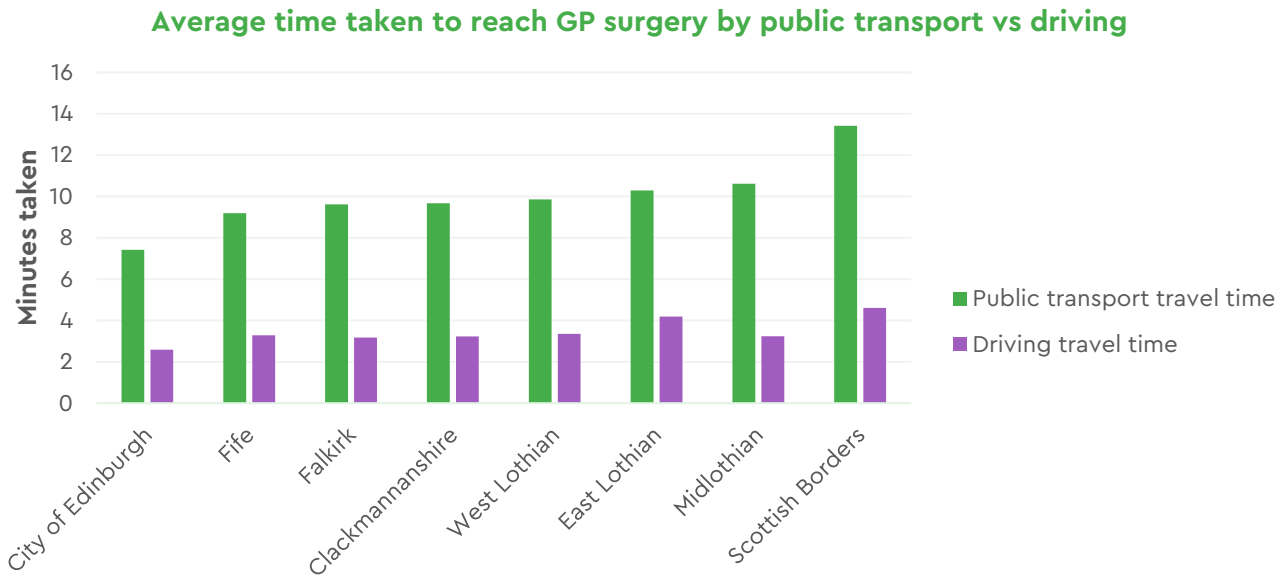


Figure 8: Public transport and driving travel times to GP surgeries across the SEStran region

Figure 9 reinforces this pattern, showing average travel times to GP surgeries by local authority and highlighting substantial differences between car and public transport journey times.



[15]Figure 9: Average journey time to GP surgery by mode and local authority

Deprivation and travel times

The relationship between travel times and deprivation is shown in Figure 10. Modelled public transport journey times do not vary substantially across deprivation deciles, yet residents in the most deprived areas are significantly less likely to own a car. As a result, they cannot avoid relying on longer and often indirect public transport journeys to reach healthcare appointments.

For people with long-term conditions or regular outpatient needs, these extended journey times can present a material barrier to consistent healthcare access.

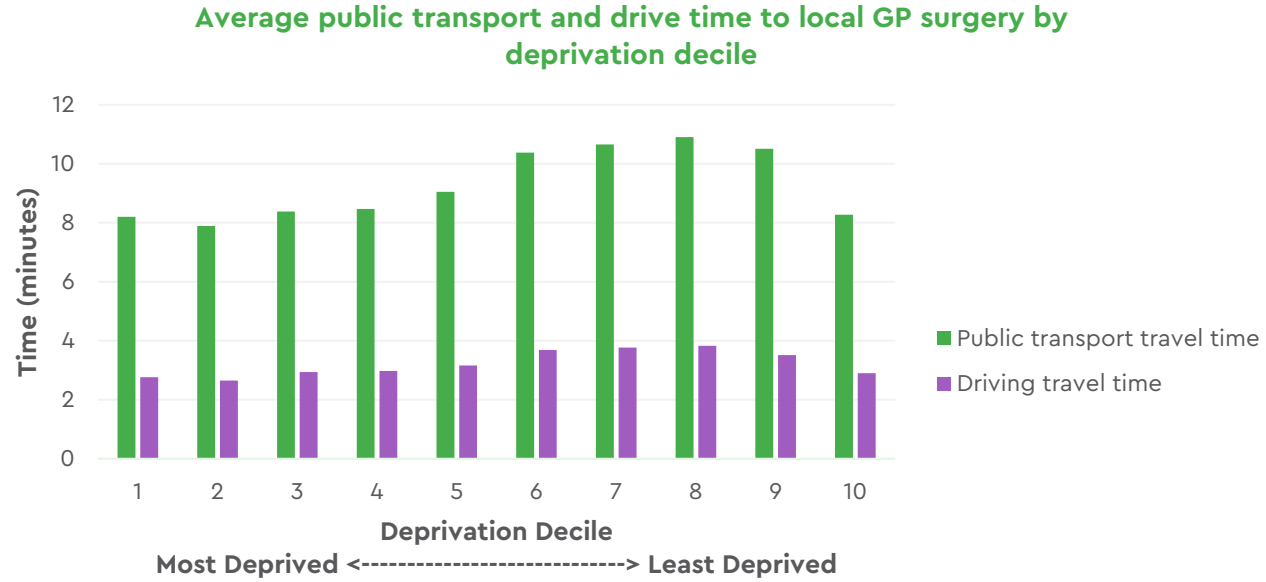


Figure 10: Average public transport and driving time to GP surgery by deprivation decile

[15] Values are presented as exact averages; therefore, journey times may include fractional minutes.

Rurality and travel times

Rurality is one of the strongest determinants of long or complex journeys to primary care. Figure 11 shows that remote rural areas experience the highest average public transport journey times to GP surgeries, averaging around 24 minutes. By contrast, large urban areas have average travel times of 7.5 minutes, illustrating the substantial difference in accessibility between settlement types.

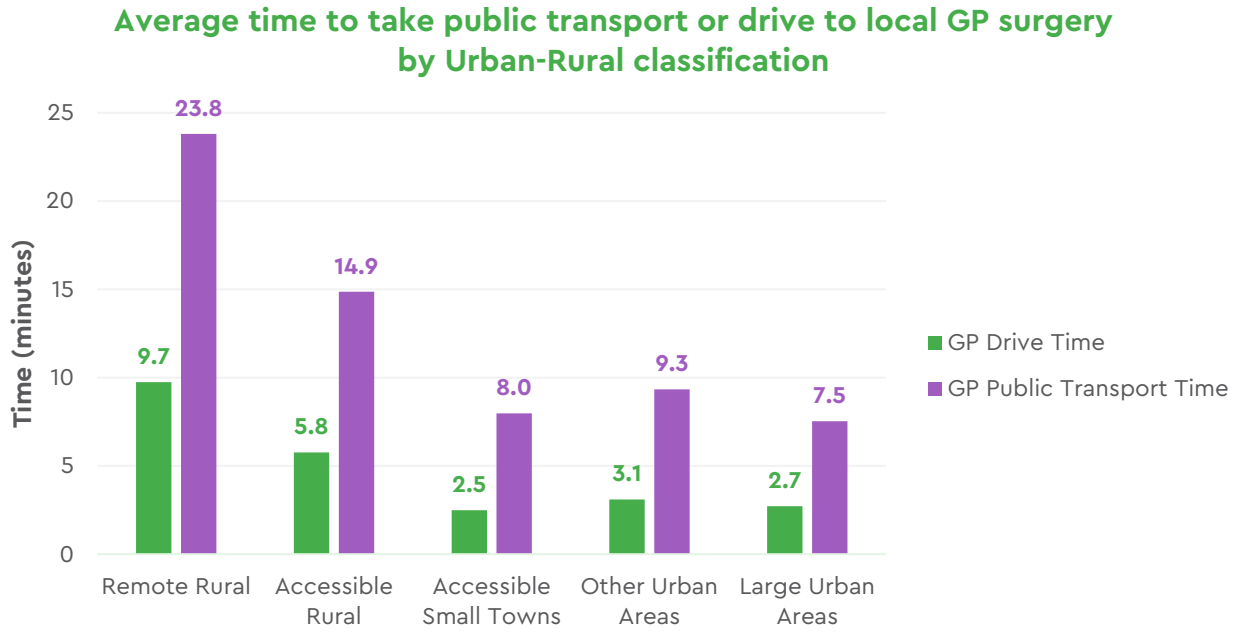


Figure 11: Average journey time to GP surgery by urban–rural classification

Accessible rural areas and small-town settings also experience longer average journey times than urban centres, reflecting more dispersed settlements, reduced service frequencies and longer distances to healthcare sites.

The infographic below highlights this disparity clearly: a typical public transport journey to a GP in remote rural areas takes more than three times longer than in large urban areas.

Access to secondary and tertiary care

Secondary and tertiary healthcare services (specialist hospital services and highly specialised care, respectively) are more centralised across the SEStran region and typically require longer travel distances than primary care. These services are located in a smaller number of acute hospitals, meaning that many residents - particularly those in Clackmannanshire, the Scottish Borders, rural Fife and East Lothian - must travel outside their immediate community to reach treatment.

Figure 12 shows the distribution of data zones by Local Authority which fit into various journey time brackets. The list of hospitals including in modelling were those considered as key NHS Scotland Accident and Emergency Sites, with sites comprised of Emergency Departments and Minor Injuries Units (MIU). Transport Scotland has used TRACC modelling software to estimate the journey times to key hospitals. This model demonstrates longer journey times to hospitals than primary care services like GPs.

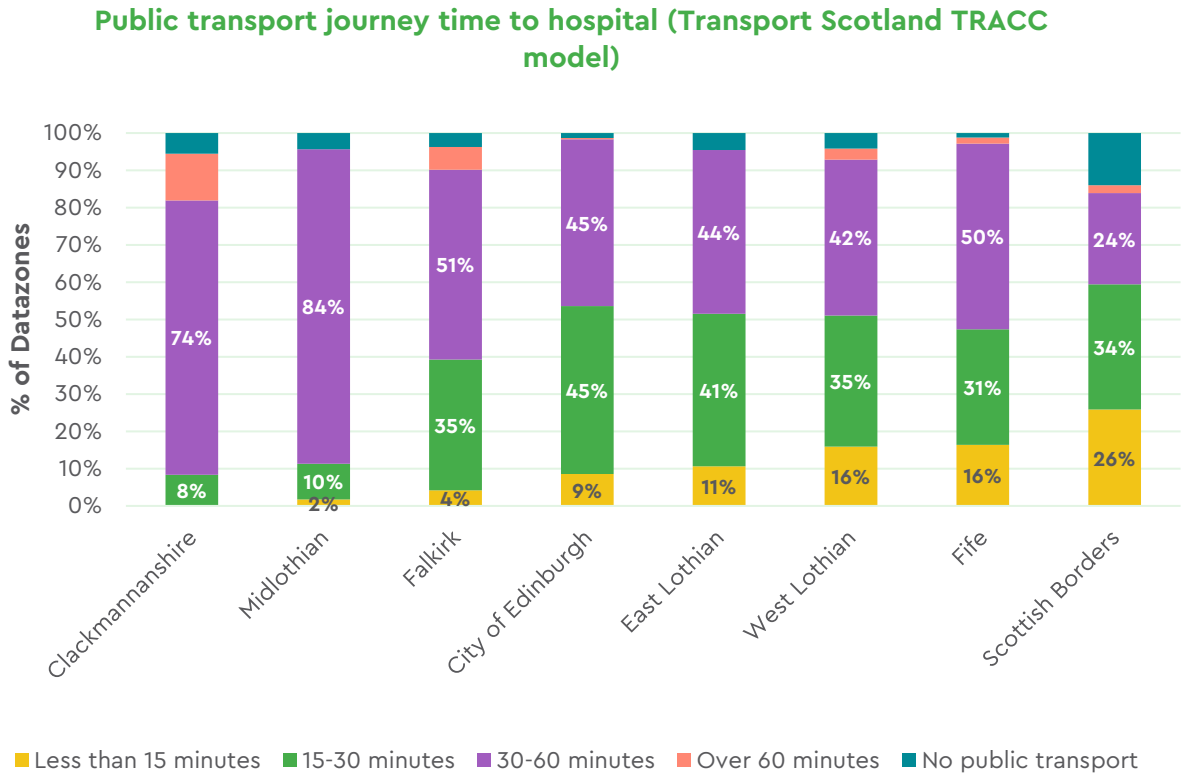


Figure 12: Public transport journey time to hospital (Transport Scotland TRACC model)[16]

Public transport journey times to hospital are substantially longer than those to GP surgeries due to the nature of the spatial distribution of healthcare services. Across the region, journeys to hospital by public transport take more than three times as long on average as those to GP surgeries.

9 minutes
Average journey time to GP surgery

31 minutes
Average journey time to major hospital

[16] Transport Scotland, 2022, Journey Time Estimates Monitoring And Evaluation 2019 Baseline Report May 2022 National Transport Strategy NTS2

In Clackmannanshire, this disparity is particularly pronounced: modelled travel times indicate that public transport journeys to hospital are 4.6 times longer than equivalent journeys to a GP. This reflects the absence of a major acute hospital within the local authority boundary, with residents travelling to Forth Valley Royal Hospital or Stirling Community Hospital for secondary care.

These differences highlight the value of shifting some routine outpatient activity into more local settings, where appropriate, and improving coordination between transport provision and hospital scheduling.

Origin-destination patterns for hospital access

Origin–destination modelling provides further insight into how residents across the SEStran region travel to major hospitals. Figure 13 shows modelled routes and travel times between local communities and hospital sites, illustrating the wide catchment areas served by hospitals across the region.

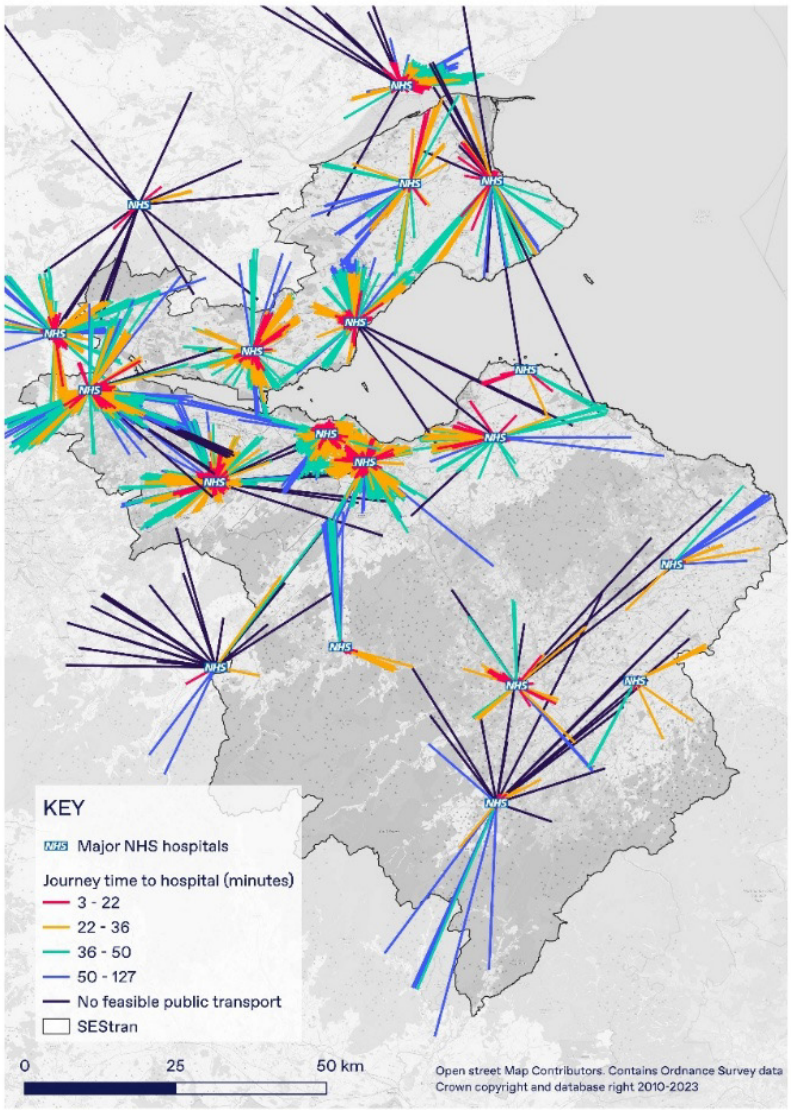


Figure 13: Origin–destination patterns for public transport travel to major hospitals

Figure 14 presents an aggregated view of public transport travel times to the nearest major hospital.

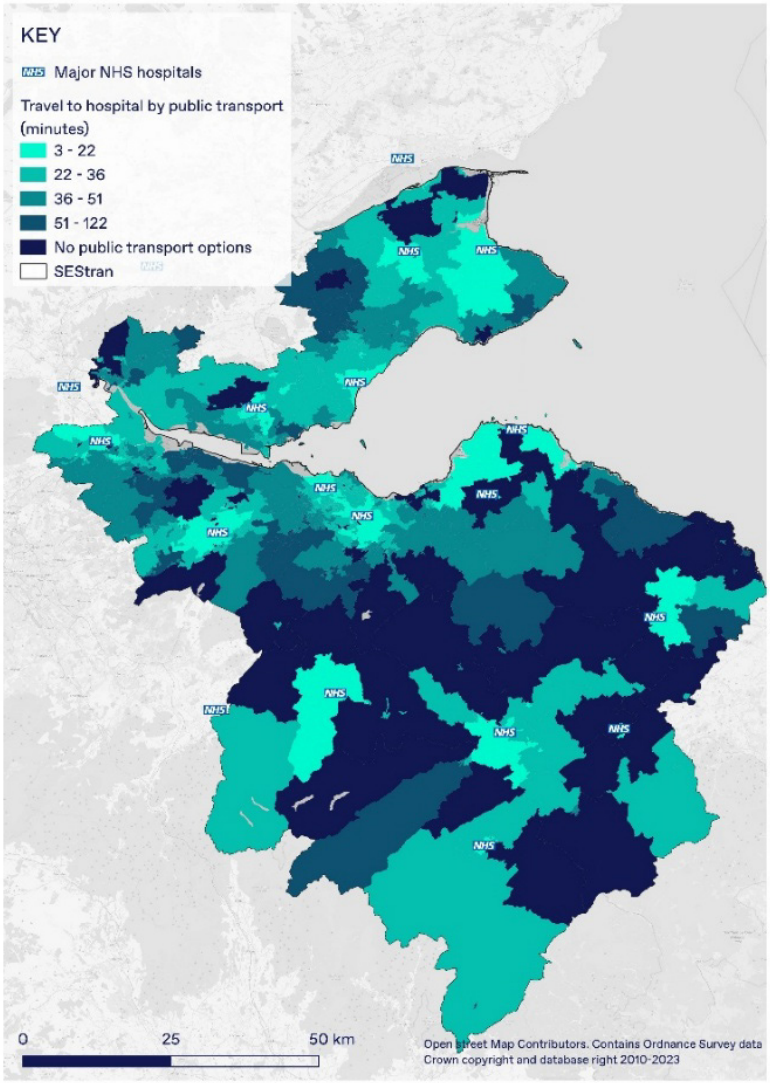


Figure 14: Public transport travel time to nearest major hospital

Two key findings emerge:

- Large parts of Clackmannanshire, the Scottish Borders and rural Fife experience hospital travel times exceeding 50 minutes by public transport.
- Several areas have no feasible public transport connection to a major hospital within a reasonable travel time.

These spatial patterns underline the need for targeted interventions to reduce travel burdens for communities with the longest and most complex hospital journeys.

Public consultation summary

An online public consultation survey was undertaken between 15th October 2025 and 16th November 2025 to gather insight into how people across the SEStran region travel to healthcare appointments, the challenges they face, and how these vary by geography, type of care and personal circumstances.

The survey provides essential lived-experience evidence that complements the desk-based analysis in the previous section and directly informs the Problems, Opportunities, Issues and Constraints (POIC) assessment.

This section summarises who responded to the survey, where they live, how they travel to healthcare, and the main barriers they reported. It then examines the results in more depth at Health Board level.

A full question-by-question overview of survey responses, is provided in the accompanying Appendix document.

Survey participation

The survey was promoted through a targeted communications campaign and was primarily completed online, with paper copies available on request.

It collected both quantitative and qualitative data, including structured questions on travel behaviour, barriers and appointment types, alongside open-text responses to capture lived experience across the SEStran region.

As with all voluntary surveys, responses reflect a self-selecting sample and may over-represent those with stronger views or more frequent interaction with healthcare services.

Survey reach

A total of 1,512 people completed the survey, providing rich qualitative and quantitative insights across all eight Local Authority areas in the SEStran region.

Postcode completeness

Respondents were asked to provide a sector-level (four–five digit) postcode to support geographic assignment. Of the 1,512 responses:

- 1,340 respondents (88%) provided a district-level postcode (e.g. TD2)
- 866 respondents (59%) provided a sector-level postcode (e.g. TD2 1)
- Only a small proportion of respondents did not provide sufficient information for geographic mapping.

This high level of completeness enables accurate grouping by Local Authority and Health Board and supports reliable spatial analysis. Figure 15 illustrates how respondents are distributed across the region. The left-hand map shows response density at postcode district level, while the right-hand map presents finer-grained patterns by postcode sector.

Together, these maps demonstrate broad geographic coverage, including strong participation across East Lothian, Fife, the Scottish Borders and Midlothian, and meaningful representation in both rural and urban areas.

This provides a robust basis for interpreting the geographic patterns discussed later in this section.

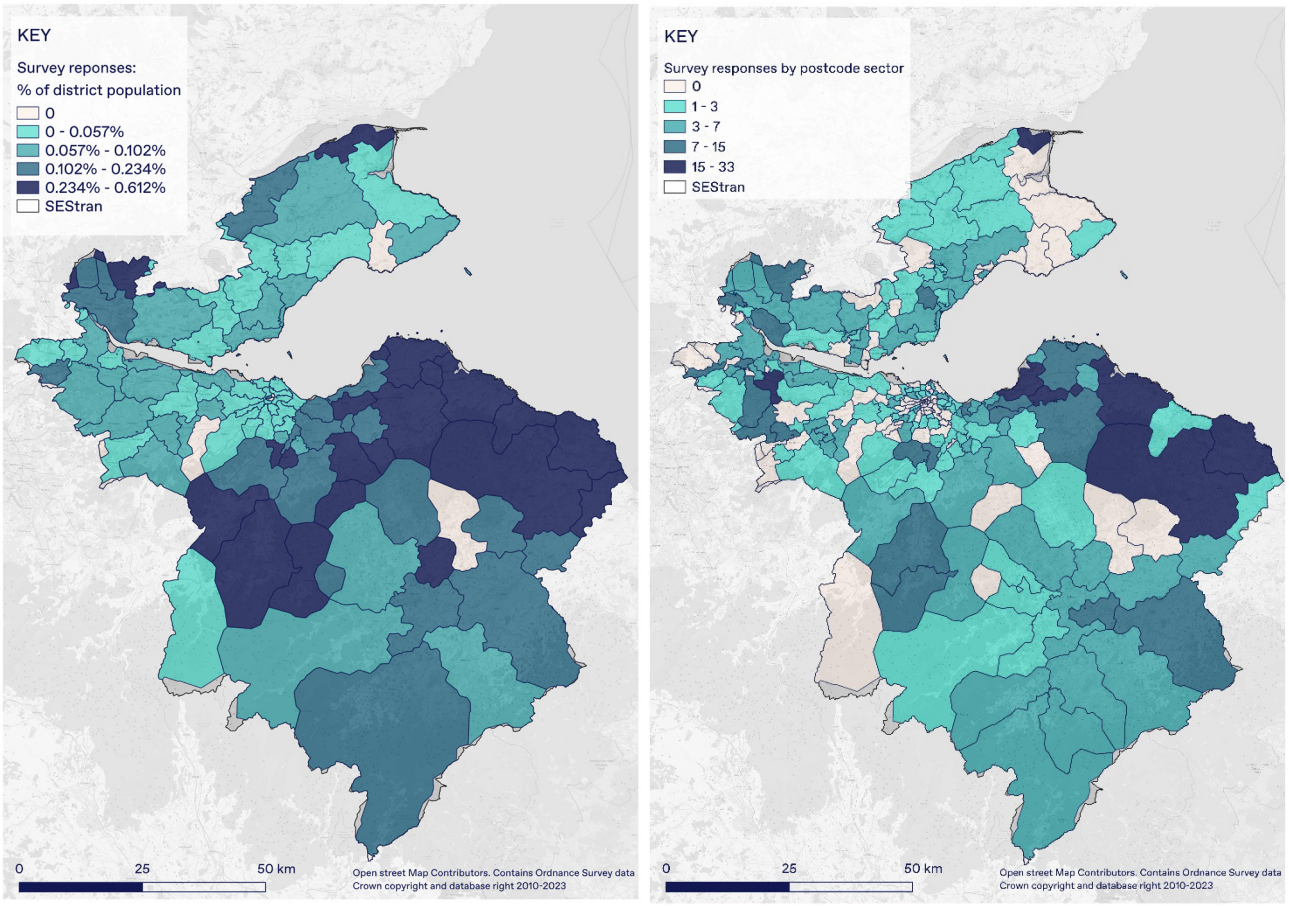


Figure 15 Density of survey responses by postcode district (left) and total responses by postcode sector (right)

Geographic distribution of responses

Responses by Local Authority

A broad spread of responses was received across the region. As illustrated in Figure 16, the highest numbers of responses came from East Lothian, Fife, and the Scottish Borders, reflecting strong participation in areas where Transport to Health is a significant local concern. Only nine responses originated from outside the SEStran region. Although Clackmannanshire has a smaller population base, it contributed a meaningful volume of responses, enabling locally relevant insight.

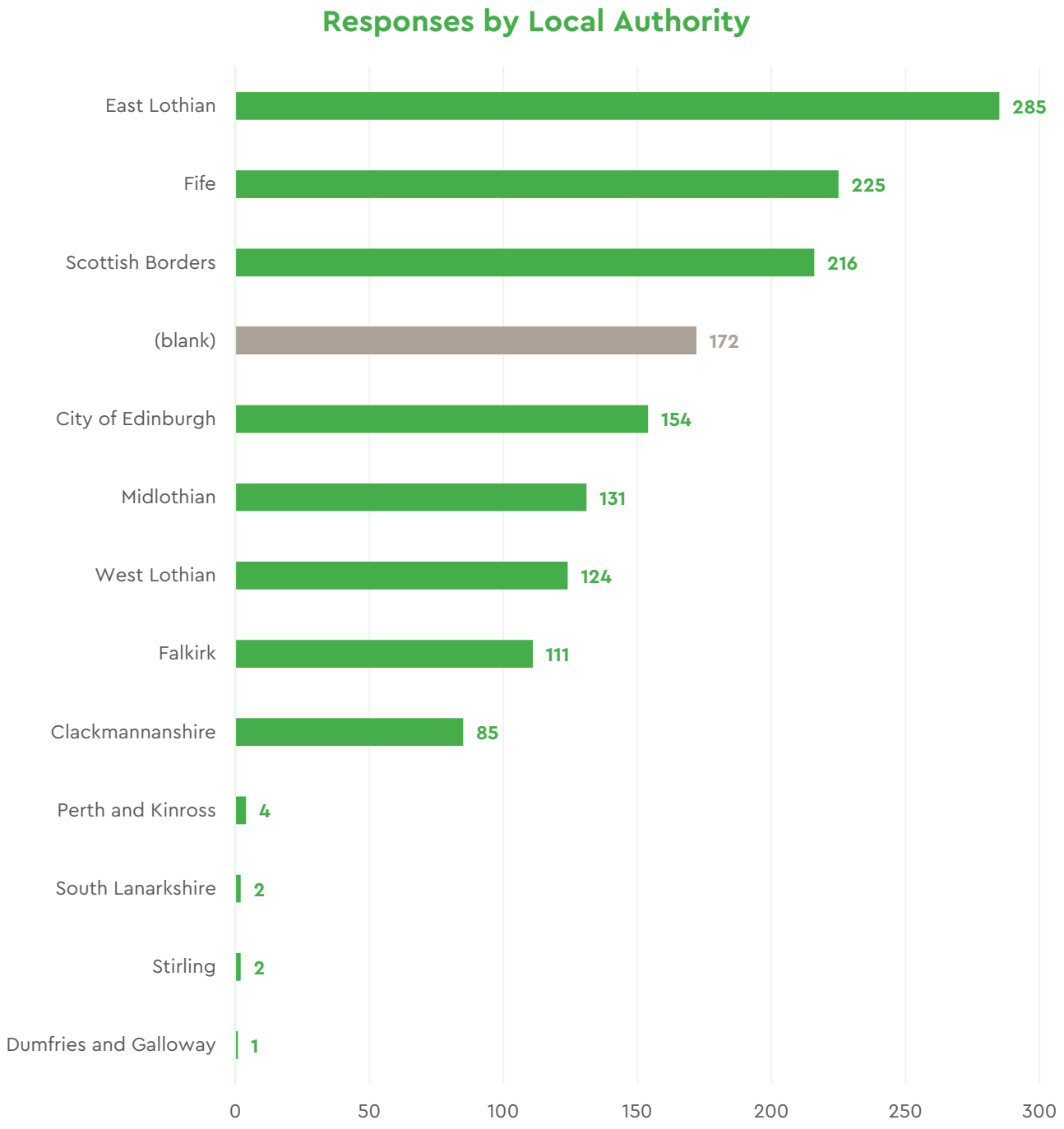


Figure 16: Responses by Local Authority

Responses by Health Board

When mapped to Health Board areas (Figure 17), the distribution broadly mirrors population patterns. NHS Lothian accounts for the largest share of responses, consistent with its significantly higher population density. Substantial numbers were also received from NHS Fife, NHS Borders and NHS Forth Valley, supporting Health Board–level analysis in the next section.

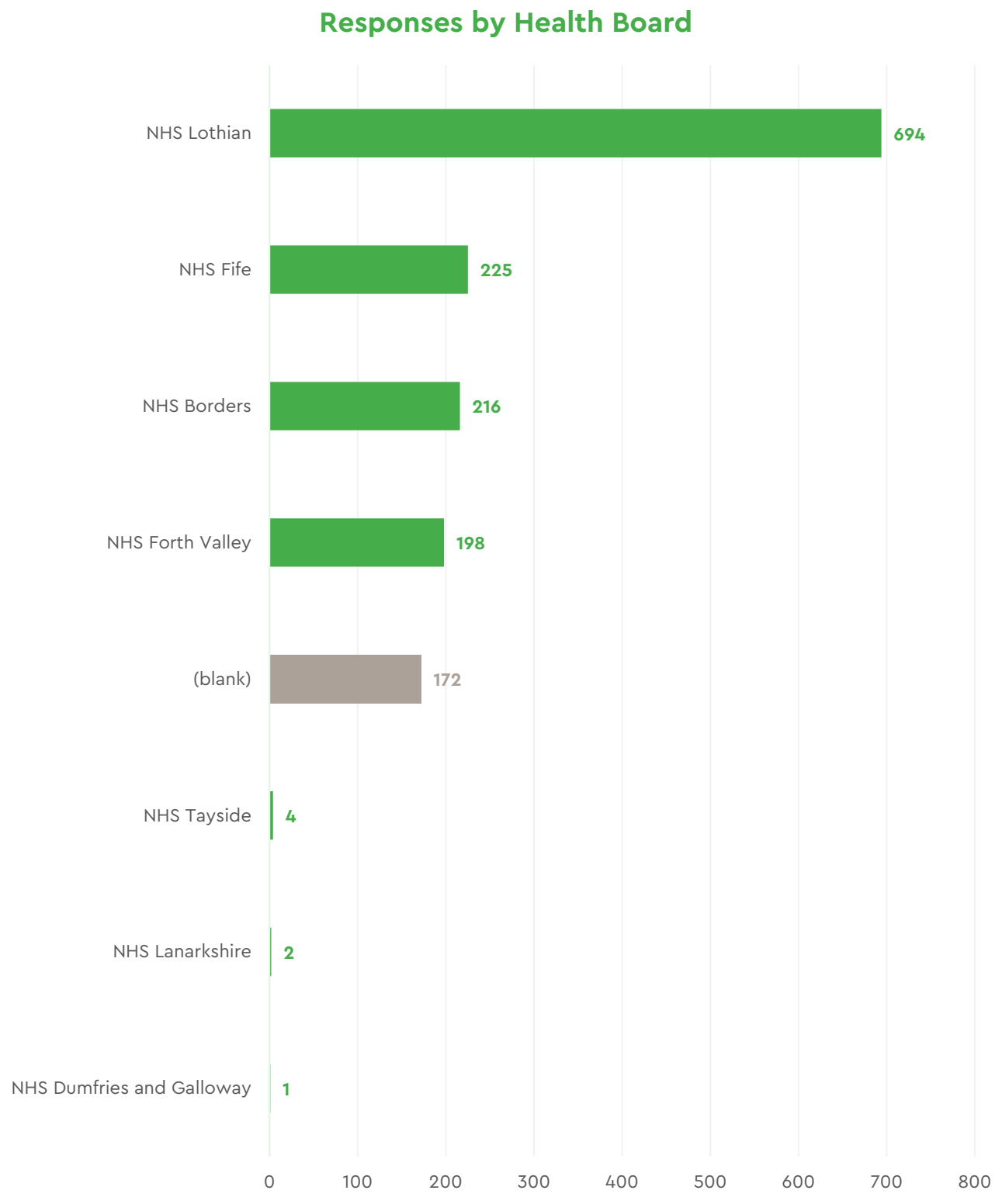


Figure 17: Responses by Health Board

Respondent characteristics

Respondents represented a wide range of travel needs and circumstances. Figure 18 summarises relevant characteristics of survey respondents, it demonstrates that respondents to our survey were marginally more likely to have access to a car or van and significantly more likely to be a woman, over 60 years old, have a long-term health condition/disability or provide unpaid care. This mixture of characteristics shows that respondents to our survey belong to groups more concerned with being able to easily travel to healthcare services than the average SEStran resident.

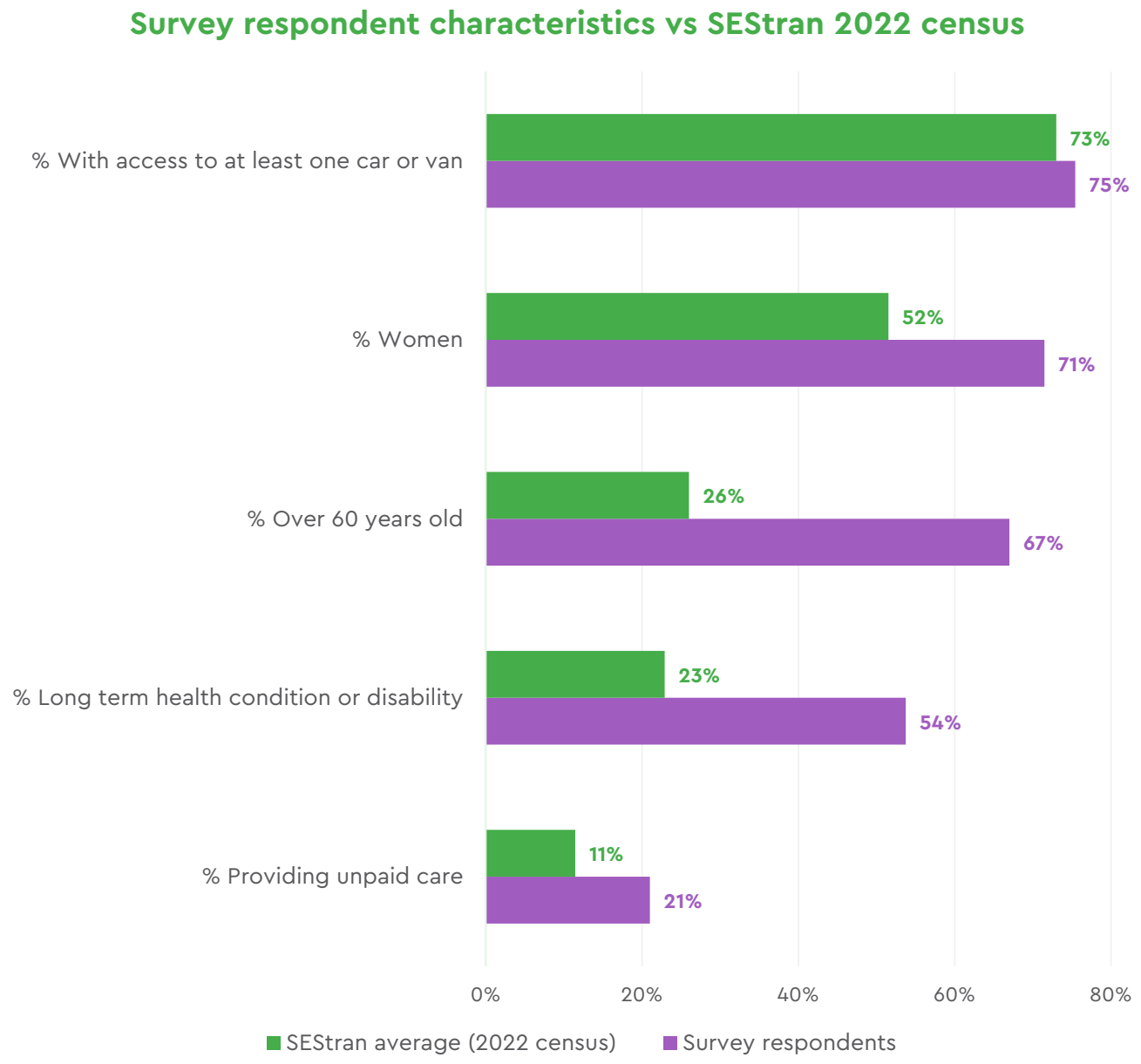


Figure 18: Survey respondent characteristics vs SEStran average via 2022 Census[17] [18] [19]

[17] Scottish Government, 2024, Scotland's Census 2022 - Health, disability and unpaid care

[18] National Records of Scotland, 2025, Scotland's Census 2022 - UV102a - Age by sex

[19] National Records of Scotland, 2025, Census 2022 estimates for Car or van availability

An additional characteristic to note is that our survey found 73% of those acting as a carer to someone when travelling to appointments are women. This coheres with the Carers Census 2023/24 which also found that 73% of unpaid carers in the SEStran area are women.[20]

Figure 19 demonstrates how survey respondents are heavily weighted to be older and are predominantly women.

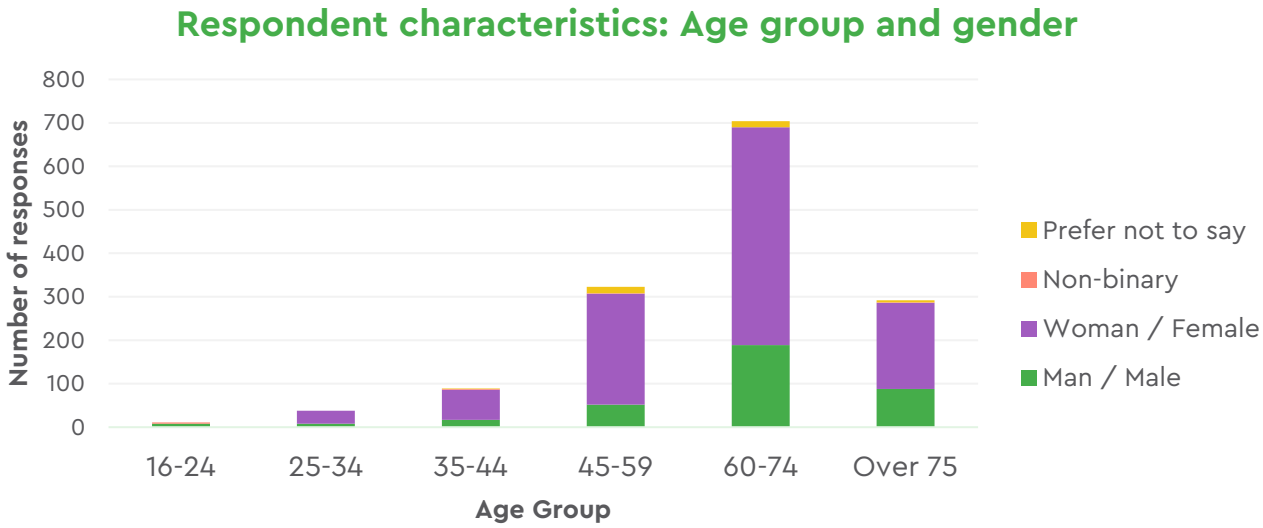


Figure 19: Age and gender distribution of survey respondents

Figure 20 displays the 55% of respondents who provided income data. The 45% who did not provide data makes this data an incomplete view of our respondents but gives an indication that the median income of respondents may be between £20,000 - £30,000.

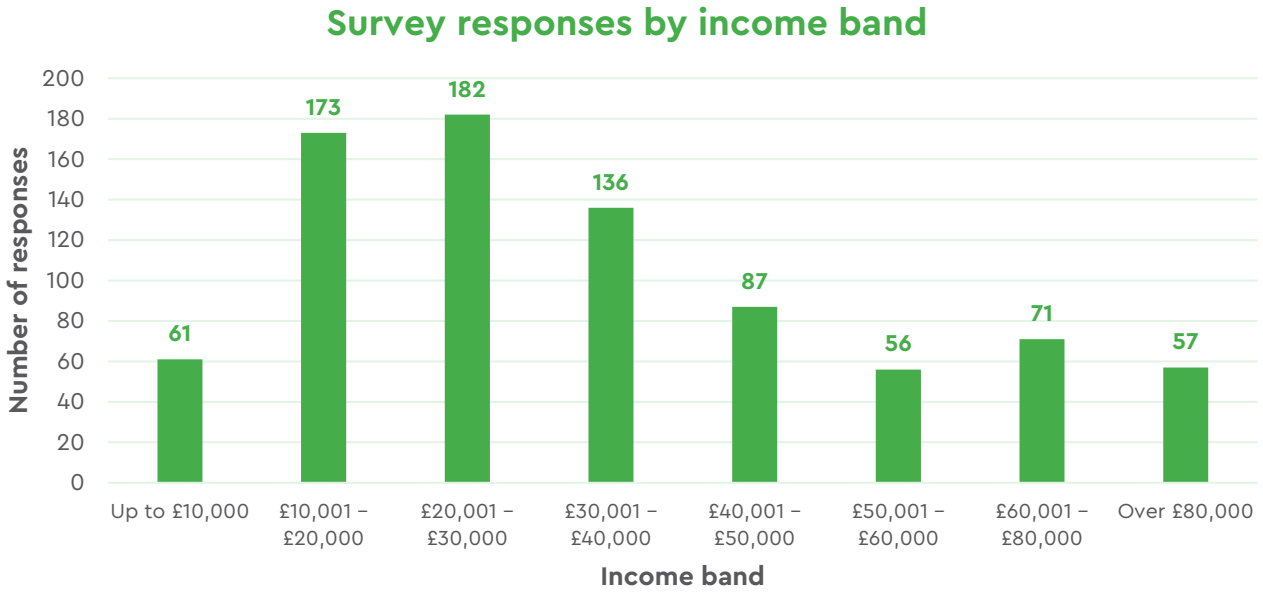


Figure 20: Number of survey responses by income band

[20] Scottish Government, 2024, Carers Census, Scotland, 2023-24

From the survey, 90% of respondents provided data on ethnicity. The majority of the responses from white Scottish (80%), other white British (17%) other whites (2%). Less than 1% of responses came from other groups. This demonstrates that this survey is missing the perspectives of the 4% of SEStran population who are Asian, Asian Scottish or Asian British, the 2% who are African, and the 2% who are from other ethnic groups.

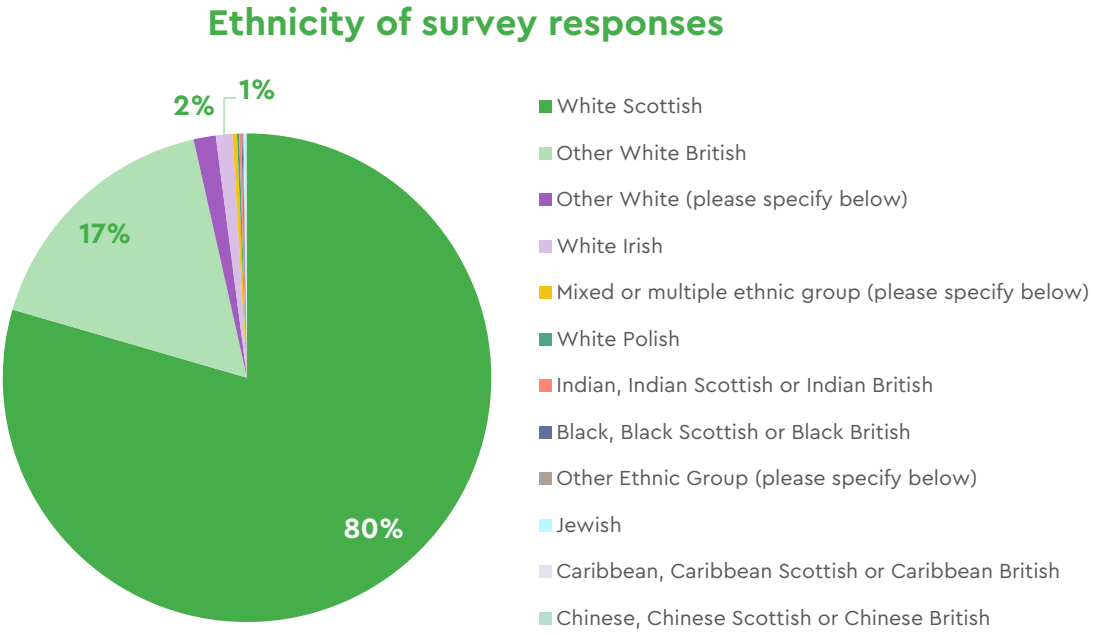


Figure 21: Ethnicity of survey responses

These characteristics help explain variations in the types of transport challenges described across the region.

How respondents travel to healthcare

Respondents used a range of modes to reach healthcare, with mode choice strongly shaped by geography, car access and type of care.

- **Car travel** (driving or as a passenger) was the most commonly used mode across the region.
- **Bus** was the dominant public transport mode across the geography types.
- **Walking and cycling** were most common for nearby GP and pharmacy visits.
- **Taxis and community transport** were essential for some, particularly those with mobility impairments or living in rural areas.
- **Rail** was used mainly for longer-distance journeys to specialist care.

Main mode choice for healthcare journeys

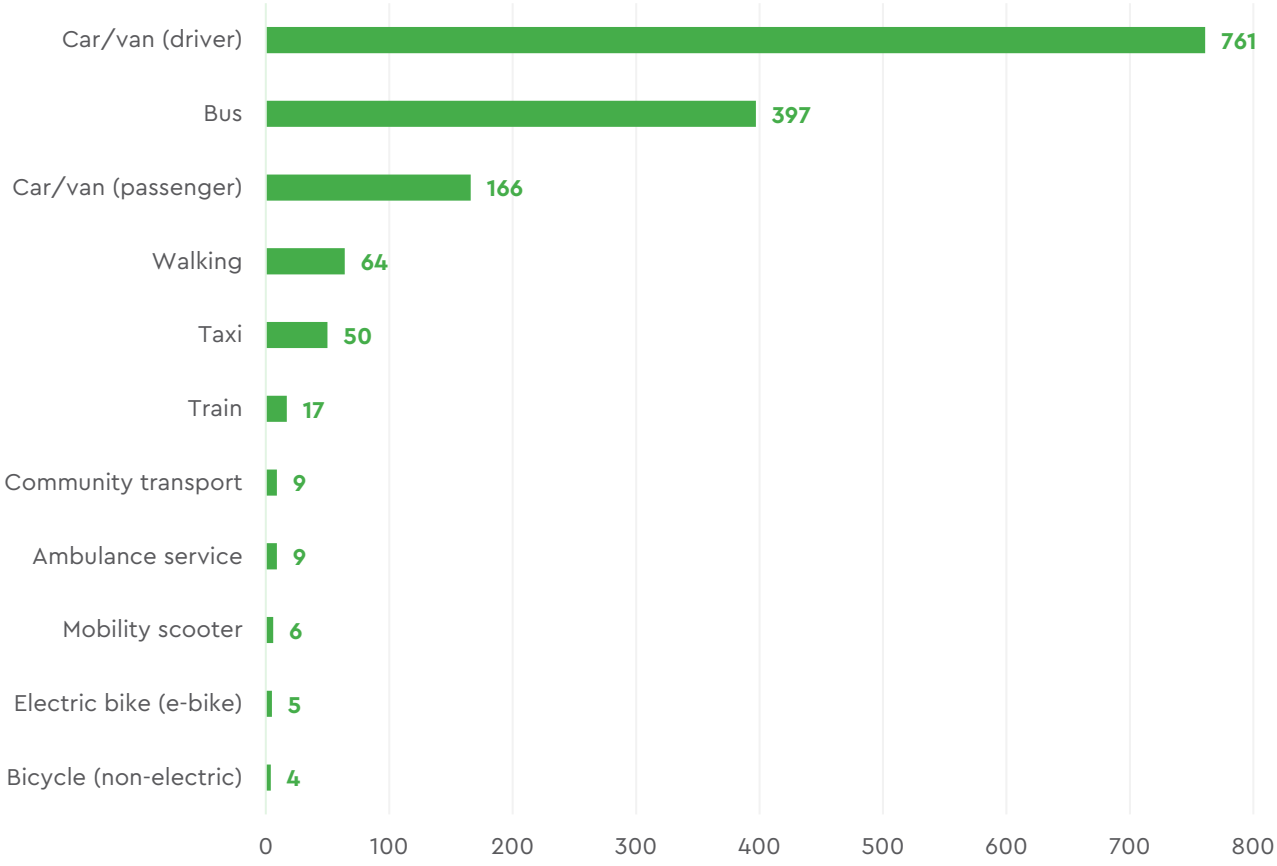


Figure 22: Main mode choice for healthcare journeys

Figure 22 displays the main mode choice for healthcare journeys found by our survey compared to general main mode choice in the SEStran area as reported by the Scottish Household Survey. Healthcare journeys are **three times more likely** to be **by bus** and **six times less likely** to be by **walking**.

Healthcare journeys often involve multiple stages, including walking, which are not captured by main mode choice alone. The older age profile of survey respondents also partly explains lower levels of active travel. Even allowing for these factors, active travel remains far less common for healthcare journeys than for everyday trips, reflecting longer travel distances and the limited walkable accessibility of many secondary healthcare sites.

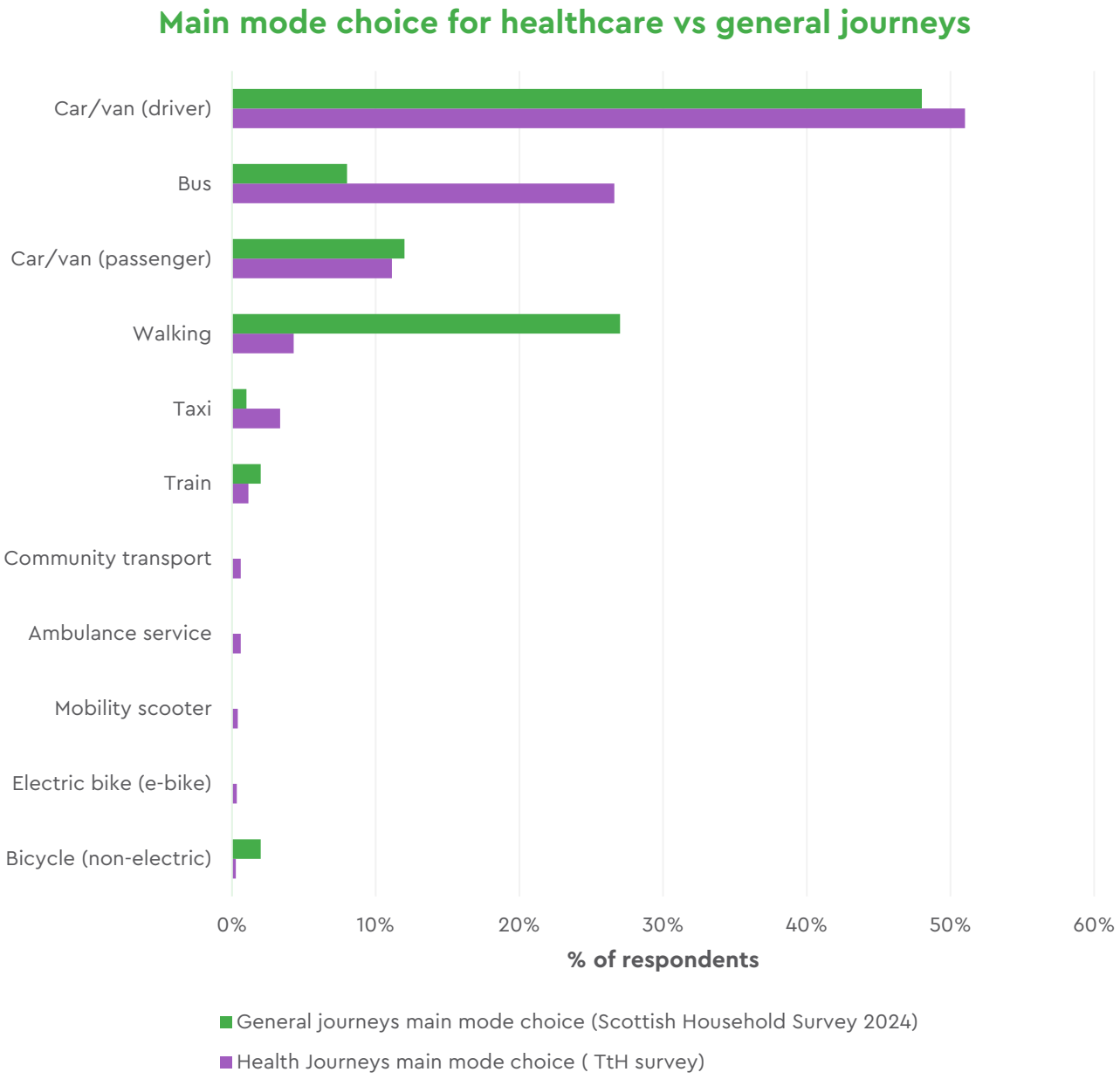


Figure 23: Main mode choice for healthcare journeys versus general journey choice via the Scottish Household Survey[21]

Respondents without access to a car often described long or complex journeys involving multiple interchanges.

[21] Transport Scotland, 2025, Transport and Travel in Scotland 2024 - SHS

Missed or delayed healthcare appointments due to transport

Across the SEStran region, a substantial proportion of respondents reported missing or delaying healthcare appointments due to transport-related issues. Around one third of respondents in each Health Board area indicated that transport had prevented them from attending appointments as planned, rising to over 40% in NHS Fife.

While transport is not the sole cause of non-attendance, respondents consistently linked missed or delayed appointments (Figure 24) to unreliable or infrequent public transport, traffic congestion, accessibility and mobility challenges, and difficulties aligning appointment times with available services. These impacts were most pronounced for hospital outpatient and specialist appointments, where journeys are longer, more complex and more sensitive to delays.

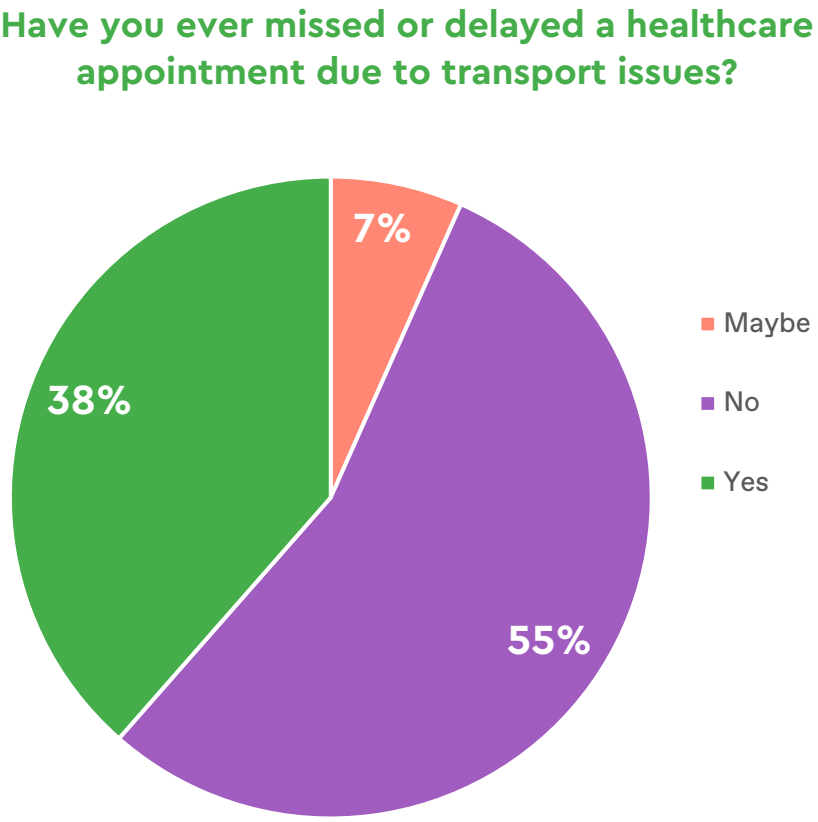


Figure 24: Proportion of respondents who have missed or delayed a healthcare appointment due to transport issues

Main challenges reported by respondents

Respondents highlighted several recurring challenges that affected their ability to attend healthcare appointments reliably, affordably and comfortably.

Long, indirect and complex journeys

Many respondents described journeys involving multiple buses, long walking distances or indirect routes, particularly for hospital appointments.

> "I have to take two buses and then walk for 15 minutes."

Infrequent or poorly timed services

Early-morning, late-afternoon and evening appointments were difficult to reach using public transport. Weekend services were limited in several areas.

> "There's no Sunday service, so I have to miss weekend appointments."

Cost barriers

For those without a car, especially people attending regular treatment (such as oncology, dialysis or physiotherapy), the cumulative cost of transport was a significant burden.

Accessibility barriers

Those with limited mobility reported challenges such as:

- Long walking distances to bus stops
- Poorly maintained or inaccessible bus stops
- Difficulty boarding or alighting buses
- Steep gradients or uneven pavements

Parking pressures

Even those travelling by car reported difficulties finding parking at major hospitals, contributing to stress and late arrivals.

> "The bus doesn't line up with my clinic time - I always arrive far too early or late."

Differences by type of healthcare appointment

Transport challenges varied depending on the purpose of the appointment:

Primary care

- Generally easier to reach due to community-based location of GP practices.
- Shorter journey times across all Health Board areas, particularly for those living in urban and semi-urban settings.
- Challenges increased where GP practices had merged or relocated more typically seen in rural and semi-rural areas.
- Shorter journey times across Health Board areas compared to secondary care (does not exceed 60 minutes).

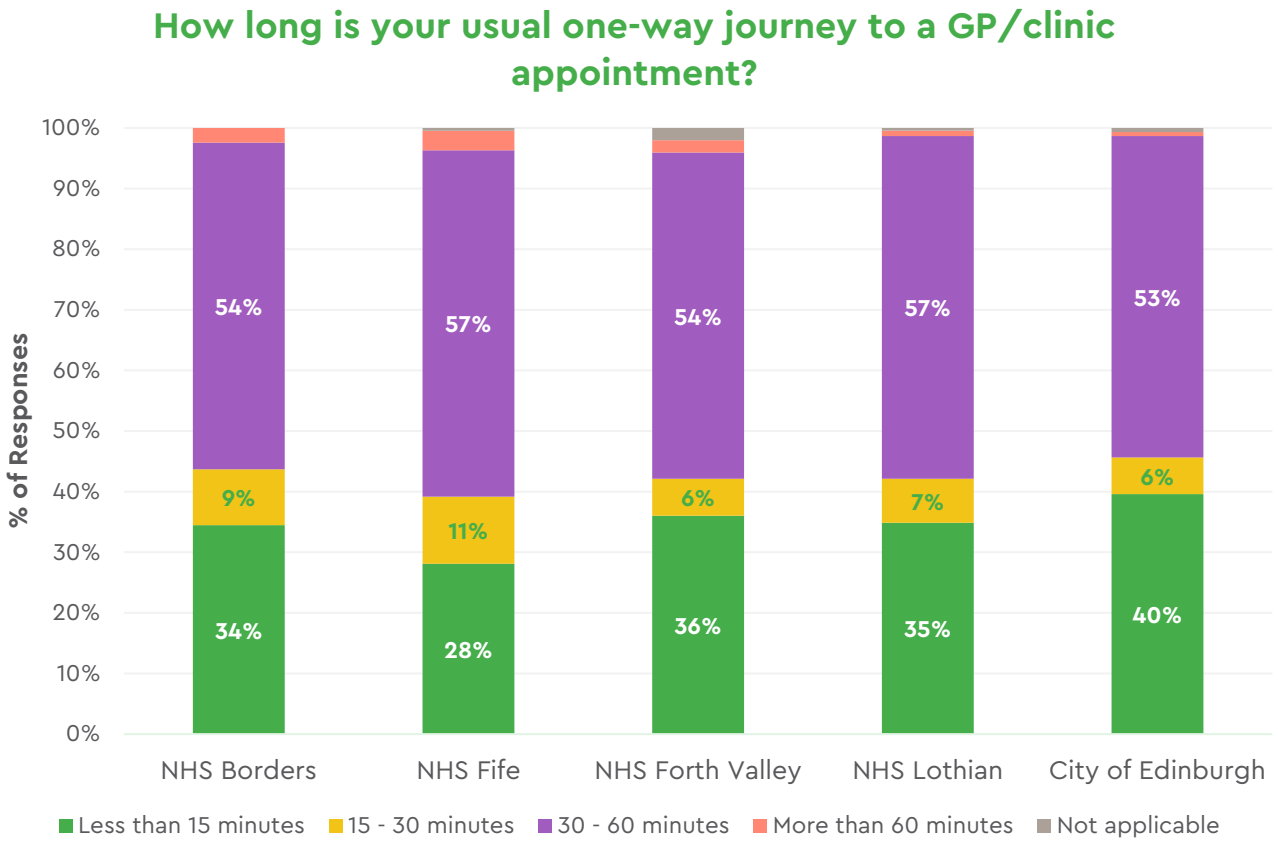


Figure 25: Survey response by Health Board - Length of journey time to GP/clinic appointment

Secondary care

- Frequently the most challenging journeys across all four Health Boards.
- Longer distances, fewer direct routes and greater reliance on interchange, particularly for public transport users.
- Longer journey times across Health Board areas (typically over 30 minutes, often over 60 minutes).
- Regular outpatient and specialist appointments compound the impact of long and complex journeys, increasing fatigue, stress and risk of non-attendance.

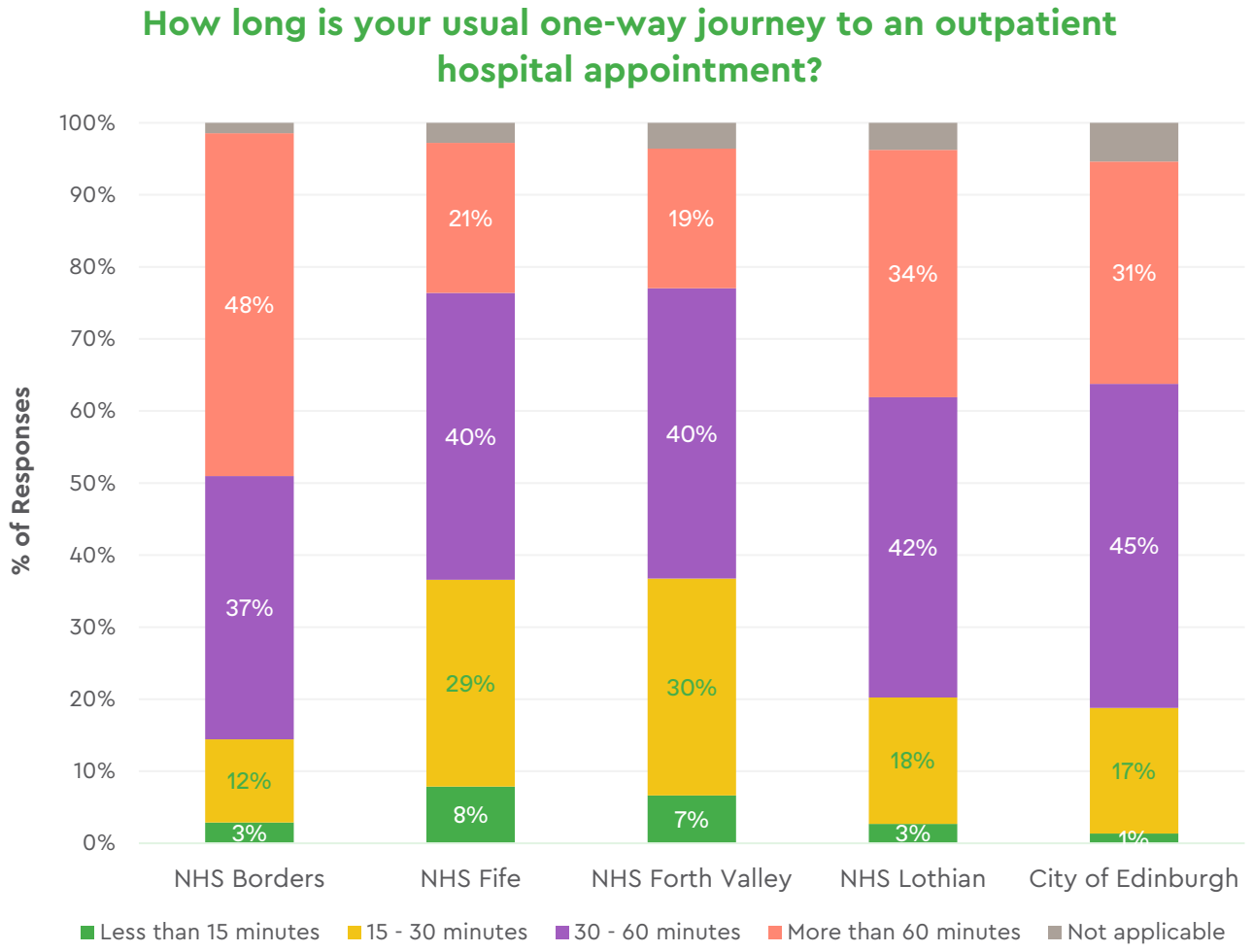


Figure 26: Survey response by Health Board - Journey time to Hospital Outpatient appointment

Tertiary care / specialist services

- Regular travel for cancer care, renal appointments or diagnostics was described as tiring, stressful and expensive

Mental health services

- Some respondents cited anxiety linked to long or uncertain journeys, unreliable services or unfamiliar environments

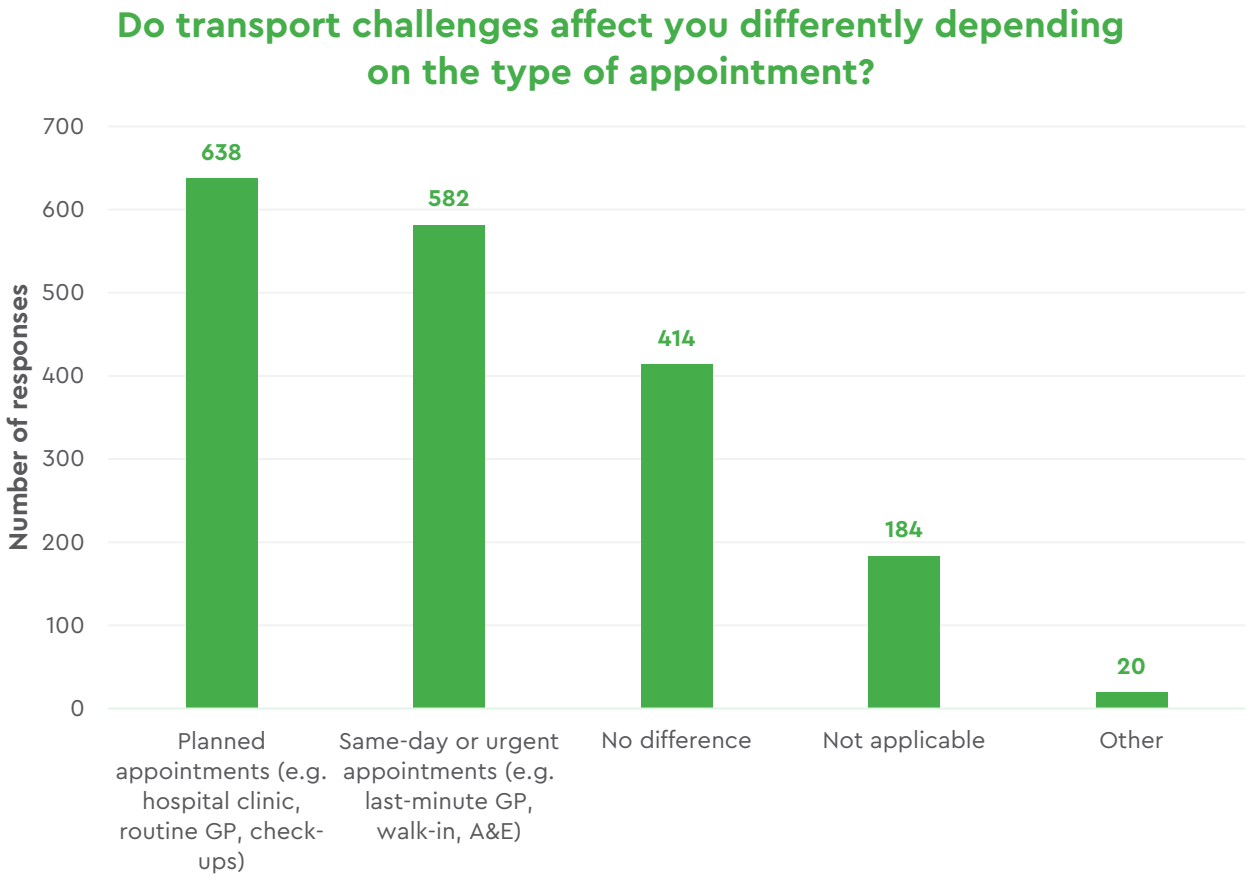


Figure 27: Responses Survey question: Do transport challenges affect you differently depending on the type of appointment?

Figure 27 shows that transport challenges are more likely to vary depending on the type of appointment, with the highest number of respondents reporting greater difficulties for planned and same-day appointments.

> "Very difficult to get to hospital appointments in Edinburgh from North Berwick. No direct transport"

Key themes emerging from the survey

Across geographies and demographic groups, several strong and consistent themes emerged:

- **People without access to a car face the greatest barriers** and the longest, most complex journeys.
- **Transport disadvantage** aligns strongly with rurality and deprivation.
- **Many journeys require multiple modes or long interchanges**, which increase time, cost and uncertainty.
- **Disabled people and those with long-term conditions** face disproportionate accessibility challenges.
- **Appointment timing is a major barrier,** particularly where public transport operating hours and journey times prevent access to early, late or weekend appointments.
- **Carers have distinct needs related to accompanying patients**, including additional time pressures, coordination challenges and reliance on suitable transport options, as evidenced in earlier survey findings.
- **Centralisation of services** at the likes of hospitals instead of GPs practices makes attending more difficult. These themes align closely with the desk-based evidence and help pinpoint the most affected communities.

Health Board insights

NHS Lothian – evidence summary

Area overview

NHS Lothian covers the City of Edinburgh, East Lothian, Midlothian and West Lothian. It is the most populous Health Board in the SEStran region and contains a mix of distinct settlement types and healthcare facilities, including:

- Dense urban centres (Edinburgh)
- Rapidly growing commuter towns (Midlothian, West Lothian, East Lothian)
- Coastal communities and rural settlements
- Major regional hospitals including the Royal Infirmary of Edinburgh (RIE), Western General Hospital (WGH), St John's Hospital (Livingston), and East Lothian Community Hospital

These contrasting geographies shape the transport needs of the population. Edinburgh benefits from extensive public transport coverage, whereas many residents of Midlothian, West Lothian and East Lothian rely on longer or multi-stage public transport journeys to reach major hospitals, particularly those located in the capital.

Figure 28 illustrates this geography, including the distribution of settlements, key A-roads and motorways, and rail corridors such as the A1 corridor, Borders Railway, Edinburgh–Glasgow line and North Berwick line. Connectivity is strongest along these corridors, while parts of Midlothian, East Lothian and western West Lothian experience weaker public transport provision.

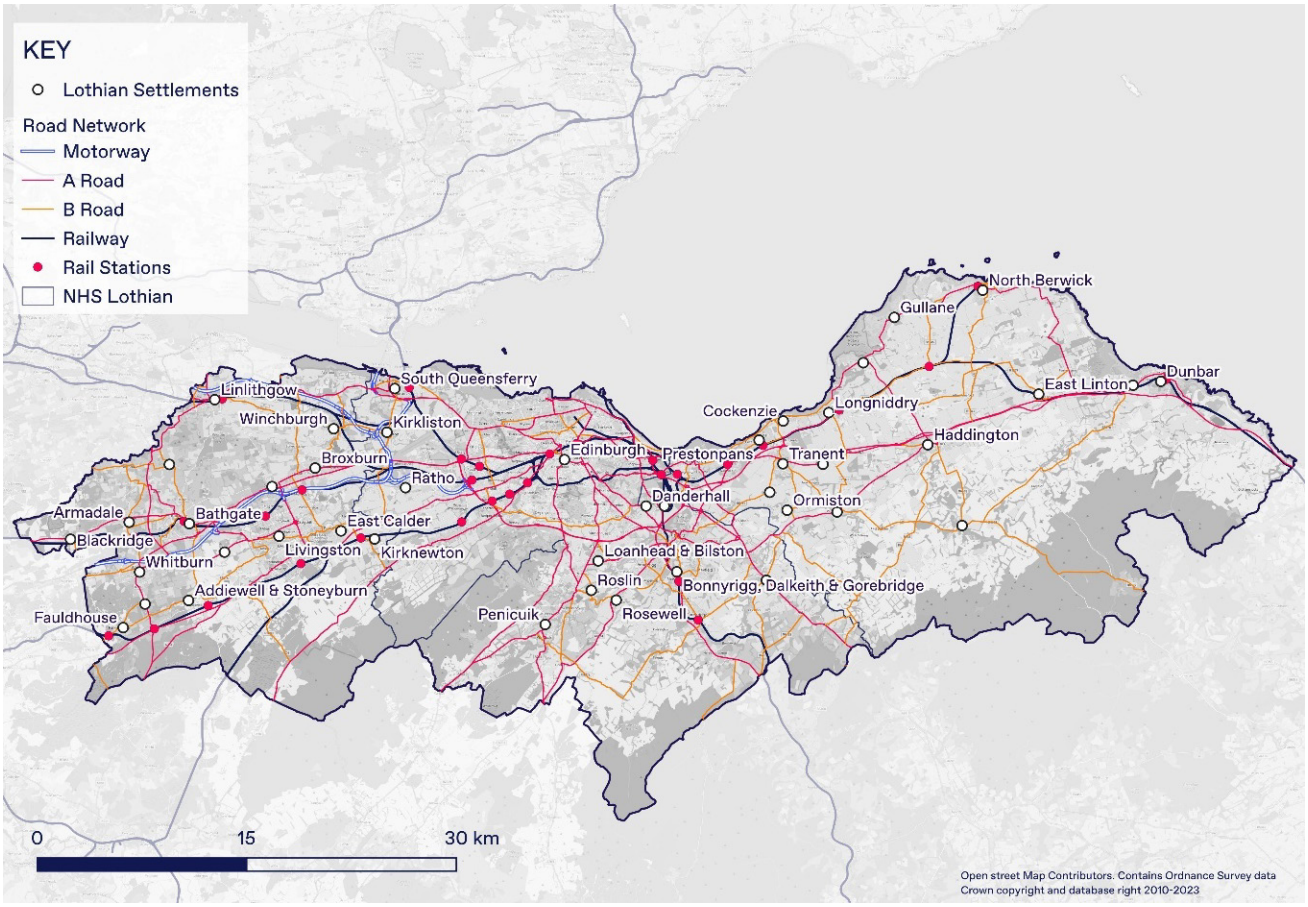


Figure 28: NHS Lothian Settlements and Transport Network

Primary healthcare services are broadly aligned with settlement centres, but Figure 29 shows that secondary and specialist services are much more centralised. The concentration of acute hospitals in Edinburgh means that significant cross-boundary travel occurs, including travel from Livingston, Haddington, Penicuik, Tranent and coastal East Lothian into the city for diagnostics, outpatient care and specialist treatment.

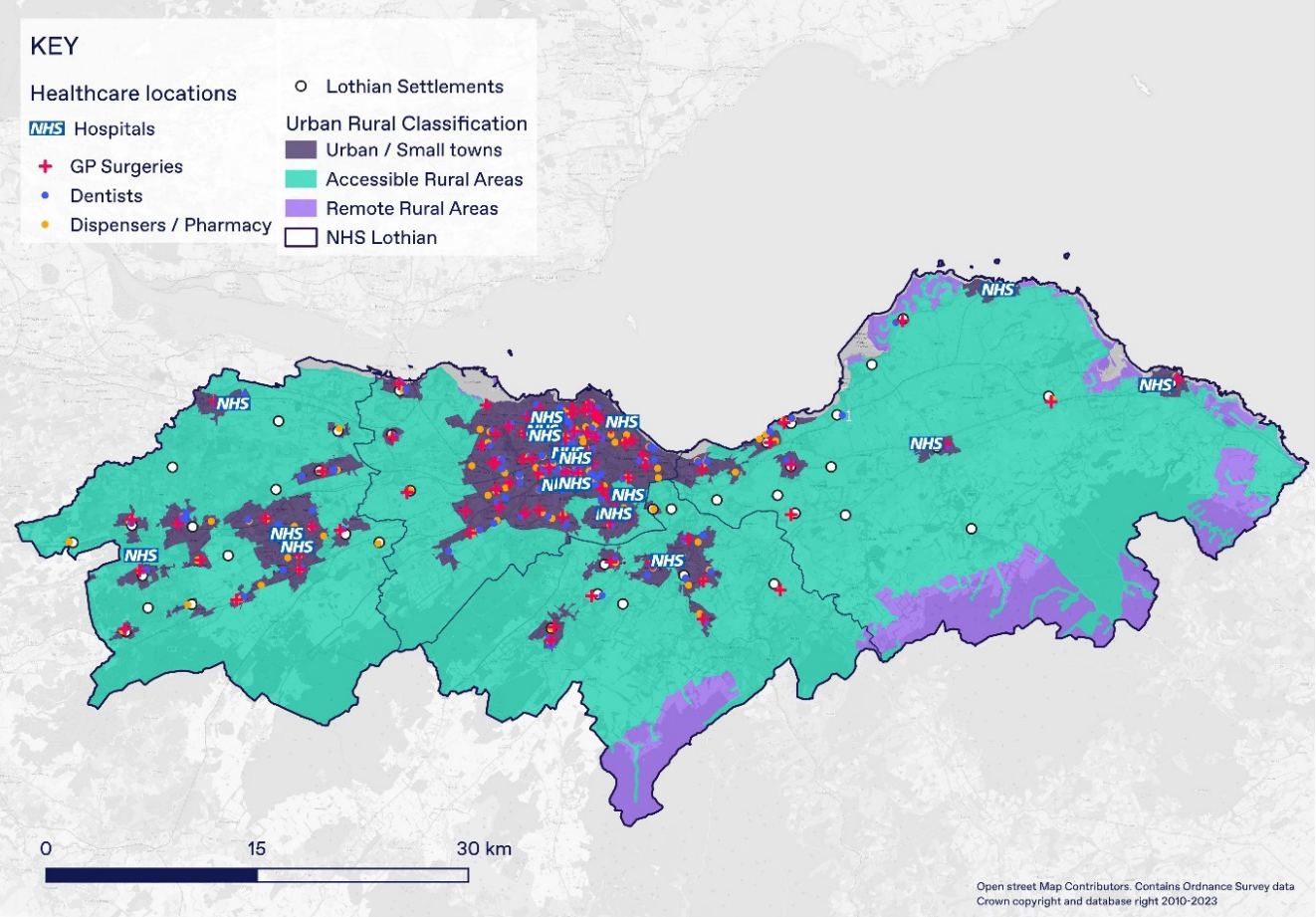


Figure 29: All healthcare locations in NHS Lothian against Settlements and Urban-Rural Classification

Travel times to major hospitals vary substantially. Figure 30 shows modelled public transport travel times and interchange requirements to the Royal Infirmary of Edinburgh from key towns across the Lothian area. Many residents face journeys of 60–90 minutes or more by public transport, often requiring two buses or a bus-rail combination. These patterns align closely with public consultation findings, which frequently highlighted indirect routes, limited direct services and long travel times.

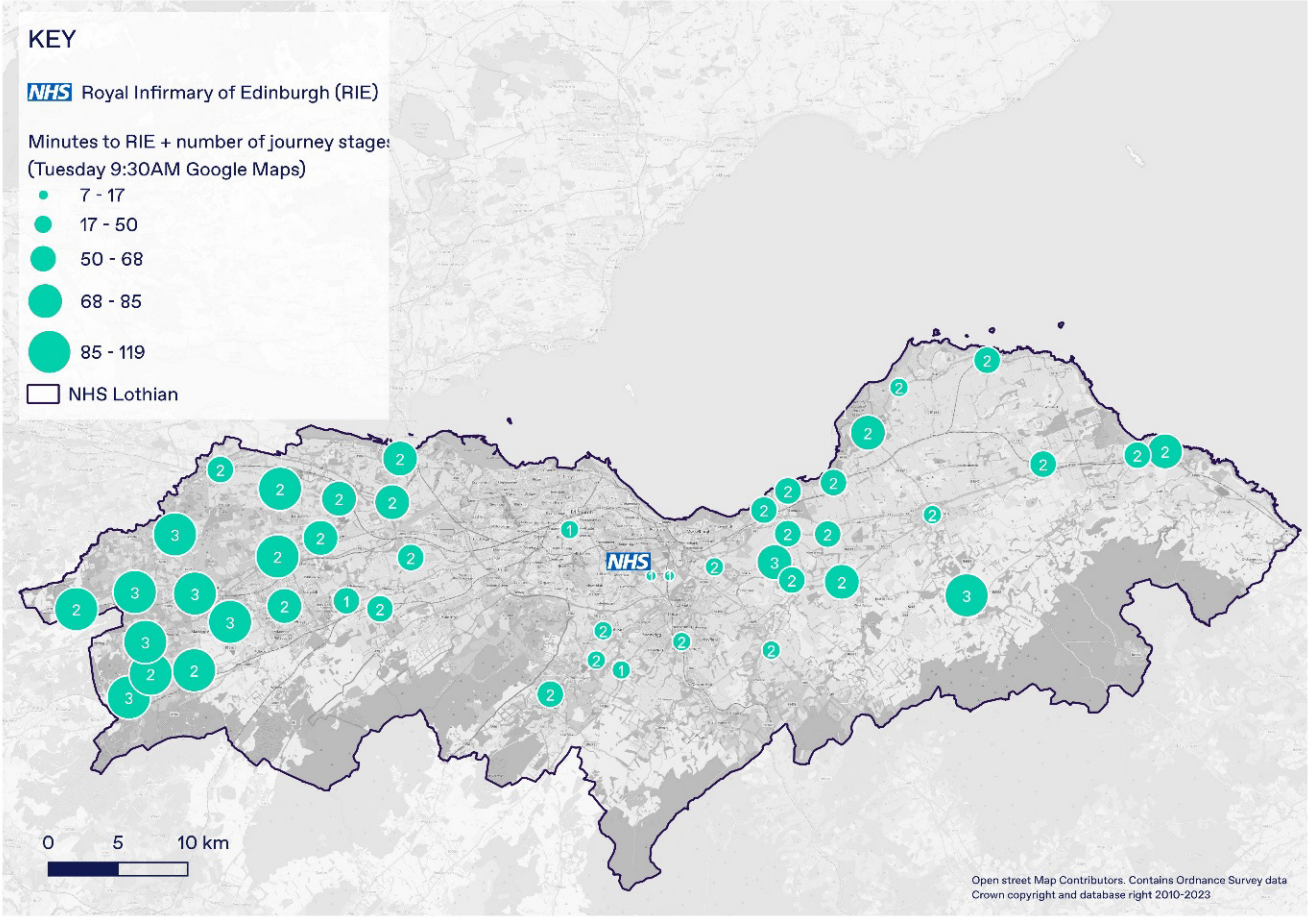


Figure 30: Minutes to RIE and number of journey stages.

Figure 31 shows the proportion of the population which lives in each of the 5 SIMD quintiles. The index of deprivation quintiles represent 5 equal segments of the Scottish population from 1 (most deprived) to 5 (least deprived). All four council areas within the Health Board have a lower than national average proportion of the population in the 20% most deprived areas. The City of Edinburgh has the highest proportion of people in the most deprived quintile, alignining with a lower car ownership rate.

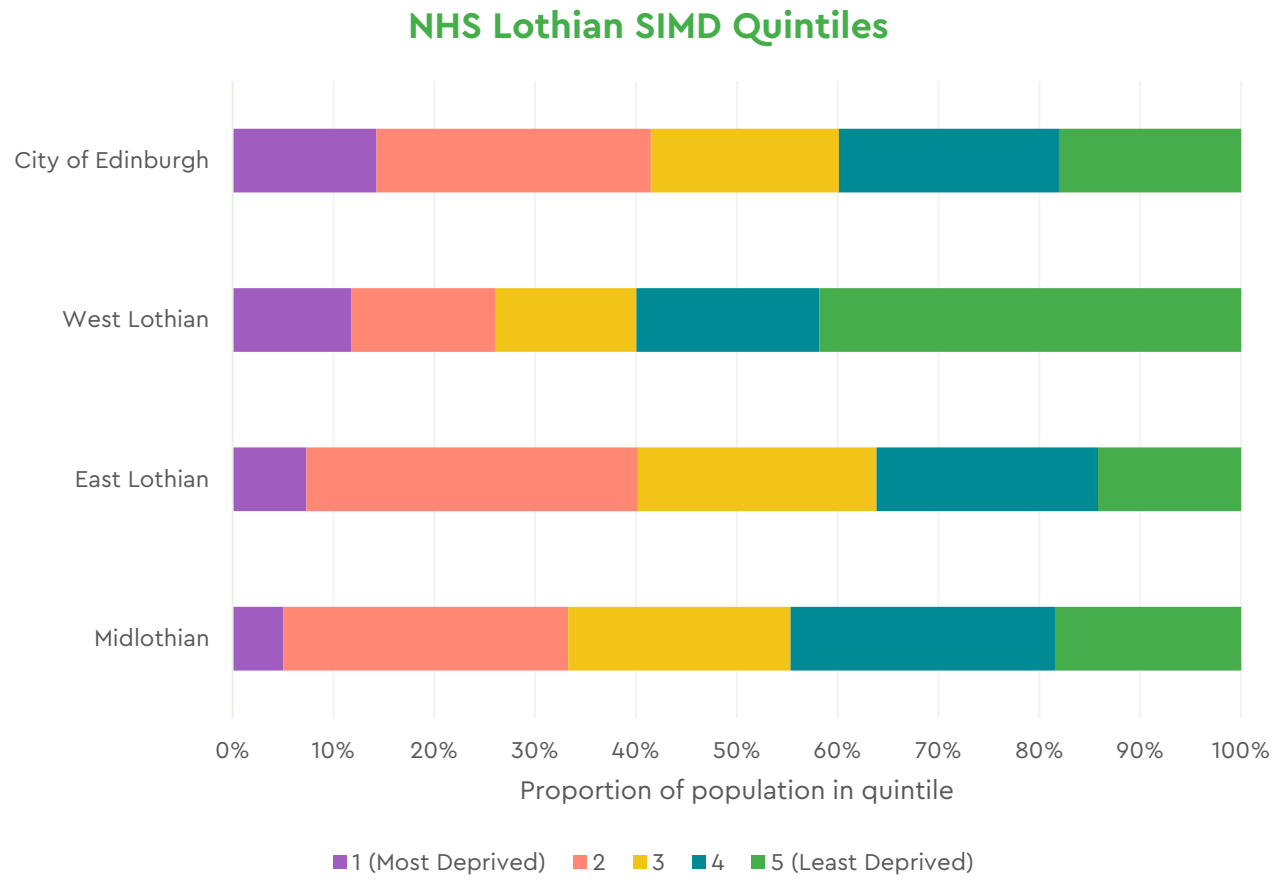


Figure 31: Proportion of NHS Lothian population in each SIMD quintile by local authority

A total of **694 survey respondents** live within the NHS Lothian area, providing a strong base of evidence on how residents across Edinburgh, Midlothian, East Lothian and West Lothian currently experience Transport to Health.

Lothian survey respondent characteristics

Survey respondents from NHS Lothian were more likely than the average Lothian resident to have access to a car. When Edinburgh is taken on its own 66% of survey respondents report having access to at least one car, this compares to 62% of Edinburgh's population having access to at least one car via census statistics.

Despite our survey skewing slightly towards car owners, people living in Edinburgh are less likely to have access to a car than SEStran residents overall with 75% of overall respondents reporting access to a car compared to 66% of Edinburgh respondents.

Figure 32 provides a summary of key characteristics of NHS Lothian respondents. Respondents were also much more likely to be women, over 60 years old, providing unpaid care or have a long-term health condition or disability than general population.

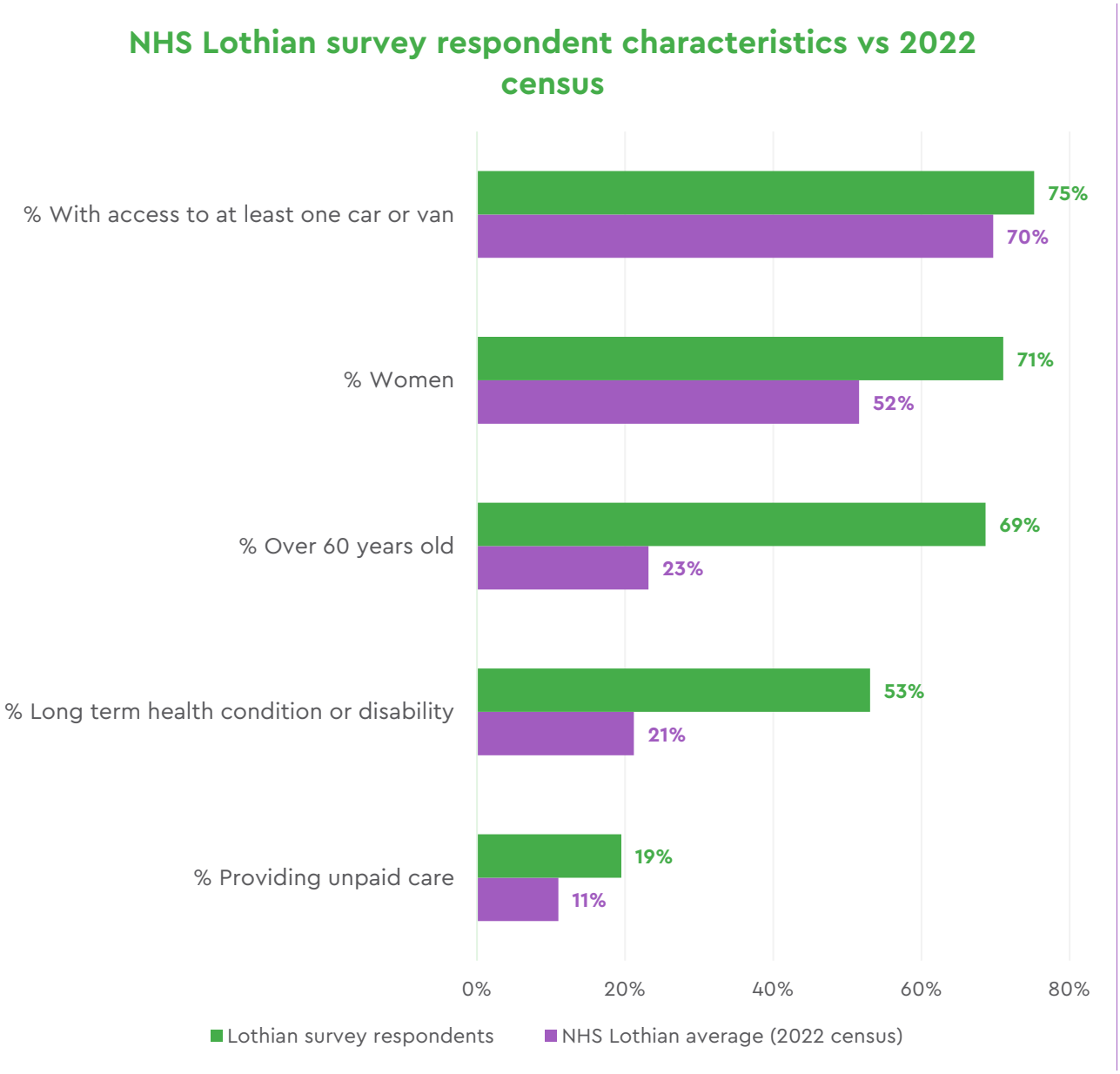


Figure 32: NHS Lothian survey respondents vs Lothian general population (2022 census)

Patterns of healthcare use

Most respondents reported travelling for healthcare infrequently, with the majority of journeys across all appointment types occurring either once a year or less or every few months. GP or local clinic and outpatient appointments were attended more regularly than other services, reflecting their role in ongoing care.

Dental and optician visits were largely infrequent, most commonly reported as once a year or less. Pharmacy visits showed a higher frequency than other services, with a greater proportion of respondents attending every few weeks or monthly. Inpatient travel was least frequent overall and most commonly recorded as not applicable or once a year or less.

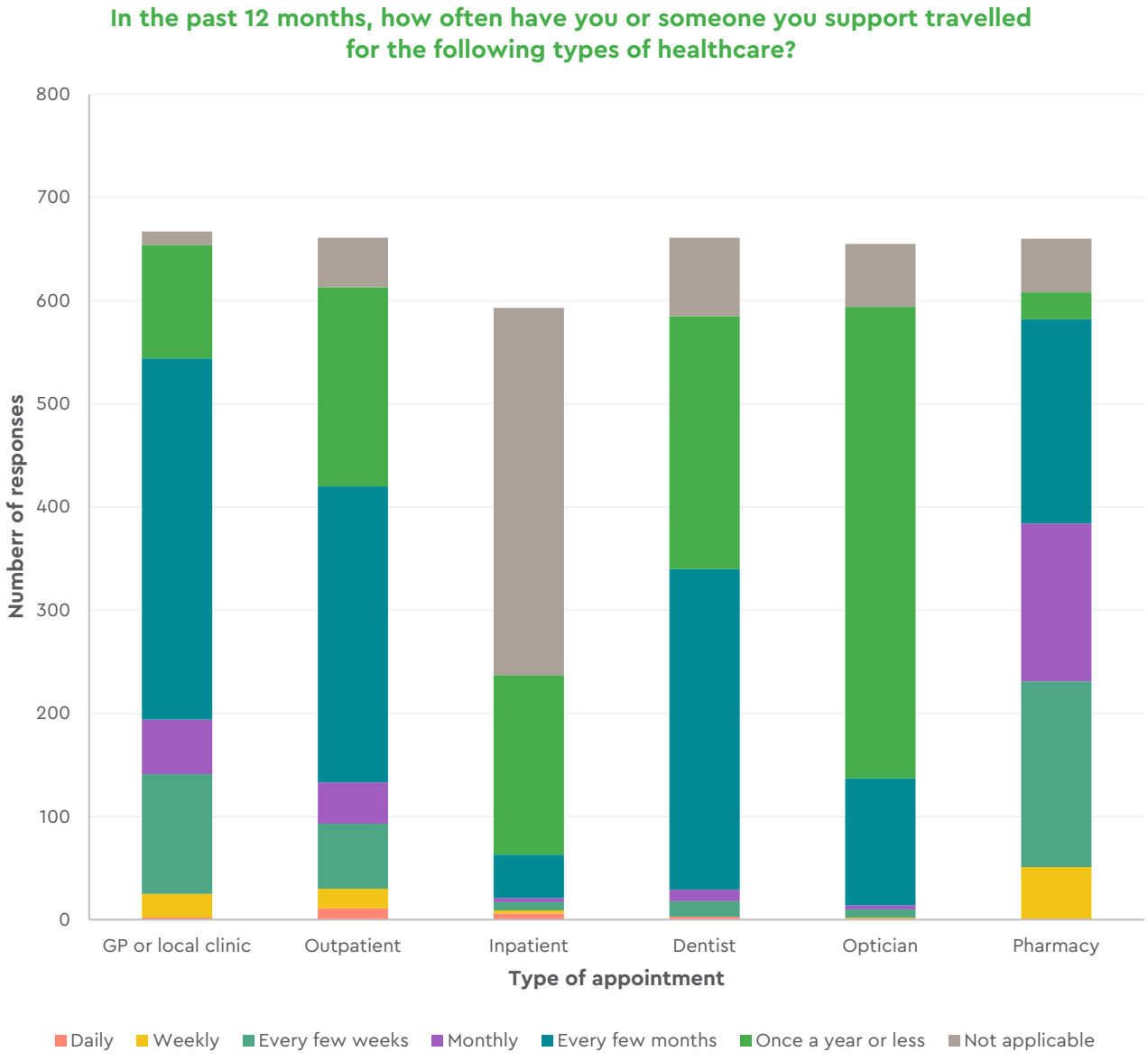


Figure 33: Frequency of visits

The frequency of travel to different healthcare appointment types was consistent between NHS Lothian as a whole and the City of Edinburgh.

How long journeys take

Journey times vary by type of appointment. GP or local clinic and pharmacy appointments were most commonly reached within 15 minutes. Outpatient, dental and optometry trips fall mainly within the 15–30-minute range, while hospital-based or inpatient journeys are more likely to exceed 30 minutes. Inpatient appointments were associated with the longest travel times, with a higher proportion of respondents reporting journeys of over 60 minutes, suggesting greater travel burdens when accessing hospital-based care.

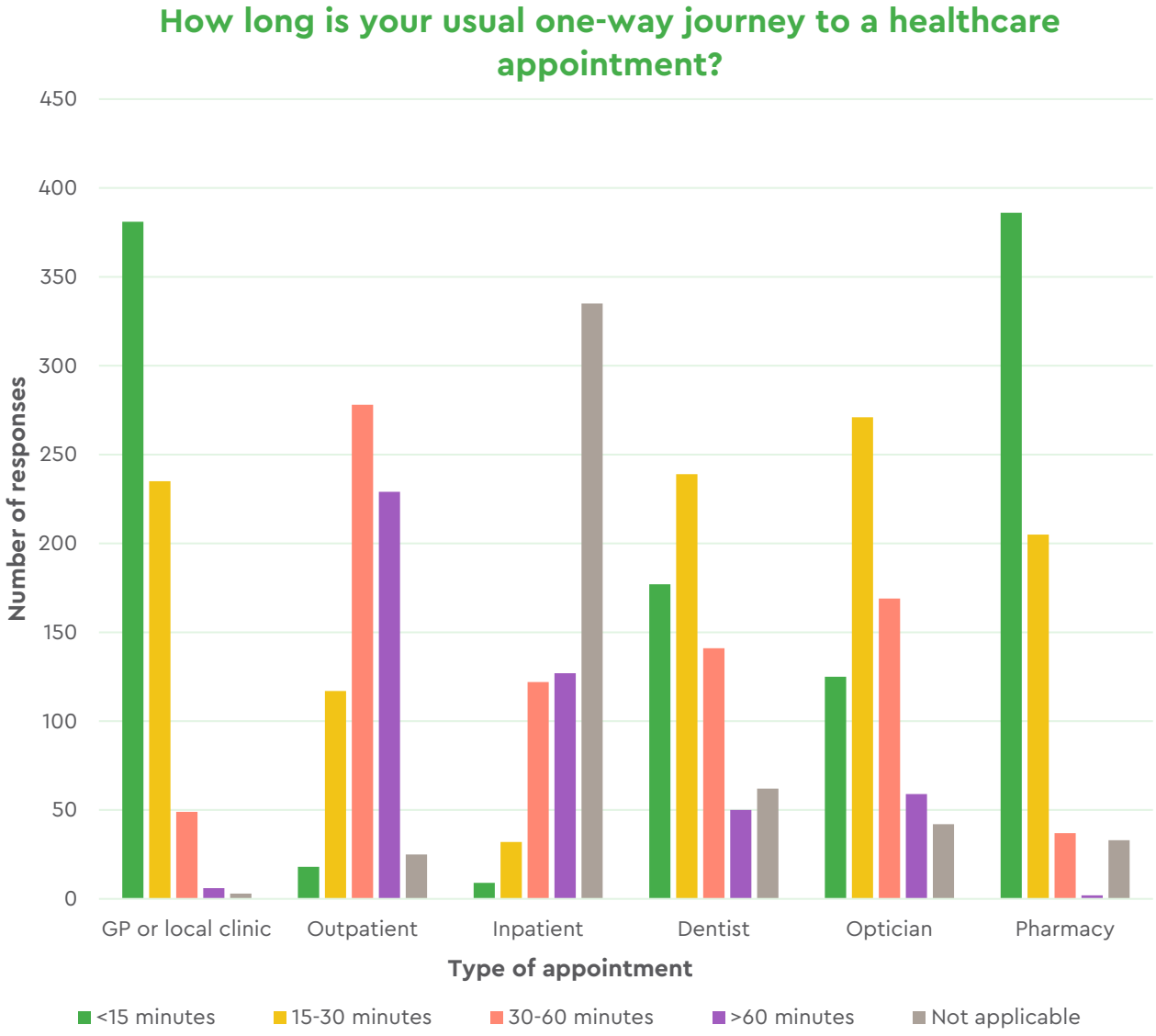


Figure 34: Journey time

The difference in reported journey times between those living in the City of Edinburgh and wider NHS Lothian responses was negligible. A similar pattern of longer journey times for secondary care appointments was evident from respondents in Edinburgh, despite a denser public transport network and closer proximity to large acute hospitals. This may be due to traffic congestion which affects both car drivers and bus passengers. Some appointments being located at St John's Hospital in Livingston may also contribute to slightly longer journey times.

How people travel to healthcare

Car travel (as a driver or passenger) is the predominant main mode for respondents across the Lothian area. Bus travel represents the most common public transport mode, and is particularly significant in Edinburgh, where respondents report higher levels of bus use. Walking is commonly used for nearby GP or pharmacy appointments.

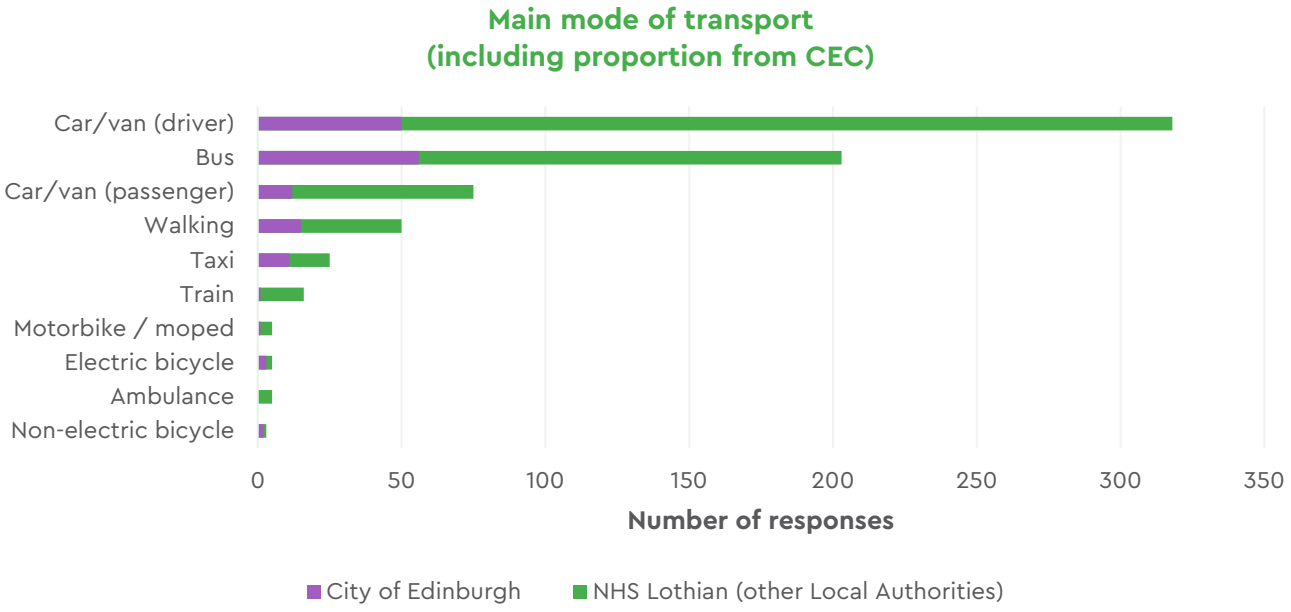


Figure 35: Main mode of transport (including highlight of those from CEC)

In terms of backup options, many respondents indicated that they would switch from their usual mode to public transport or rely on lifts from family or friends if their main option was unavailable. Taxis were also used as a fallback by a smaller proportion of respondents. Many reported having no backup transport mode, highlighting potential vulnerability if their usual travel option is disrupted.

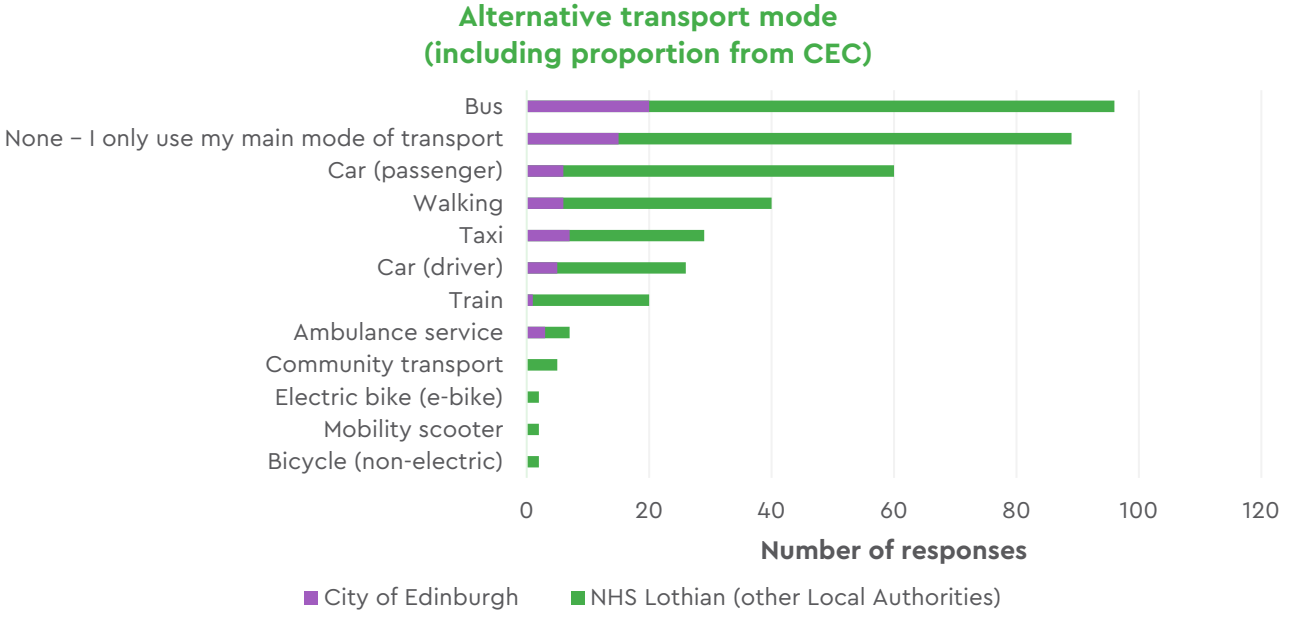


Figure 36: Alternative transport mode (including highlight of those from CEC)

Reliability of available transport

Most respondents reported that their usual transport to healthcare is reliable. Around 44% stated it is usually reliable and a further 30% described it as always reliable. 18% reported that transport is "sometimes unreliable" and 8% "often unreliable", indicating that while overall reliability is generally good, there are pockets of inconsistency that affect a minority of users.

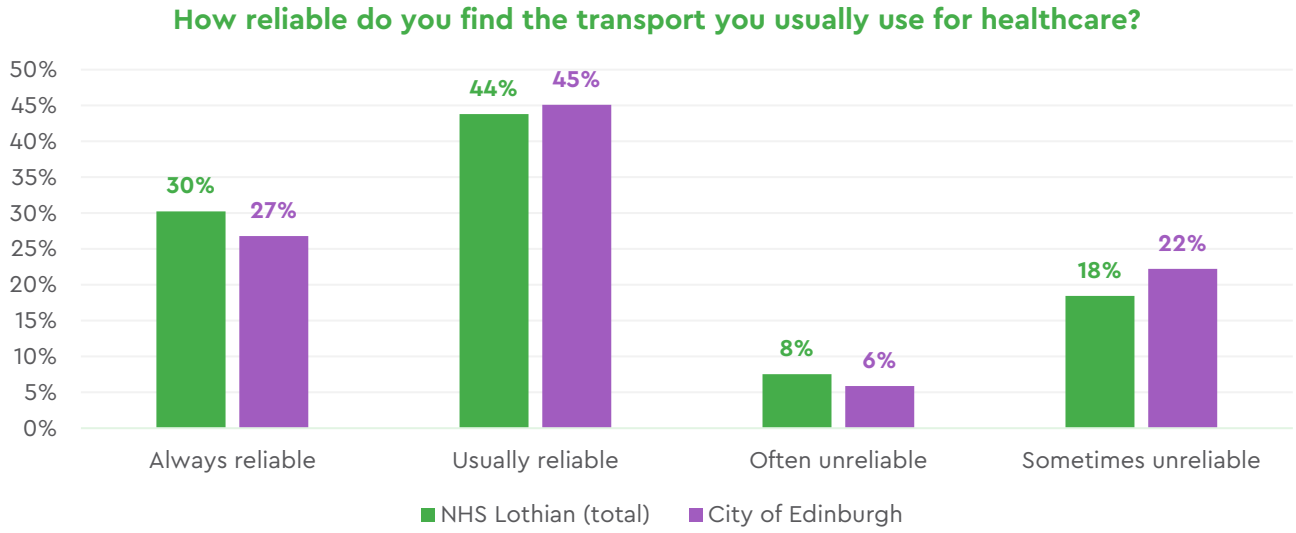


Figure 37: Transport reliability

Missed or delayed healthcare due to transport

Over one third of respondents (36%) reported that they have missed or delayed a healthcare appointment due to transport issues, while 58% said they had not. A small proportion (6%) were unsure. Among those affected, the most common reasons were traffic delays and delayed transport services. Accessibility and mobility issues were also a significant factor. Other contributing reasons included reliance on family for transport and parking difficulties, while costs, poor connections, distance, lack of information and personal car issues were cited less frequently.

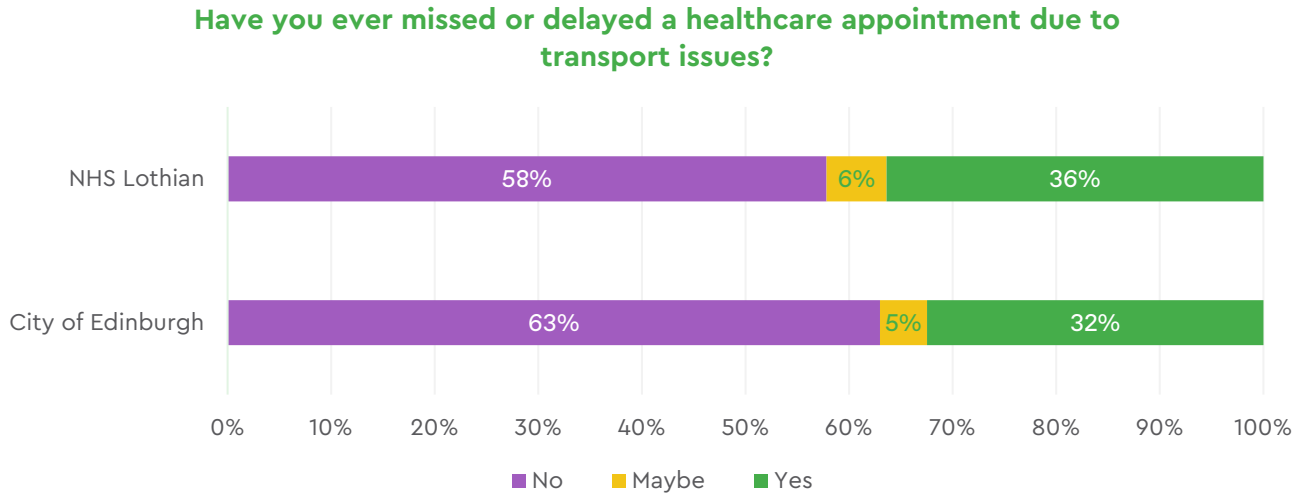


Figure 38: Missed appointments

For those that had missed appointments due to transport issues, and more specifically, a lack of suitable transport options. Accessibility and mobility issues were also commonly cited barriers. A smaller number of respondents highlighted over-reliance on family members for lifts and difficulties with parking. Other factors, including poor transport connections, personal care issues, lack of information, cost and distance, were mentioned less frequently.

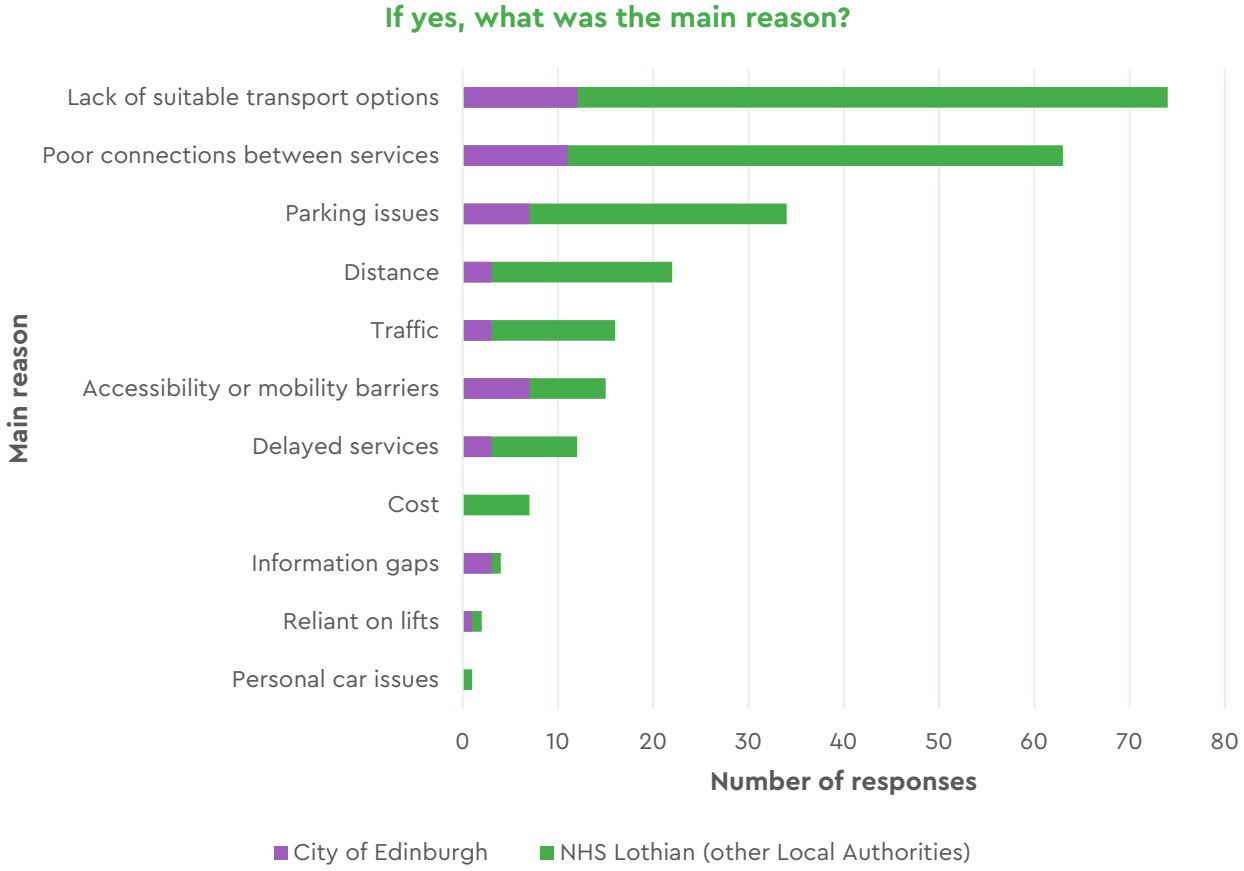


Figure 39: Main reason for missed appointments (including highlight of CEC responses)

Effect of transport costs on attendance

Most respondents (76%) stated that transport costs do not affect their decision or ability to attend healthcare. However, 11% reported that costs do affect their attendance, and a further 13% said that costs sometimes have an impact. This indicates that while cost is not a barrier for most, it remains a significant issue for a minority of patients.

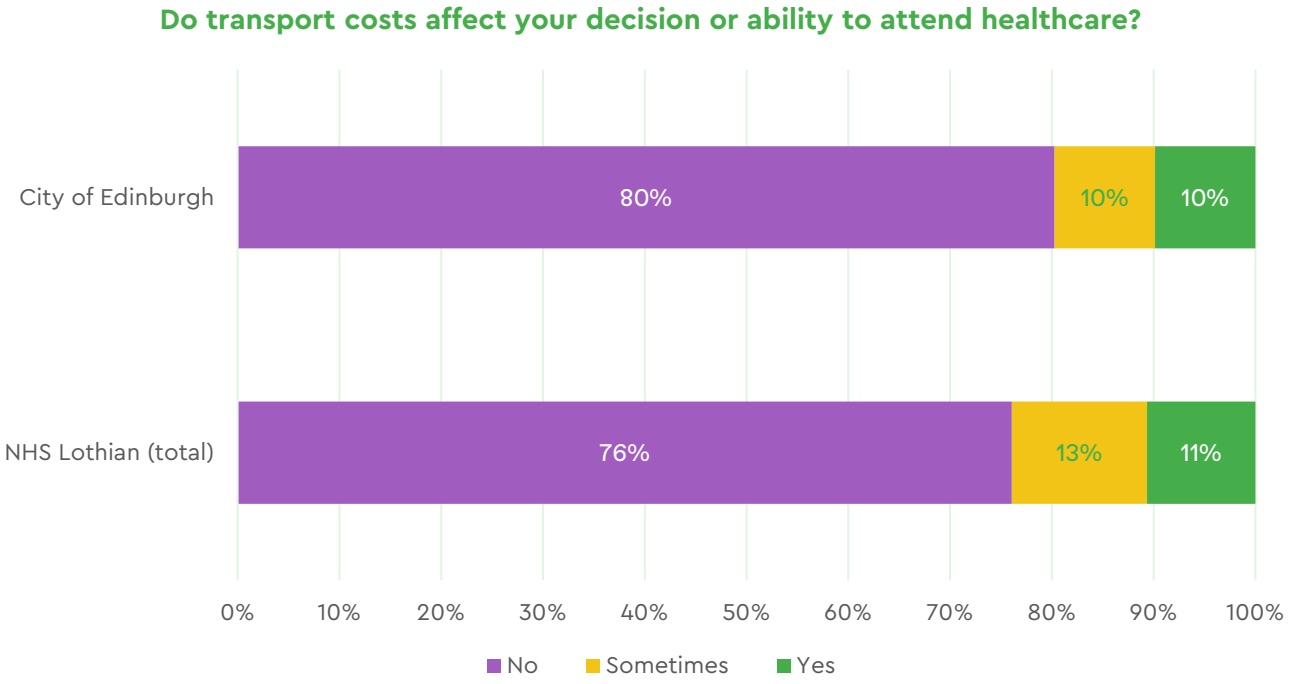


Figure 40: Transport affects healthcare

Cost of the most recent healthcare journey

Most respondents reported that their most recent return journey to a healthcare appointment did not cost anything. Among those who did incur a cost, the majority spent under £10, with the largest proportion paying under £5. Smaller numbers reported spending between £11 and £20, and only a limited number incurred costs above £20.

A small proportion were unsure or unable to remember the cost. Overall, this suggests that while most journeys are low cost or free, a minority of patients face higher travel expenses.

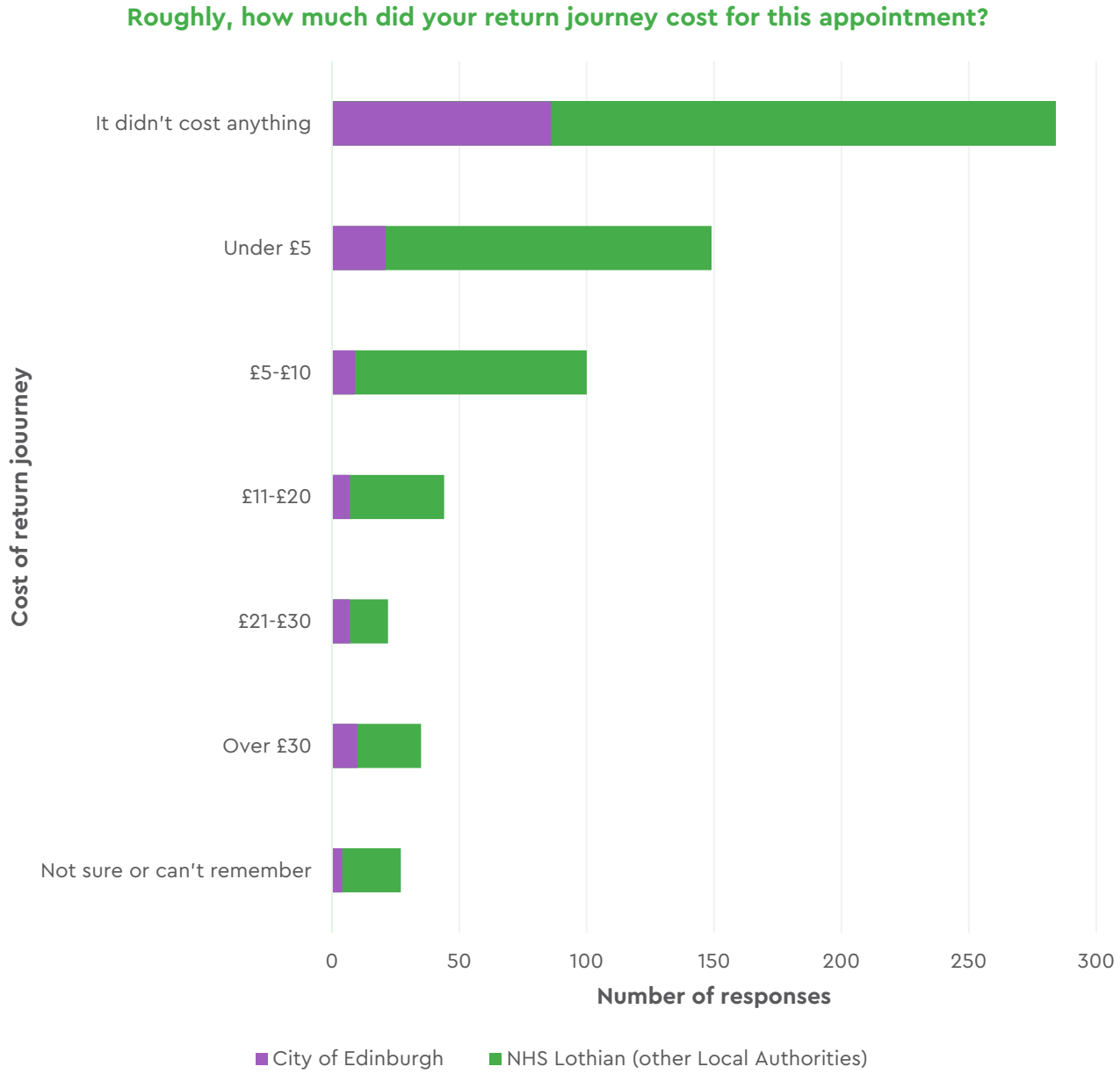


Figure 41: Cost of journey

How people find travel information

Respondents most commonly relied on digital mapping tools such as Google or Bing Maps to find travel information, followed closely by online resources such as Traveline and NHS websites. Information included in patient letters was also an important source. Word of mouth and personal knowledge played a moderate role, while community transport providers, NHS staff advice and local bus apps were used by fewer respondents.

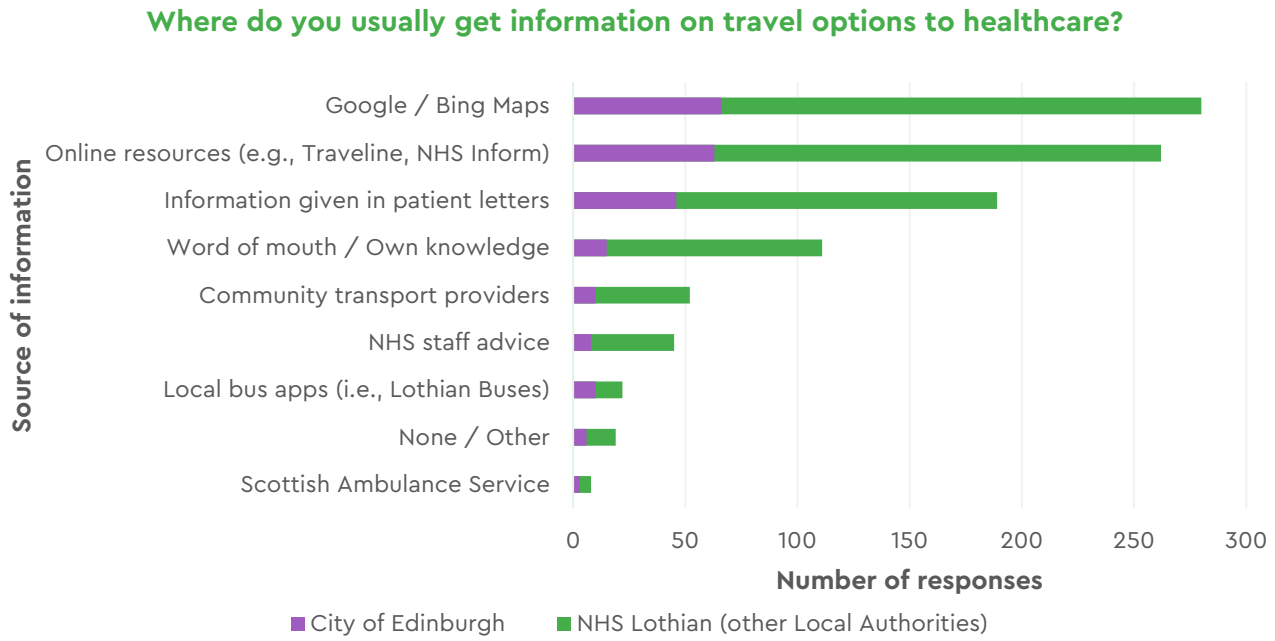


Figure 42: Where do you get your information?

In terms of ease of finding and understanding travel information, most respondents said this is possible "most of the time". A sizeable proportion reported that it is only "sometimes" easy, while fewer stated that it is "always" easy. A notable minority reported that they rarely or never find the information easy to access or understand.

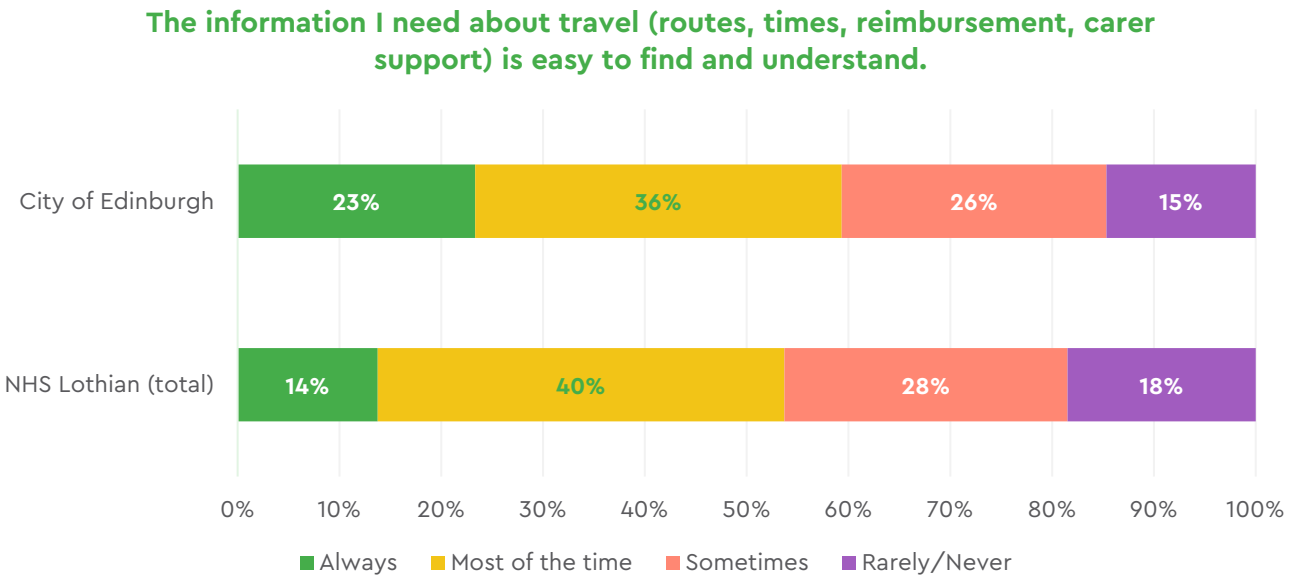


Figure 43: Digestible information

Many respondents reported not needing additional help to find or book transport. However, 'Easier to use digital tools or websites' was the most popular intervention selected. This is followed by paper timetables or leaflets and in-person support. This demonstrates that to improve information about transport options to healthcare appointments a variety of methods need to be employed to reach as many people as possible.

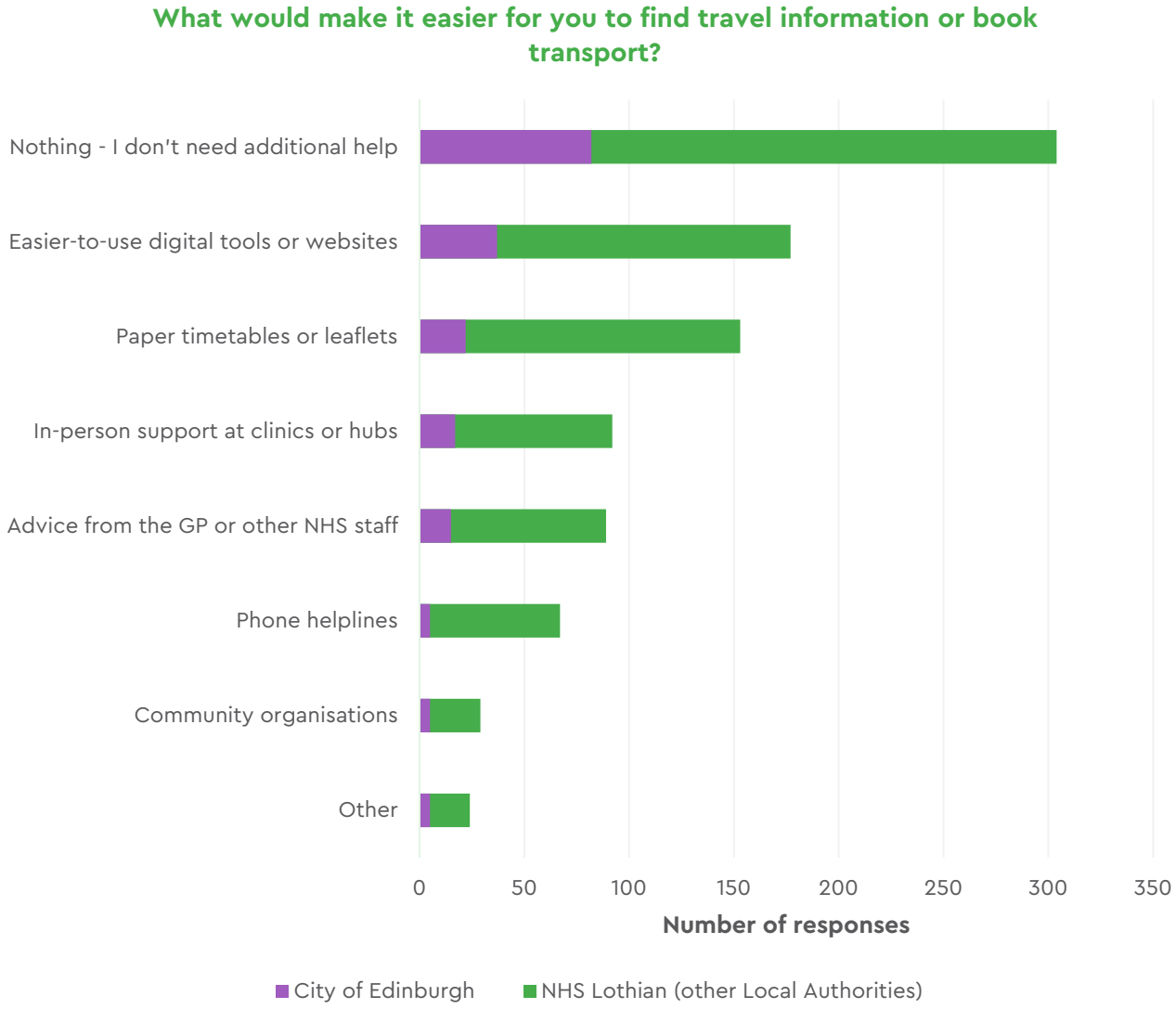


Figure 44: what would make it easier to book?

Digital confidence in planning healthcare travel

Digital confidence is generally high among respondents in NHS Lothian. Most report being "very" or "fairly" confident using online tools for planning or booking transport. A minority indicate limited confidence, highlighting the need for accessible non-digital options.

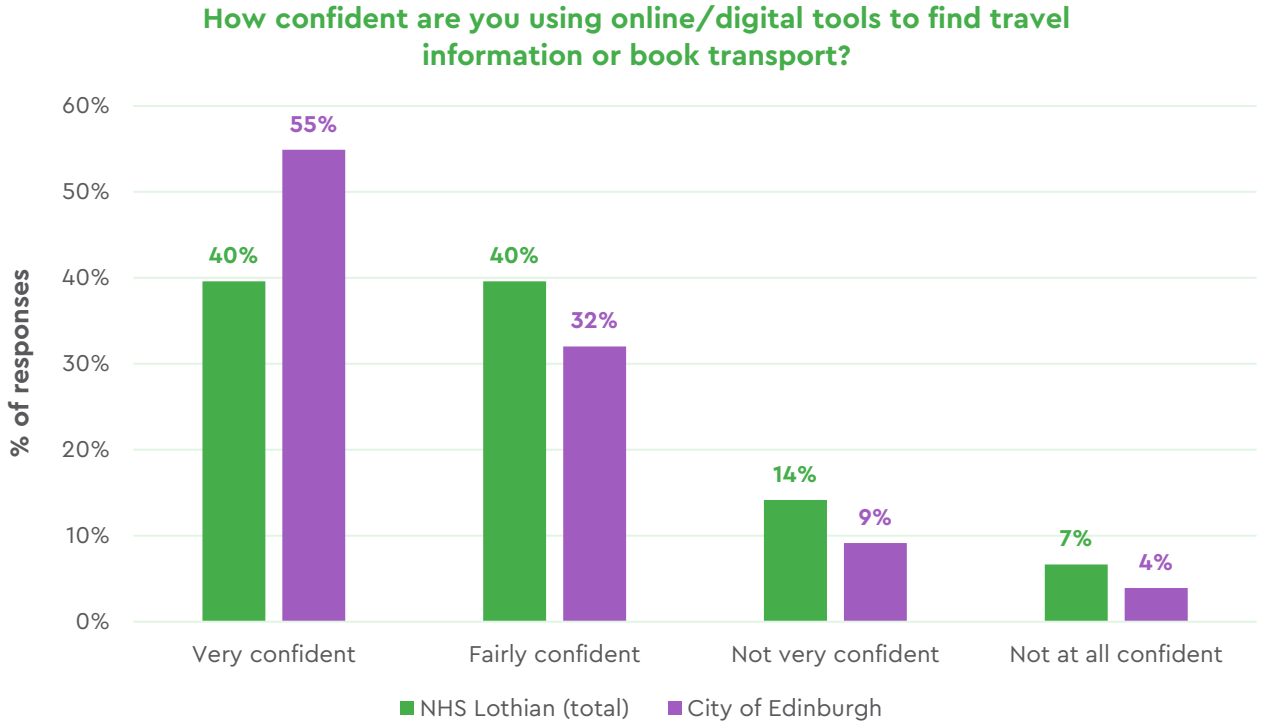


Figure 45: Confidence online

In practice, most respondents usually use digital tools for travel information or booking. A substantial proportion use them sometimes, while fewer reported that they rarely or never use digital tools for this purpose.

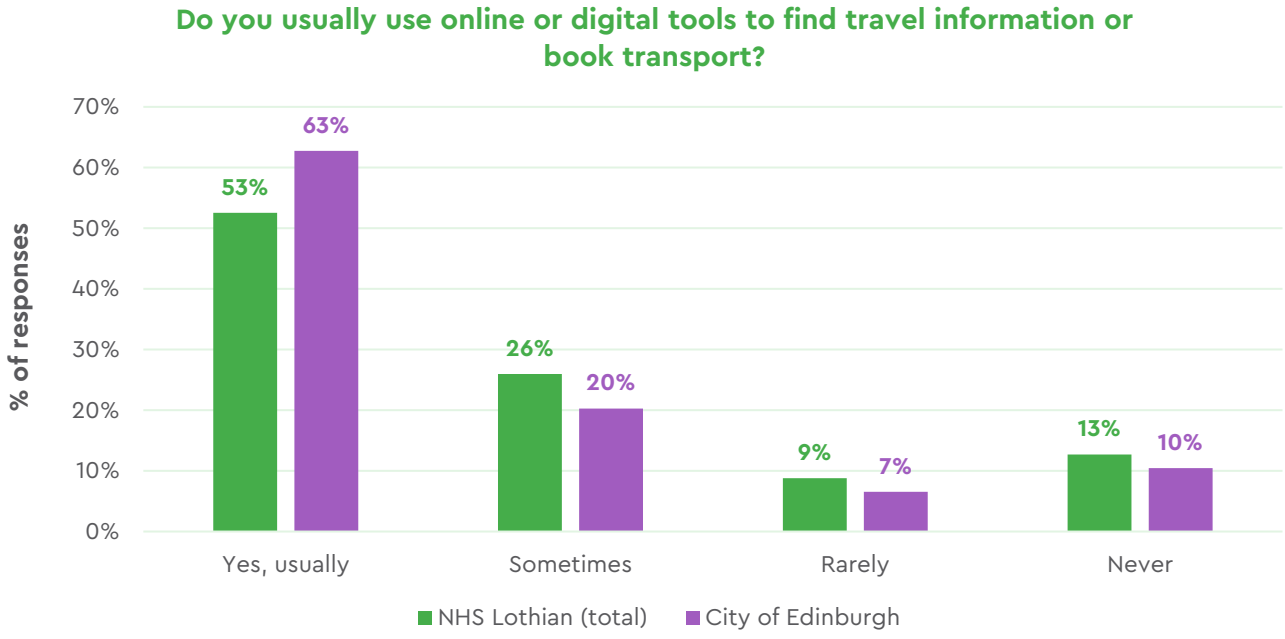


Figure 46: How do you use online tools

Severity of transport barriers

Respondents identified several significant transport barriers affecting access to healthcare. The most severe and commonly reported issue was the lack of direct public transport routes to healthcare facilities. Parking difficulties were also a major concern, particularly for hospital-based appointments. Poor connections between different transport services, such as bus, rail, taxi and community transport, were highlighted as a further barrier. A moderate number of respondents also reported challenges linked to limited service availability and difficulties with coordination and information across agencies. Cost and access to appropriate support for disabled people and carers were identified as additional, though less widely reported, barriers.

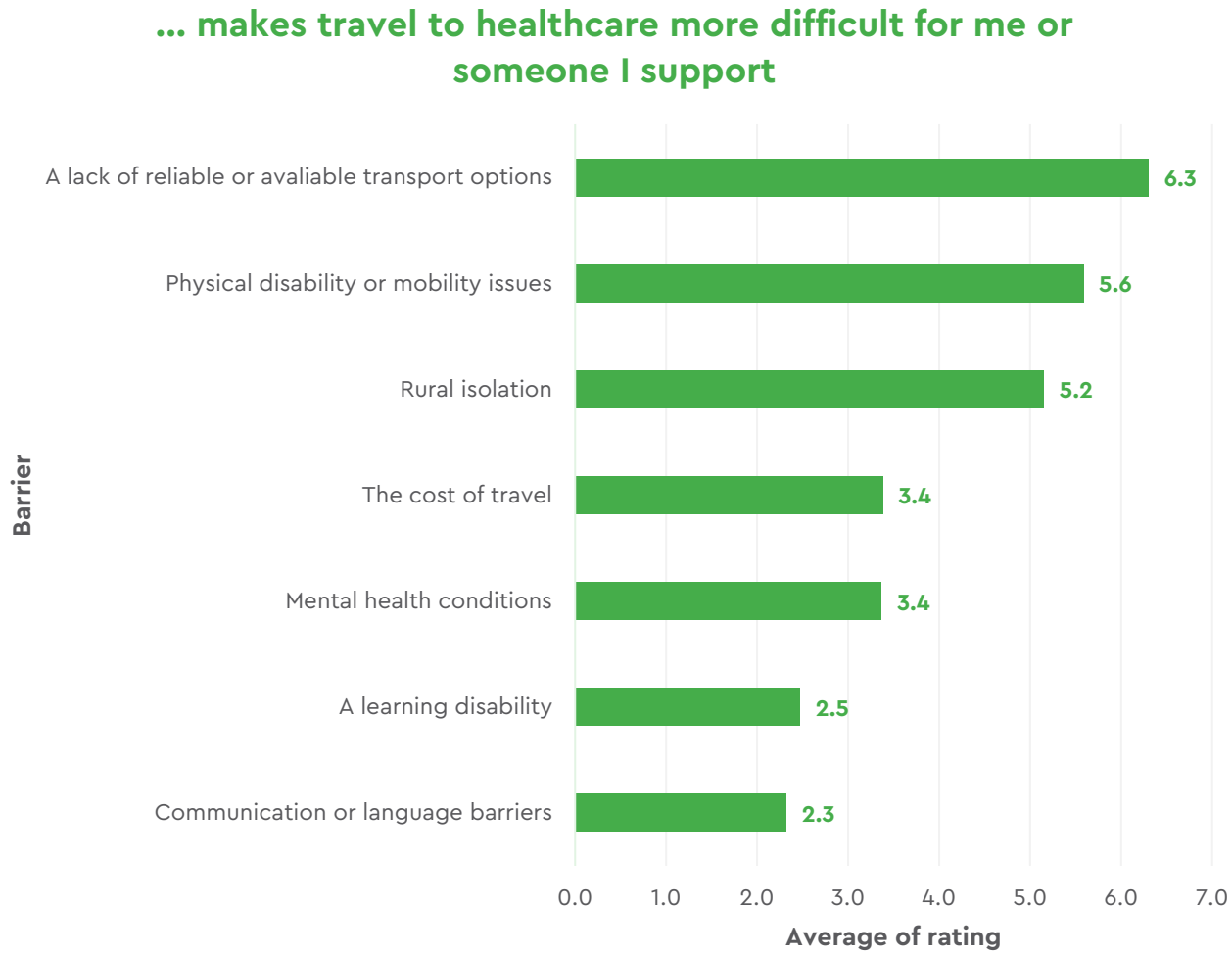


Figure 47: Difficulties with travel

Responses from the City of Edinburgh followed a similar pattern to those of NHS Lothian overall. However, the salience of 'Rural isolation' as a barrier to healthcare travel was much reduced for Edinburgh residents.

Which groups experience the greatest barriers

People with disabilities and long-term health conditions were more likely to experience accessibility and mobility-related barriers, including difficulties using public transport and reliance on others for lifts. Older people were more affected by digital barriers, limited service availability and reduced confidence in using online tools.

Carers frequently reported time pressures, reliance on others, and the complexity of coordinating transport around caring responsibilities.

Reported Transport Barriers by Disability Status

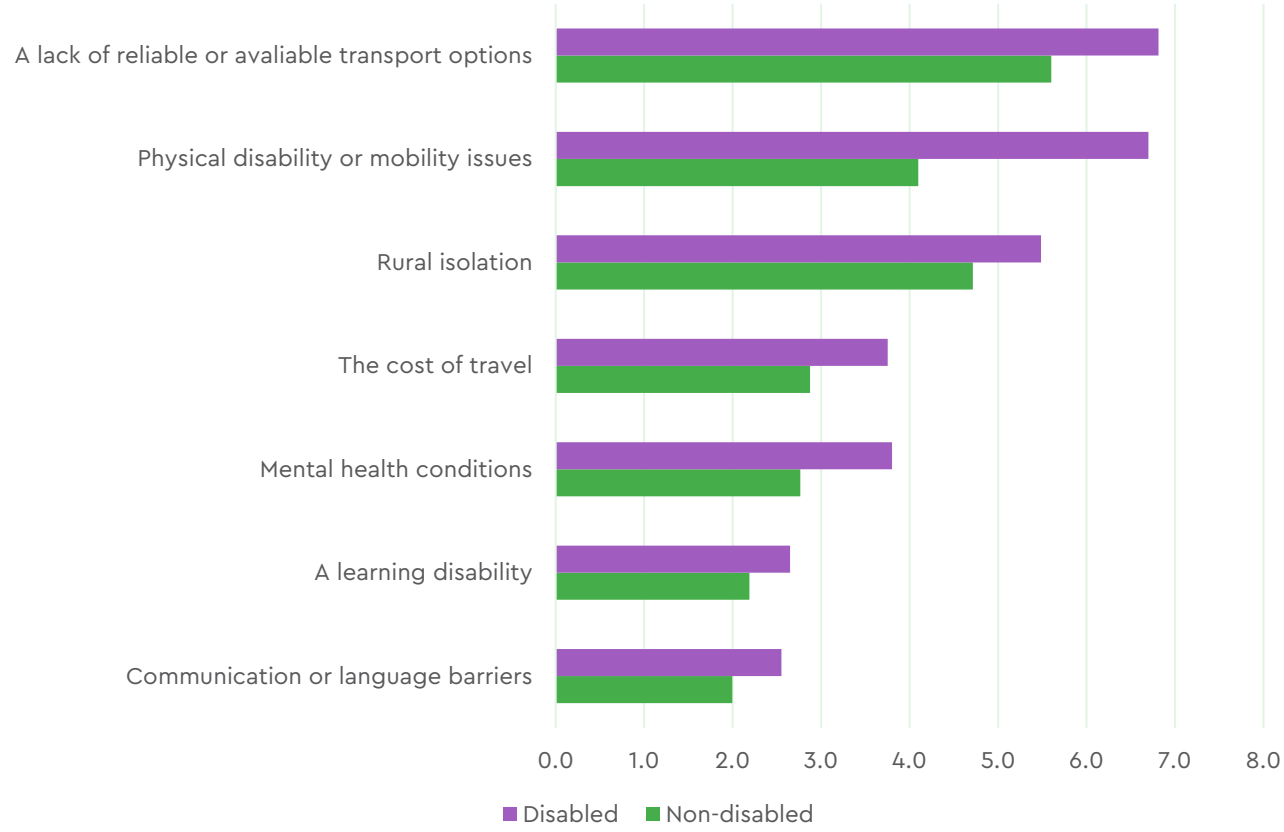


Figure 48: Transport barriers

What solutions people will consider

The most likely solution respondents were to consider to help access healthcare was remote consultations. This shows there is a willingness among patients to receive more care without travelling to appointments in person, this could help reduce journeys to healthcare for some suitable use cases. Hospital or clinic transport was the second most popular option, demonstrating a strong demand for purpose-built transport, particularly for healthcare journeys, alongside evidence that existing options do not meet the needs of all users.

Would you consider using any of the following to help you access healthcare, if they were available in your area?

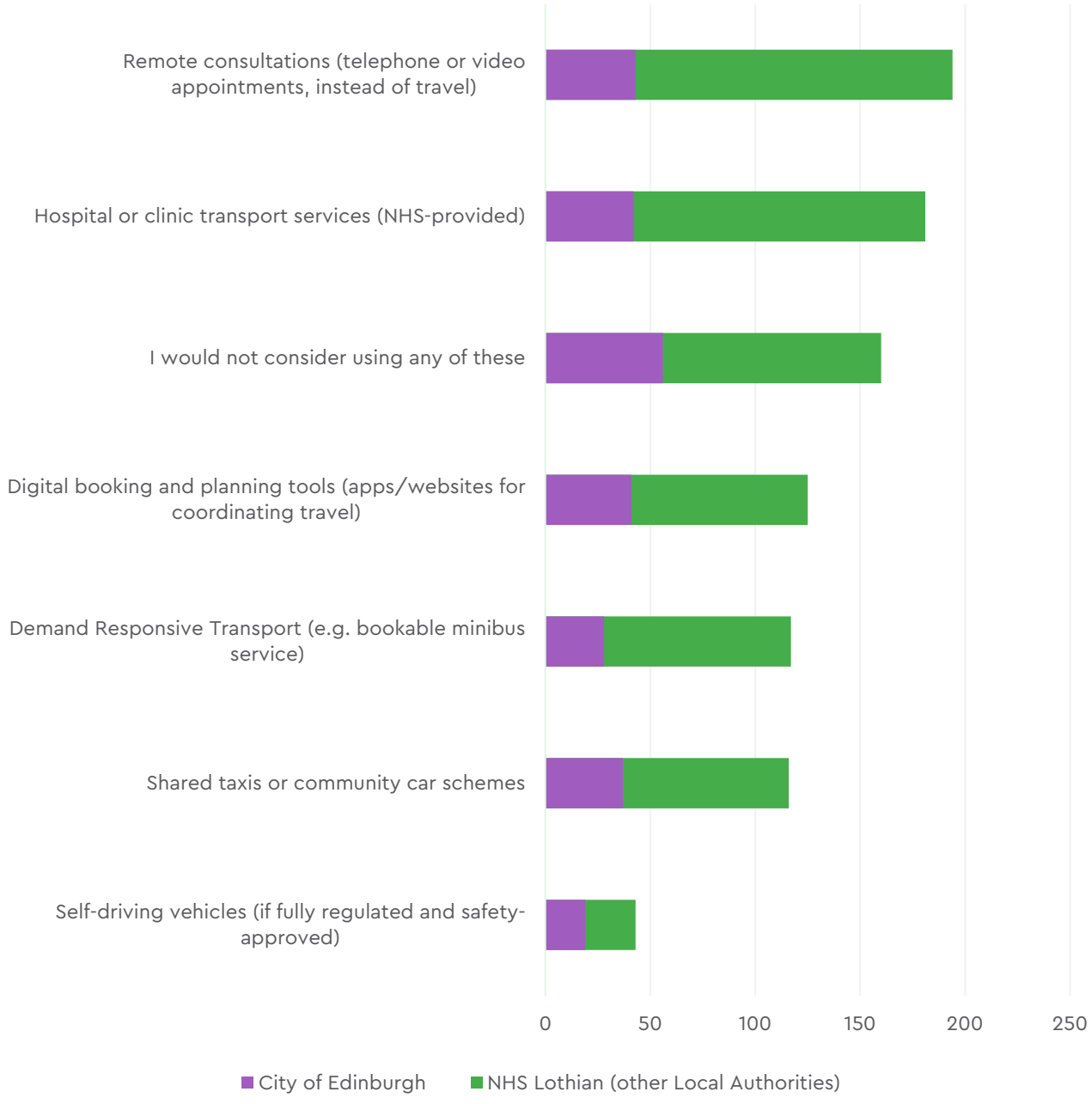


Figure 49: What would help access healthcare

Qualitative insights: Lived experience of travelling to healthcare

Open-text responses from NHS Lothian residents provide important context to the survey findings. Several consistent themes emerged across Edinburgh, East Lothian, Midlothian and West Lothian, reflecting a combination of long journeys, indirect routes, accessibility issues and reliance on private or informal transport.

Indirect, lengthy or multi-stage public transport journeys

Across NHS Lothian, respondents consistently described significant challenges related to the availability of accessible transport, long journey times and the distance to healthcare services. For many, accessing hospital care requires multiple bus journeys, long travel times and complex planning, particularly where there is no direct bus route to major hospital sites.

Several respondents reported that travelling to hospitals such as the Royal Infirmary of Edinburgh, Western General and St John's Hospital often requires two buses or a combination of bus, train and taxi, with journeys taking up to 90 minutes each way or longer. One participant explained:

> "If my husband is not available to drive us it's two buses to get to RIE... which can take anything from 35 minutes to 1 hour 15 minutes each way."

Long journeys were particularly difficult for those who do not drive:

> "I don't drive so rely on public transport and living at the opposite side of the city to the hospital takes almost 1.5 hours each way."

Distance to services was also linked to the centralisation of care, with people frequently being referred outwith their local area for treatment. This resulted in journeys that were described as time-consuming, stressful and costly, especially for older people:

> "We are elderly... we need to drive to the railway station, catch the train and take a taxi. This can be expensive and takes up a lot of time."

In some cases, people were required to travel over 28 miles for day surgery, which was viewed as unreasonable and avoidable where local facilities exist:

> "Don't send people 28 miles away for day surgery."

Lack of direct routes and reduced bus frequencies

A recurring theme was the lack of direct public transport routes to NHS facilities, even from densely populated areas. Respondents described routes being indirect, poorly connected or having reduced frequency over time.

One respondent from Leith highlighted the impact of this on someone with limited mobility:

> "There is no direct bus from Leith to the Western General... my partner is not up to walking between bus stops or sitting waiting for the connecting bus."

The absence of direct services was particularly problematic for regular outpatient and secondary care appointments:

> "The difficulty for me is there is no direct bus to ERI which I have to attend every 6 months."

Indirect routes often added significant additional travel time and resulted in time off work:

> "Indirect bus services approx. 2 hours one way (time off if workday)."

Parking pressures and continued reliance on the car

Parking availability at hospitals was another commonly reported barrier. Even where respondents had access to a car and a Blue Badge, parking close to hospital entrances was not guaranteed:

> "My husband has a blue badge, but you can't guarantee a parking place that is close enough to hospital."

As a result, some respondents relied on private cars due to limited suitable public transport options, particularly where connecting services were unreliable or physically demanding. For these users, parking pressures at hospital sites add further stress and barriers. Park and Ride was used as a compromise by some, although this increased journey length:

> "I am more likely to drive to the Park & Ride and then get a bus... which makes it a much longer journey."

Accessibility barriers for disabled people and those with long-term conditions

For people with limited mobility, transport challenges were compounded by limited accessible options. Respondents highlighted a shortage of wheelchair-accessible taxis, with many tied into school transport contracts:

> "Only a few taxis in our area take wheelchairs and a lot of these are tied into school contracts."

> "My partner can't manage the walk between connecting buses."

Health conditions also influence travel planning:

> "We have to consider times if she needs to access toilets which could mean getting off a bus to find a toilet."

These factors made public transport unpredictable, physically demanding and unsuitable for some patients.

Cost, stress and reliance on informal support

For those without access to a car, arranging transport often depended on family, friends or lifts, creating stress and uncertainty, especially following procedures:

> "If we can't get a lift, I don't know what we'll do as we can't afford a taxi, and he can't get a bus when he's had a painful surgical procedure."

Transport costs were also a concern for longer journeys involving trains and taxis. This created an additional burden for older people and those on fixed incomes:

> "We are elderly... train plus taxi is expensive and takes a lot of time."

Summary of insights for NHS Lothian

Evidence for NHS Lothian highlights a series of transport pressures shaped by the centralisation of acute care in Edinburgh and the diverse settlement patterns across the Health Board.

Key themes emerging from the data and lived experience

- **Hospital journeys are significantly longer and more complex than primary care travel**
  Many residents across East Lothian, Midlothian and West Lothian report hospital journeys of 60–90 minutes involving two buses or multimodal trips, reflecting indirect connections to major sites such as RIE, WGH and St John's.

- **Lack of direct public transport routes is the most consistently reported barrier**
  Indirect services, limited frequency and poorly aligned timetables particularly affect regular outpatient users and those travelling for specialist care.

- **Continued dependence on private cars despite parking pressures**
  Although Edinburgh has good public transport coverage, many respondents rely on driving due to journey complexity and accessibility issues.

- **Disabled people and those with long-term conditions face disproportionate barriers**
  Limited availability of accessible taxis, long walking distances between interchanges and the physical demands of multi-stage travel make public transport unsuitable for many.

- **Cost is not a universal barrier but can be significant for those without car access**
  Rail–taxi combinations and long bus trips impose financial strain, especially on older and low-income residents.

- **Spatial disparities are clear across the Board area**
  Edinburgh respondents experience shorter, more reliable journeys, whereas outer authorities report the longest travel times, higher reliance on informal support and the fewest direct hospital connections.

- **Overall**
  NHS Lothian performs relatively well for primary care access but less effectively for hospital and specialist appointments, creating a pattern of disadvantage for disabled people, older adults and residents living further from Edinburgh's main hospital sites.

NHS Fife – evidence summary

Area overview

NHS Fife covers a geographically diverse area that includes coastal towns, mid-sized urban centres and extensive rural communities. Settlement patterns are shaped by the Firth of Forth coastline, former mining towns across central Fife, and rural hinterlands in the north and east of the region. Major towns include Dunfermline, Kirkcaldy, Glenrothes and St Andrews, alongside smaller communities such as Cupar, Leven, Anstruther and Cowdenbeath.

Two acute hospitals serve the area:

- **Victoria Hospital, Kirkcaldy (VHK)** – the main district general hospital providing most acute and specialist services
- **Queen Margaret Hospital, Dunfermline (QMH)** – providing a range of outpatient and elective services

These hospitals sit within dense or semi-urban areas in central and west Fife, meaning that residents in rural northern and eastern parts of the region often face longer and more complex journeys to reach secondary care. Several community hospitals and primary care centres supplement this network, but many specialised services require travel to VHK or to hospitals in neighbouring NHS Lothian.

Fife's transport network is shaped by major road corridors including the A92, A915 and A985, and a rail network serving the Fife Circle, Edinburgh, Dundee and Aberdeen routes. However, rail coverage is uneven, with large parts of East Neuk, North Fife and rural inland areas located far from train services. Bus provision is dense in larger towns yet significantly thinner in rural areas, contributing to pronounced differences in healthcare accessibility.

These structural patterns are illustrated in the following GIS maps:

Figure 50 shows distribution of major settlements, road connectivity and rail availability.

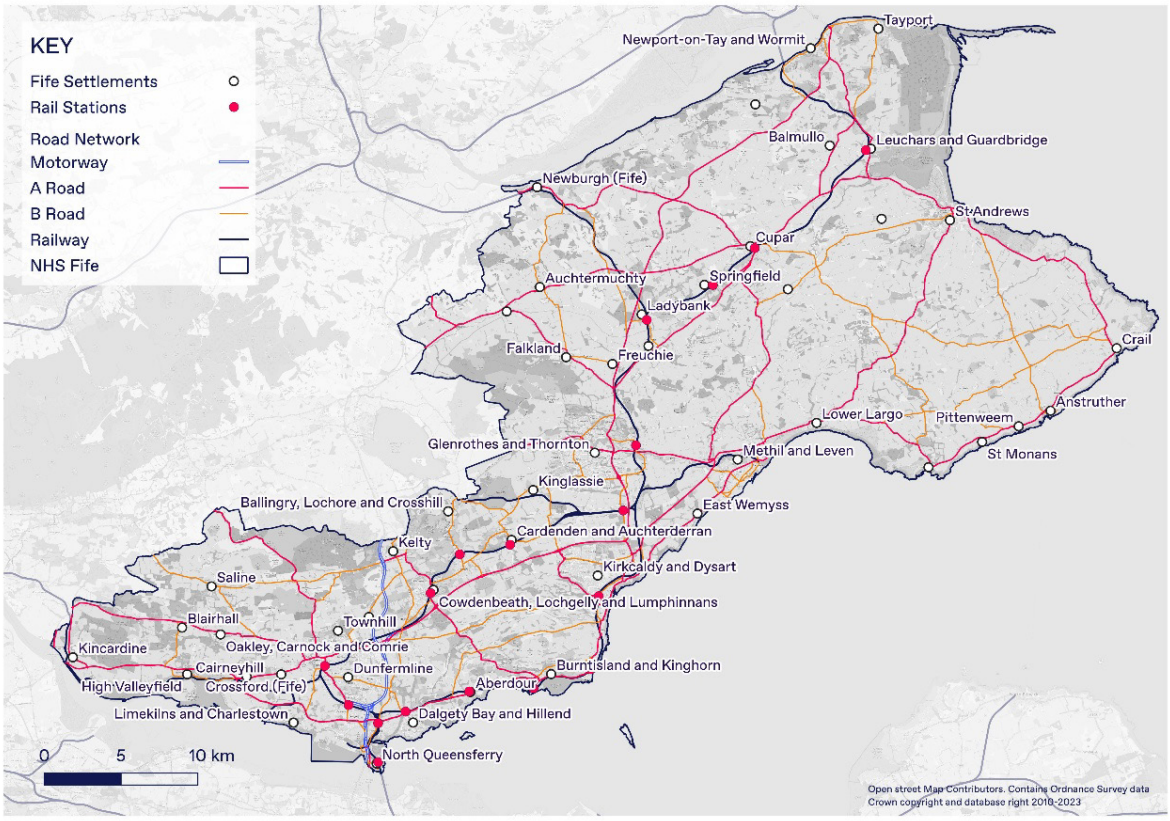


Figure 50: Distribution of major settlements, road connectivity and rail availability

Figure 51 shows GP surgeries, community hospitals and the two acute hospitals, highlighting rural areas with greater travel distances.

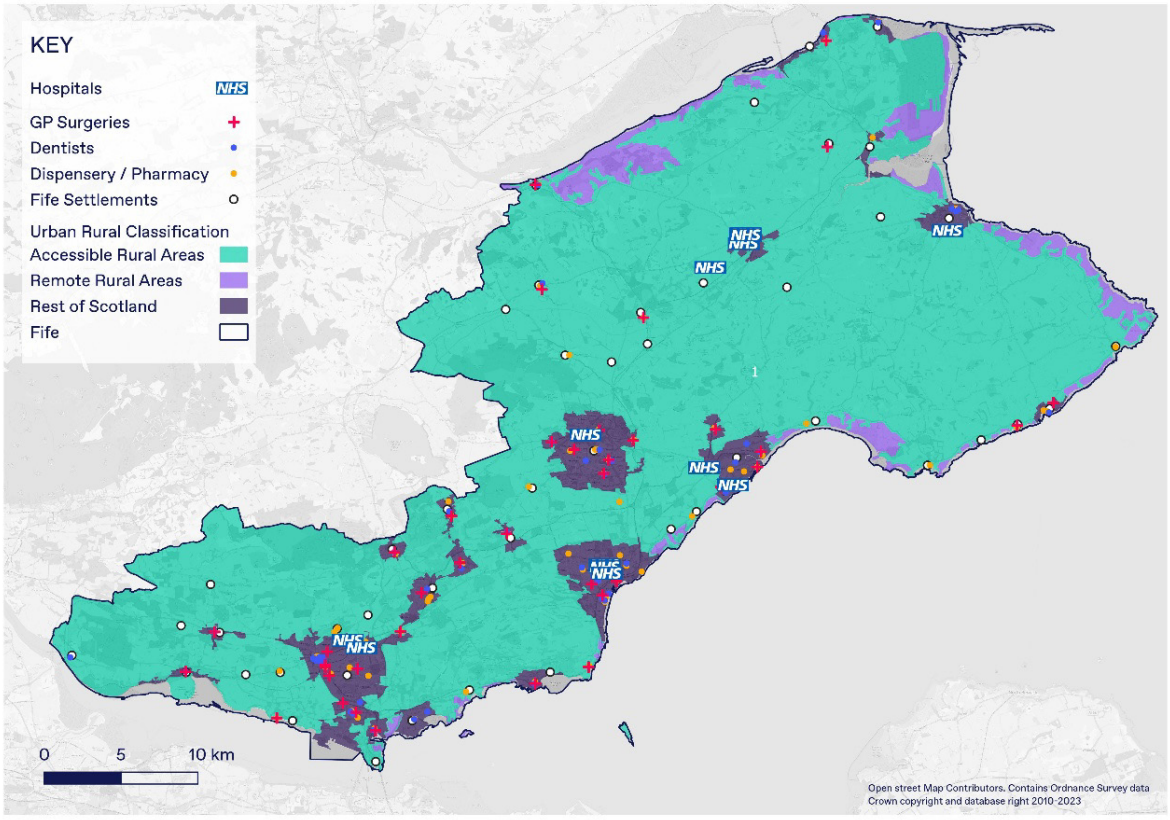


Figure 51: Distribution of services

Figure 52 illustrates variation in journey time and public transport complexity across central, western, northern and eastern Fife.

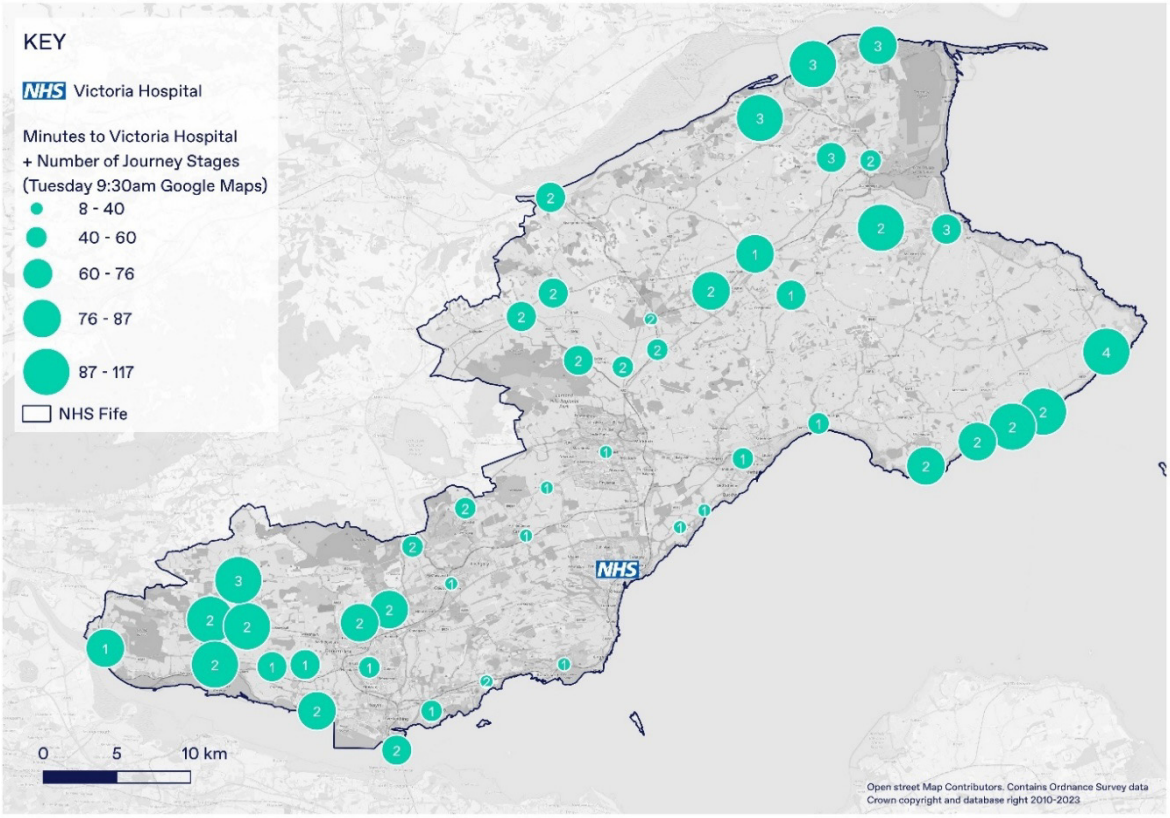


Figure 52: Journey time variation

Figure 53 shows the proportion of the population which lives in each of the 5 SIMD quintiles. The index of deprivation quintiles represent 5 equal segments of the Scottish population from 1 (most deprived) to 5 (least deprived). NHS Fife aligns with the Scottish average with each quintile containing roughly 20% of the population, meaning that there is a an equal distribution of deprived and less deprived areas.

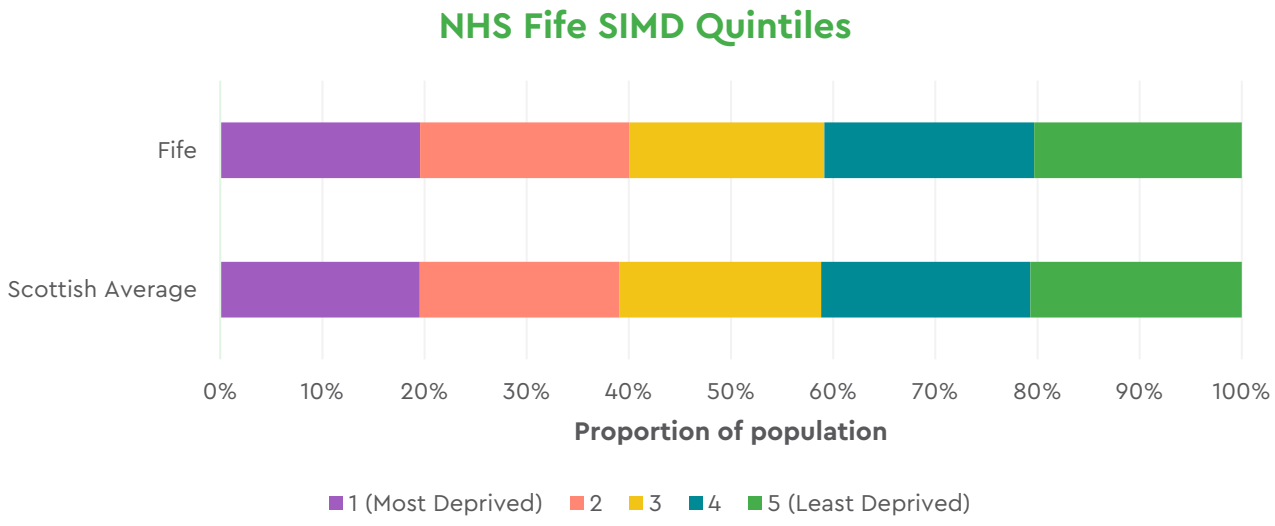


Figure 53: NHS Fife proportion of the population in each quintile

A total of **225 survey respondents** live within the NHS Fife area, providing insight into how residents across urban, semi-urban and rural communities currently experience travel to healthcare.

NHS Fife Survey respondent characteristics

Survey respondents from Fife were more likely to have access to a car than survey respondents overall by a margin of +5%. This reflects the more mixed rural and semi-urban setting of much of the authority area.

Survey responses from Fife are consistent with overall survey characteristics, with a greater proportion of older people and women responding to the survey than the general population.

Fife is notable for having a much greater proportion of people living with long term health conditions or disabilities both in terms of the general population and respondents to this survey. The 2022 census reveals that Fife has +4% more people than the SEStran average living with a long-term health condition/disability, while our survey has an increase of +6% compared to overall survey results.

Fife also has a greater proportion of people providing unpaid care. The 2022 census shows 13.9% of Fife residents provide unpaid care compared to 11.5% in SEStran overall. This is reflected in our survey where 26% of respondents provide unpaid care compared to 21% in overall survey results.

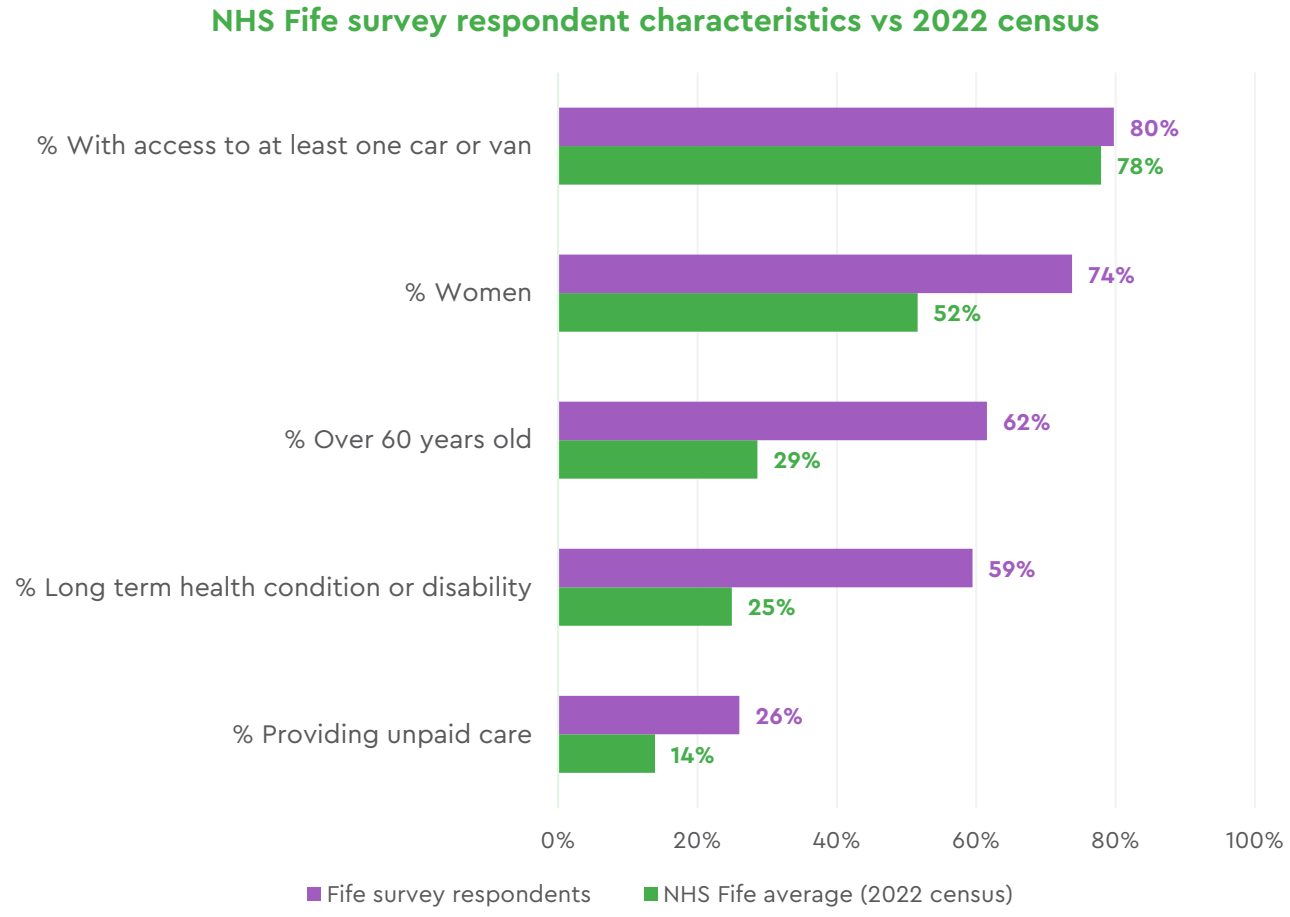


Figure 54: NHS Fife Characteristics – respondents vs census

Patterns of healthcare use

Within NHS Fife, most respondents reported travelling for healthcare infrequently, with the majority of journeys across all appointment types occurring either once a year or less or every few months. GP or local clinic and outpatient appointments were attended more regularly than other services, reflecting their role in ongoing care.

Dental and optician visits were largely infrequent, most commonly reported as once a year or less. Pharmacy visits showed a higher frequency than other services, with a greater proportion of respondents attending every few weeks or monthly. Inpatient travel was least frequent overall and most commonly recorded as not applicable or once a year or less.

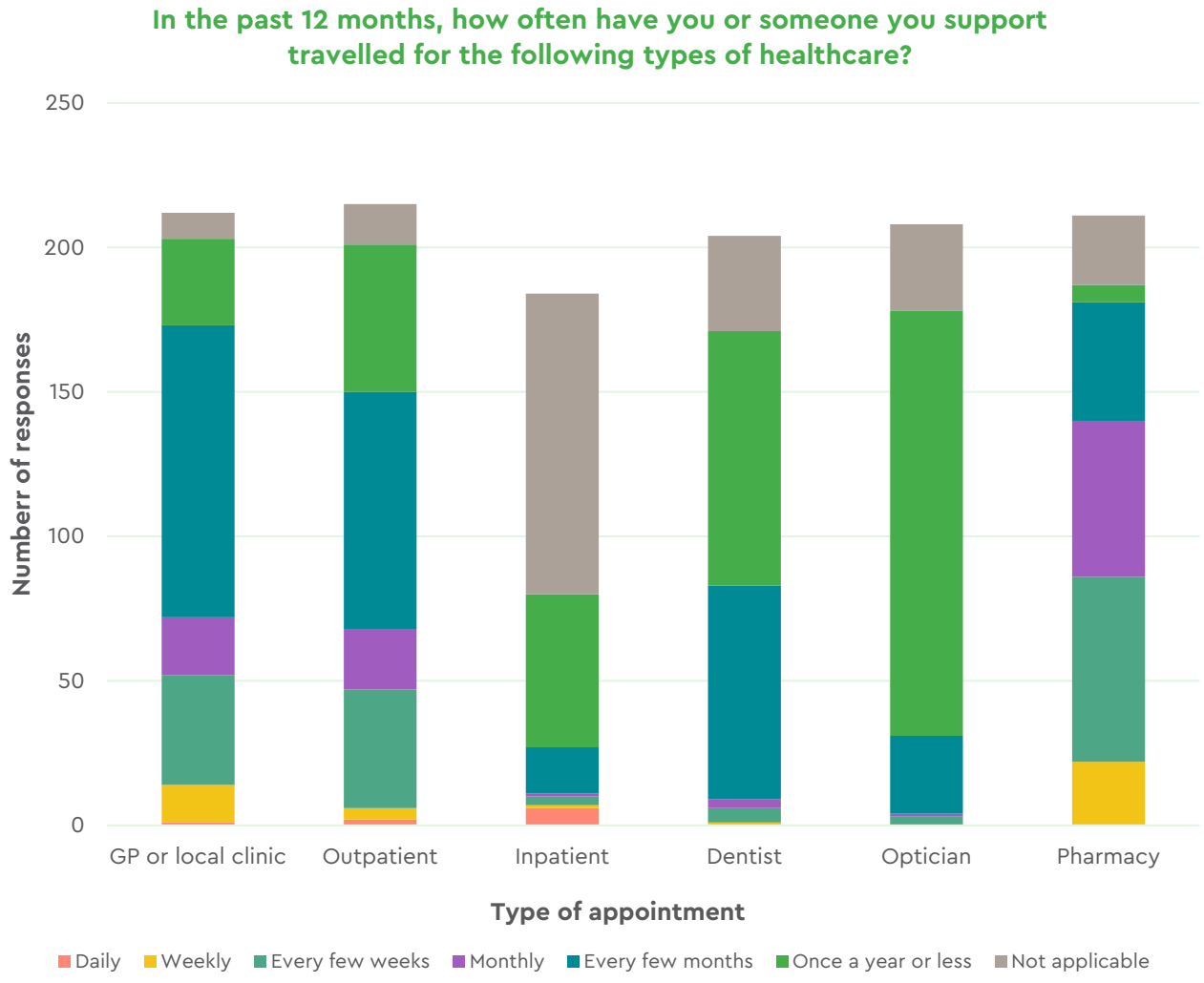


Figure 55: Frequency of visits

How long journeys take

Across NHS Fife, most journeys to healthcare appointments were relatively short. GP or local clinic and pharmacy appointments were most commonly reached within 15 minutes, indicating generally good local access to community-based services. Journeys to outpatient, dentist and optician appointments were more mixed, with many respondents reporting travel times of 15–30 minutes and 30–60 minutes. Inpatient appointments were associated with the longest journeys, with a higher proportion of respondents travelling over 60 minutes, reflecting the more centralised nature of hospital services within Fife.

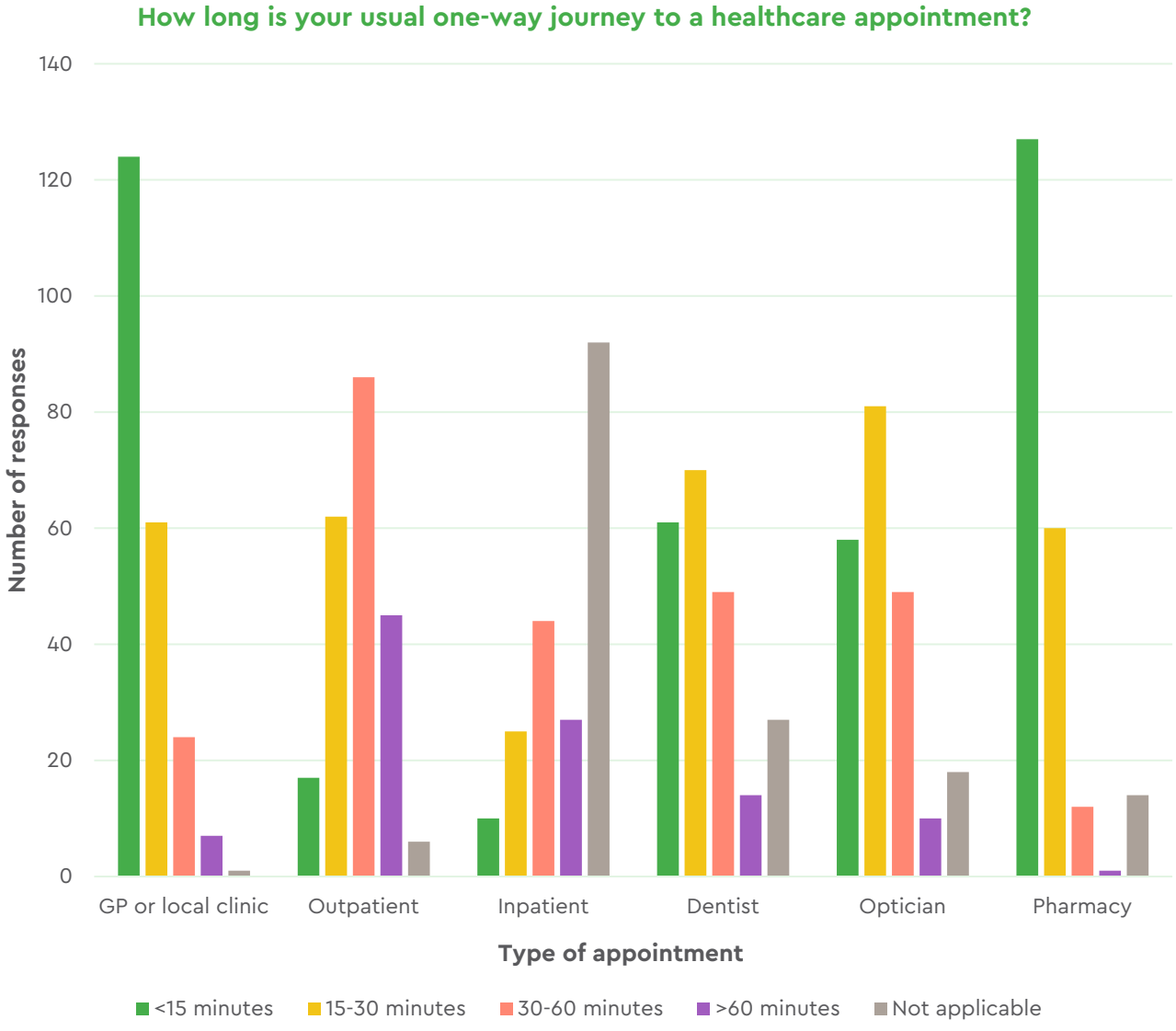


Figure 56: Journey time

How people travel to healthcare

Respondents in NHS Fife reported using a mix of transport modes to access healthcare, with the private car being the most common main mode of travel, either as a driver or passenger. Bus services were the next most frequently used option, particularly for those without access to a car. Use of taxis and walking was less common.

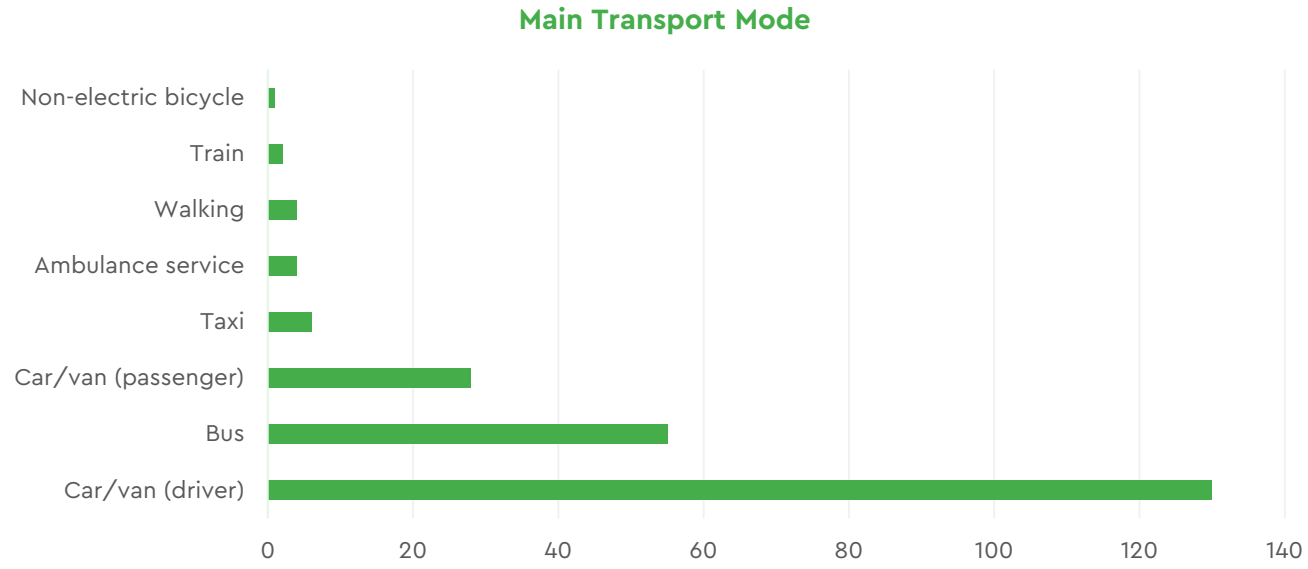


Figure 57: Main mode of transport

The most popular option for respondents was that they didn't have a backup option to their main mode of transport. Among those who reported having an alternative transport option, many respondents indicated that they would rely on family or friends for lifts if their usual mode was unavailable. Public transport, particularly buses, was also commonly used as a secondary option. A smaller number identified taxis as their main alternative.

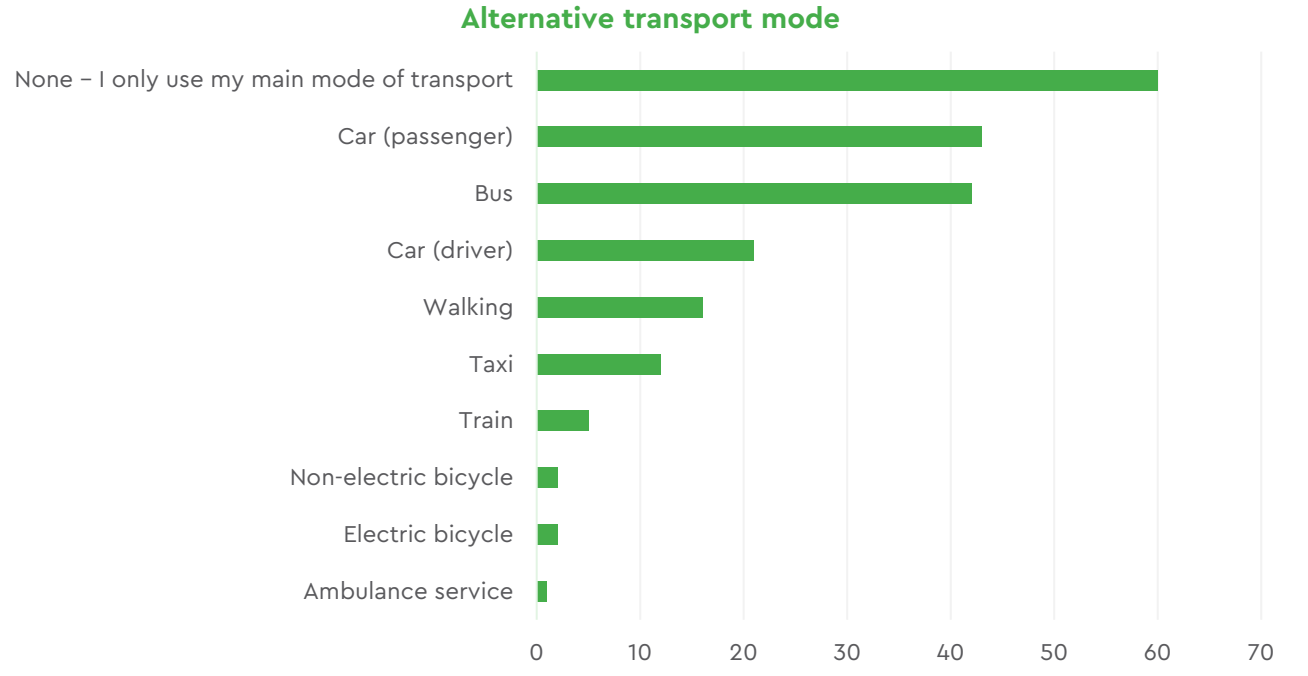


Figure 58: Alternative transport mode

Reliability of available transport

Most NHS Fife respondents reported that their usual transport to healthcare is reliable. The largest group described their transport as "usually reliable", followed by those who said it is "always reliable". A smaller proportion experienced some issues, reporting that their transport is "sometimes unreliable". Only a small minority stated that it is "often unreliable", indicating that overall reliability across Fife is generally good, but not consistent for all users.

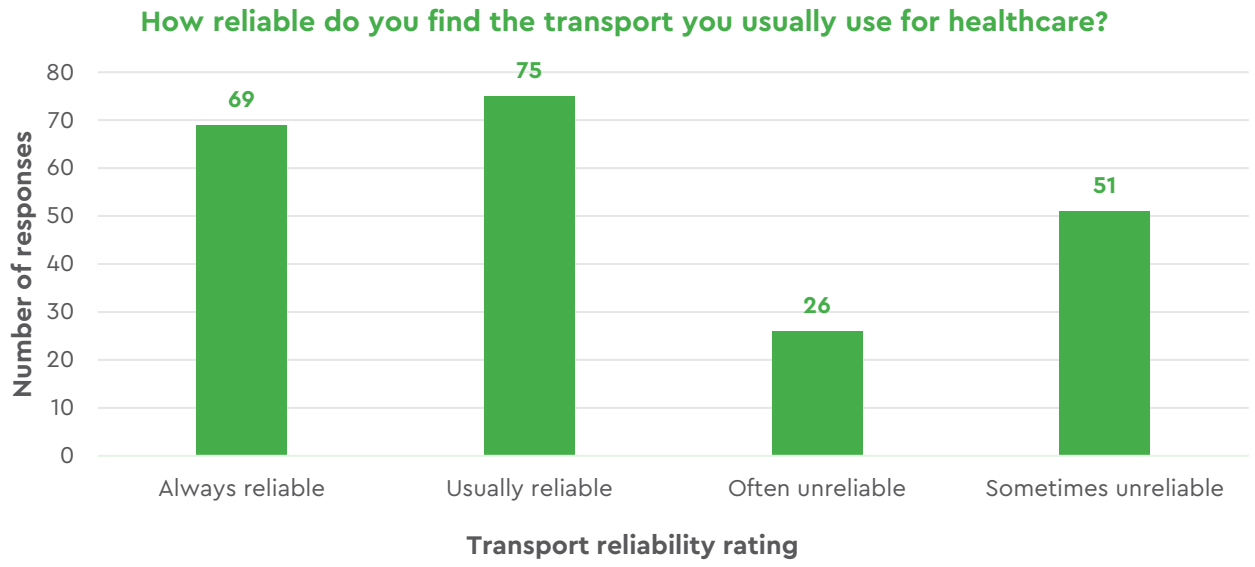


Figure 59: Transport reliability

Missed or delayed appointments due to transport

44% of NHS Fife respondents reported that they have missed or delayed a healthcare appointment due to transport issues, the highest proportion of any Health Board in the region.

For those affected, the leading reasons were traffic congestion and delayed services. Accessibility and mobility issues were also commonly cited. A smaller number of respondents highlighted reliance on family for transport and difficulties with parking. Other factors, including poor transport connections, personal car issues, lack of information, cost and distance, were mentioned less frequently.

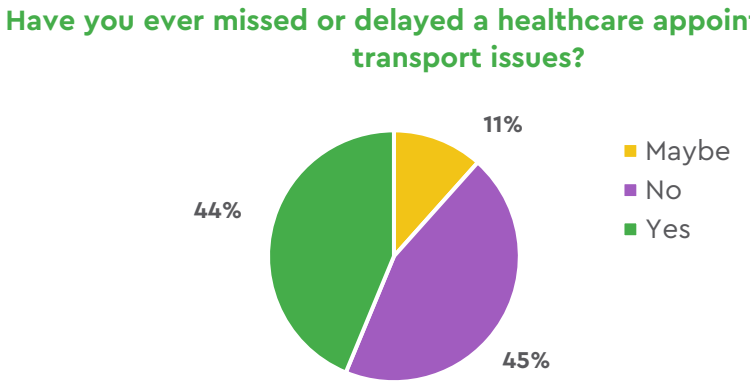


Figure 60: Missed appointments

Effect of transport costs on attendance

Most respondents in NHS Fife stated that transport costs do not affect their decision or ability to attend healthcare. However, a notable minority reported that costs either do affect or sometimes affect their attendance. This minority rises by 12% when only considering those who don't have a free bus pass. This indicates that while cost is not a barrier for most patients in Fife, it remains a significant issue for a proportion of service users.

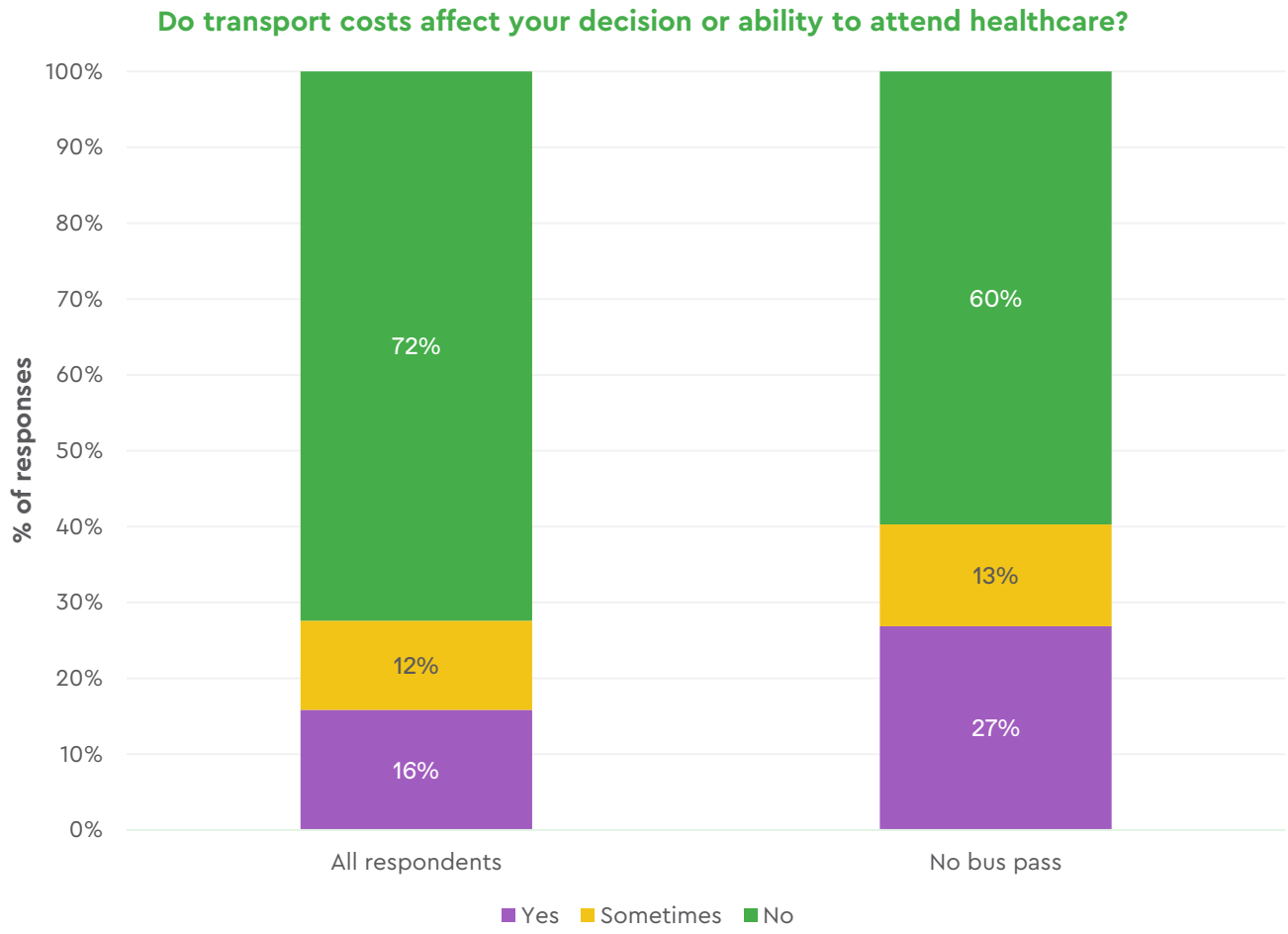


Figure 61: Reason for missed appointment

Cost of the most recent healthcare journey

Among NHS Fife respondents, most reported that their most recent return journey to a healthcare appointment did not cost anything. Where costs were incurred, the majority spent under £10, with the largest proportion paying under £5. Smaller numbers reported spending between £11 and £20, and only a limited number incurred costs above £20.

A small proportion were unsure or unable to remember the cost. Overall, most journeys are low-cost, but a minority face higher travel expenses.

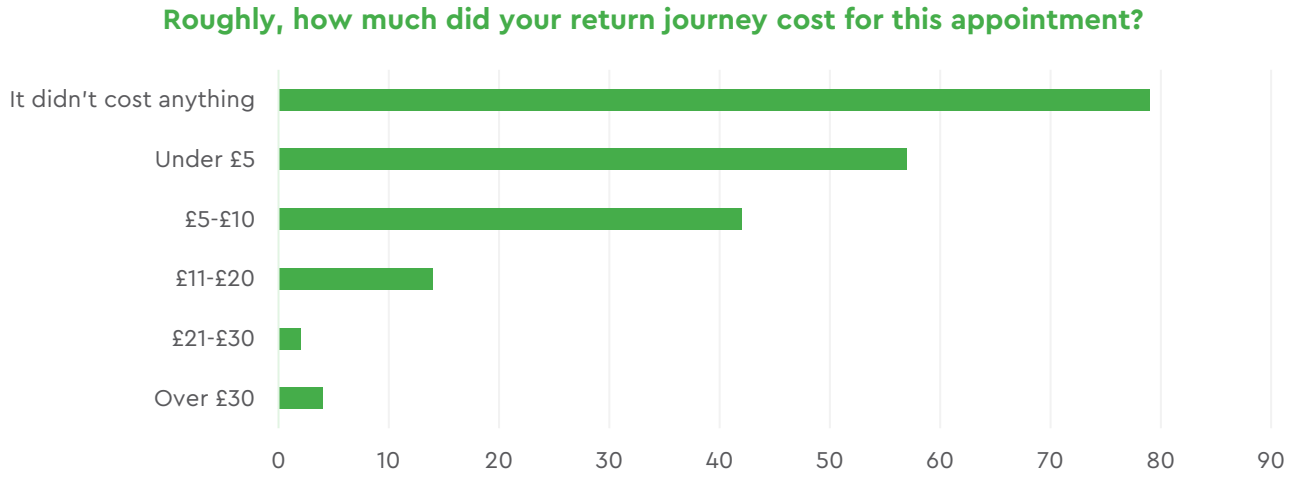


Figure 62: Cost of journey

How people find travel information

In terms of ease of finding and understanding travel information, most respondents said this is possible "most of the time". A sizeable proportion reported that it is only "sometimes" easy, while fewer said it is "always" easy. A notable minority reported that they rarely or never find the information easy to access or understand.

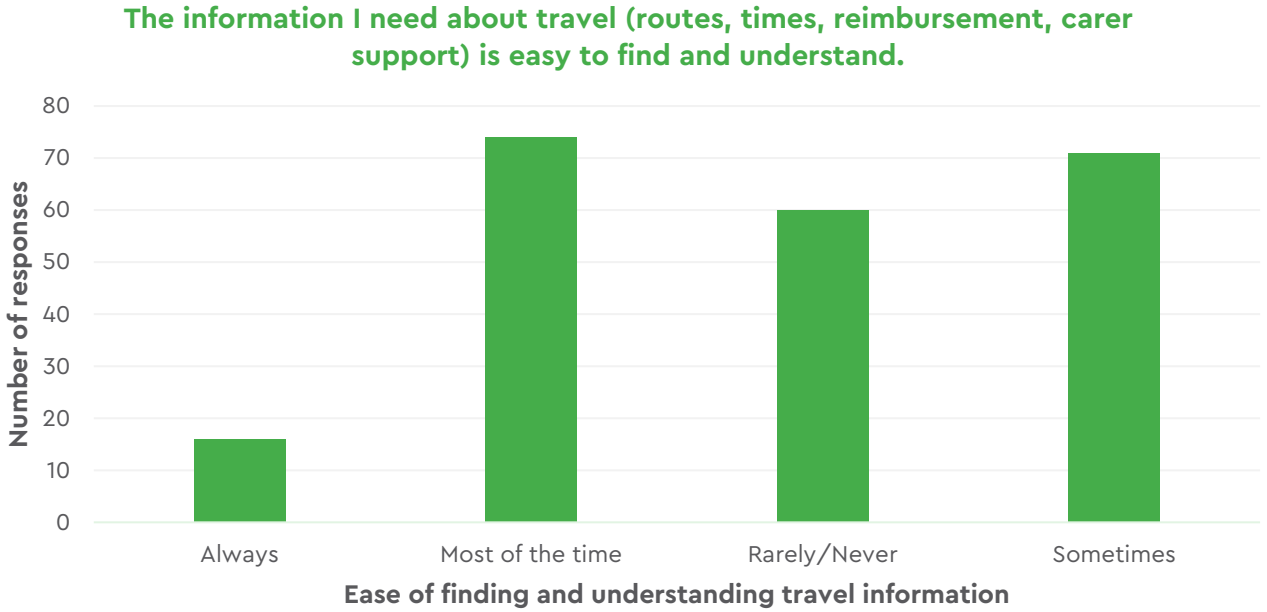


Figure 63: Digestible information

NHS Fife respondents most commonly relied on digital mapping tools such as Google or Bing Maps to find travel information, followed closely by online resources such as Traveline and NHS websites. Information included in patient letters was also an important source. Word of mouth and personal knowledge played a moderate role, while community transport providers, NHS staff advice and local bus apps were used by fewer respondents.

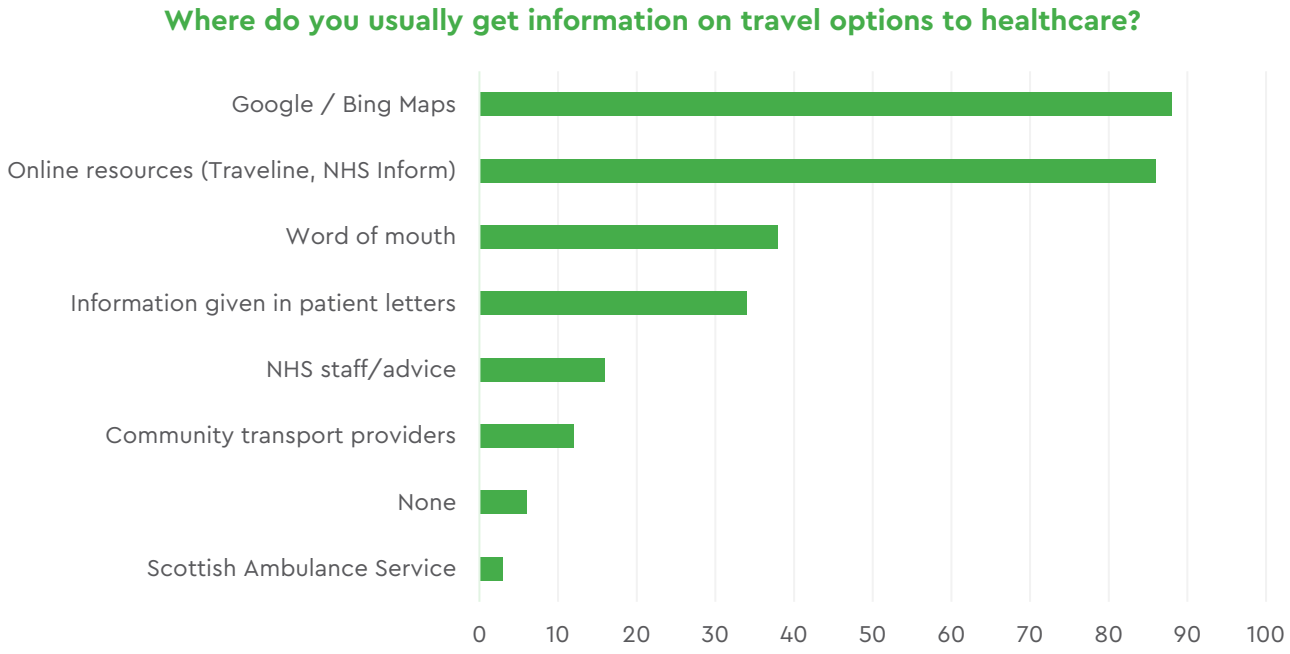


Figure 64: Where do you get your information?

Digital confidence in planning healthcare travel

Overall digital confidence among NHS Fife respondents is high. Most described themselves as either very confident or fairly confident in using online tools to find travel information or book transport. Smaller numbers were not very confident, and only a small minority were not confident at all.

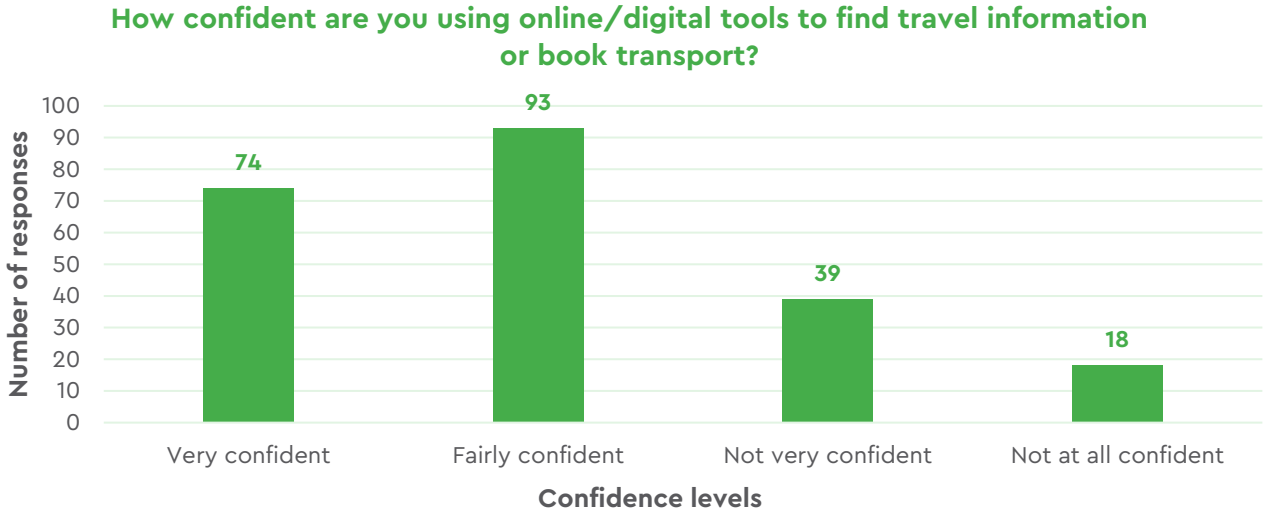


Figure 65: Confidence online

In practice, most respondents usually use digital tools for travel information or booking within NHS Fife. A substantial proportion use them sometimes, while fewer reported that they rarely or never use digital tools for this purpose.

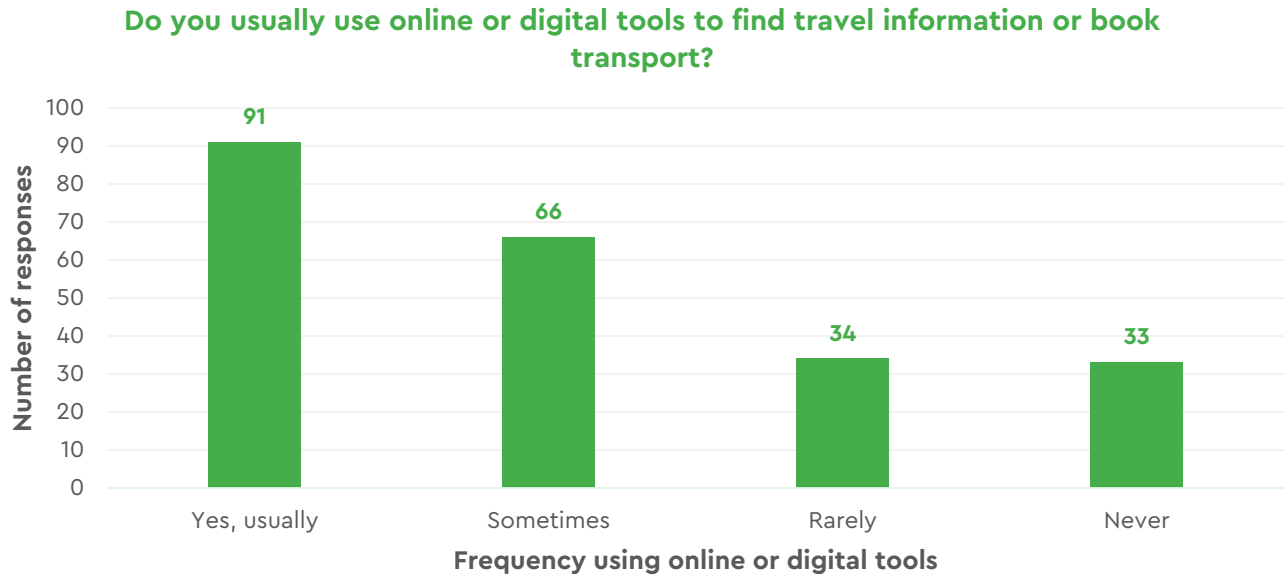


Figure 66: How do you use online tools

Severity of transport barriers

Within NHS Fife, the most commonly identified barrier was the lack of direct public transport routes to healthcare services. Difficulties with parking and poor connections between different transport services were also significant issues. Problems with coordination and information across agencies were reported by a moderate number of respondents. Cost, availability of suitable services, and support for carers and disabled users were identified as additional barriers, though by smaller proportions of respondents.

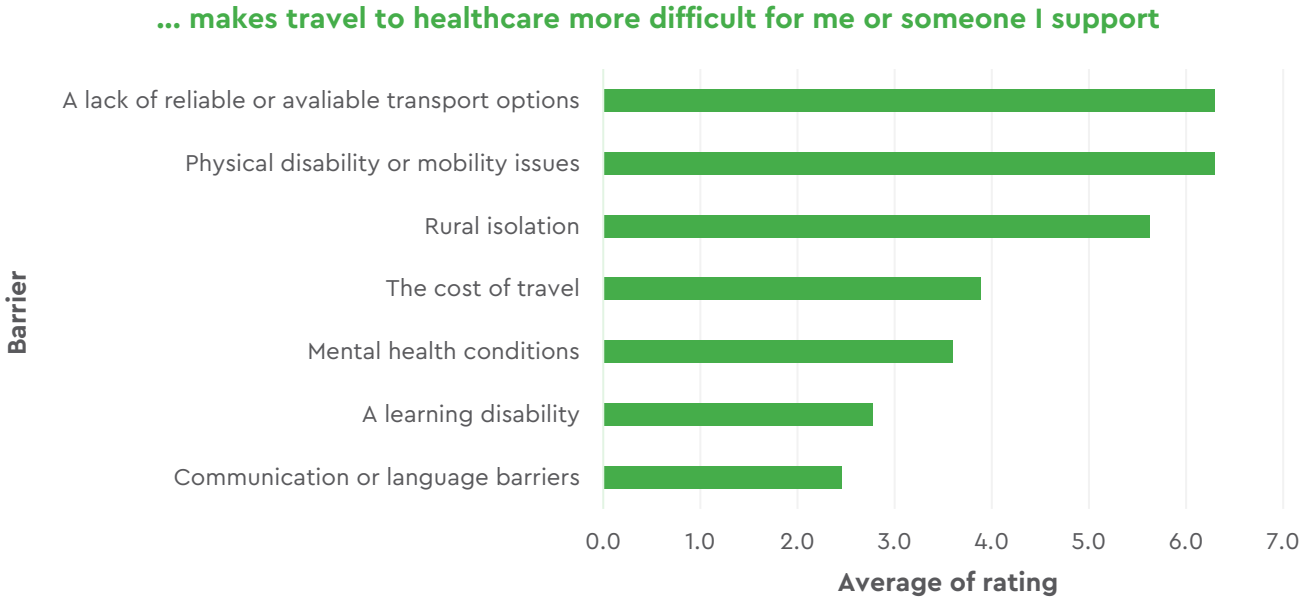


Figure 67: Difficulties with travel

Which group experience the greatest barriers

The data shows that disabled respondents in NHS Fife experience all transport barriers more frequently than non-disabled respondents.

The most significant barrier for both groups is a lack of reliable or available transport options, but this is more pronounced among disabled respondents. Physical disability or mobility issues are also a major barrier for disabled people, while this is far less significant for non-disabled respondents.

Rural isolation affects both groups, although it is again more commonly reported by disabled respondents. The cost of travel is a moderate barrier for both groups, with similar levels of impact.

Barriers linked to mental health conditions, learning disabilities, and communication or language barriers are reported at lower levels overall, but remain consistently higher for disabled respondents than for non-disabled respondents.

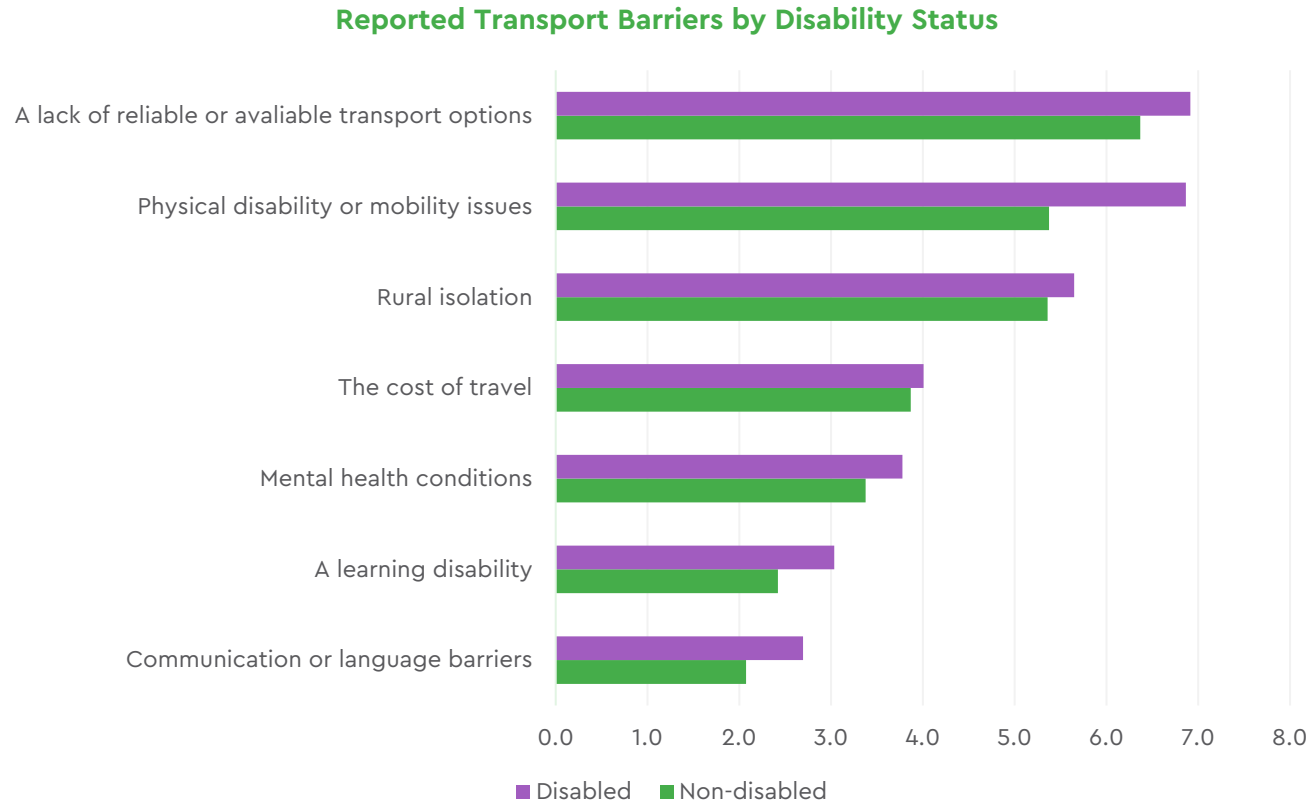


Figure 68: Transport barriers

What improvements people want

The most popular option among respondents was demand responsive transport, indicating strong demand for flexible local travel services. There was also high support for remote consultations and hospital or clinic transport services, suggesting that alternatives to independent travel are widely welcomed.

A moderate number of respondents would consider using shared taxis, community car schemes and digital booking tools. Only a small proportion said they would not use any of these options. Self-driving vehicles attracted the least interest and are not seen as a current priority.

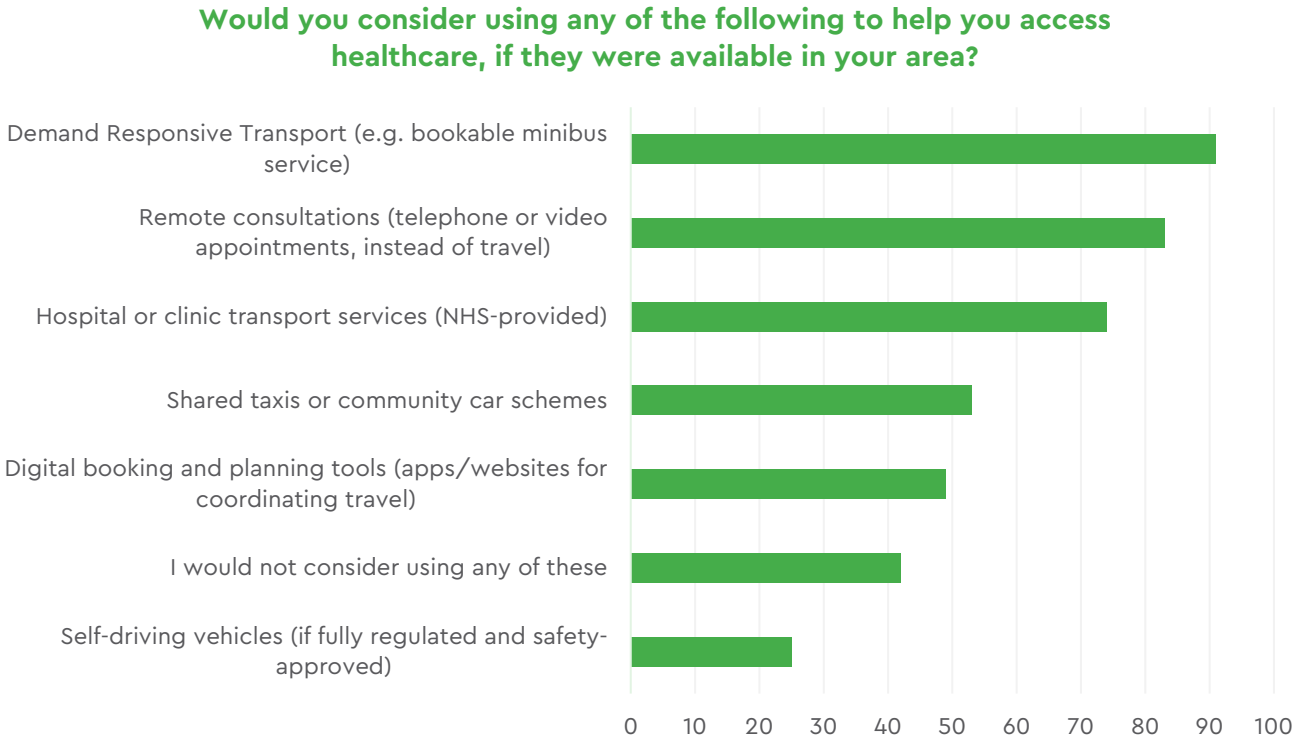


Figure 69: What would help access healthcare

Qualitative insights: Lived experience of travelling to healthcare

Transport availability, accessibility and distance

Across NHS Fife, respondents frequently described limited, indirect and infrequent public transport as a major barrier to accessing healthcare. Many reported that local bus services have been reduced or removed altogether, leaving some communities with no direct public transport to hospitals or GP services. This was particularly evident in places such as Limekilns and Tayport, where residents reported being unable to reach Fife hospitals without travelling via Dundee or relying on taxis. One respondent noted that

> "The only bus we now have taken us out of the county to Dundee, so [we are] unable to attend Fife-based hospital appointments."

Journey length was a consistent problem, with public transport trips often taking significantly longer than the equivalent car journey. Respondents described journeys of over an hour for appointments that would take 20 minutes by car, and in some cases requiring multiple bus changes. Travel to more specialist services was particularly challenging, with one individual reporting that reaching Perth from Tayport required "6 buses". This level of complexity was described as a deterrent to attending appointments.

Service frequency was also a prominent concern. In parts of rural and semi-rural Fife, buses run only once an hour, making it difficult to match appointments with available services. One respondent noted:

> "Only one bus an hour goes near to the GP surgery and hospital"

Centralisation of services increased the travel burden further. Several respondents highlighted the shift of specialist services to Victoria Hospital, Kirkcaldy, describing journeys as time-consuming and expensive:

> "Outrageous that we have to travel so far for most services at the Victoria Kirkcaldy"

A lack of accessible alternatives was also evident. Patient transport services were not always available or practical, with one respondent stating

> "We don't use patient transport because no one has time for that"

Others reported living too far from bus stops for public transport to be a realistic option, particularly for those with mobility issues.

Finally, concerns about the comfort, safety and confidence of bus travel were raised, with one respondent noting that

> "Confidence using buses is low as they can be uncomfortable and behaviour of fellow passengers can be off-putting"

Lack of direct routes and reduced bus services[22]

Respondents across NHS Fife reported that reductions in bus services, indirect routes and unreliable timetables are making it increasingly difficult to reach healthcare, particularly for those without access to a car. These issues affect both same-day urgent care and planned appointments and were most acute in rural and semi-rural areas.

Several participants described how previously frequent services have been reduced, leaving them with infrequent or unreliable options. One respondent explained that a service that had run every 30 minutes was changed and now

> "Does not always run... it is hit and miss"

meaning they faced a 35-minute walk to their GP surgery if no lift was available. Others reported buses being withdrawn entirely due to driver shortages, with little notice given to passengers:

> "Buses are often late or don't turn up at all... this information is not communicated to people waiting at stops."

Long, indirect journeys caused by poorly connected services were common, with many planned appointments requiring two or three buses each way. Some respondents described hospital trips taking most of the day, including one case where a 40-mile journey involved multiple bus changes and took over seven hours in total. These lengthy journeys were described as physically exhausting, painful and highly stressful, particularly for those with long-term conditions.

The unreliability and limited frequency of bus services also led to missed or cancelled appointments. Respondents described having to book specific appointment times to match infrequent bus schedules, only to cancel when services ran late. One participant noted that their GP surgery was only ten minutes away, but because the bus ran once an hour and was often late, they had cancelled several appointments as a result.

[22] https://tinyurl.com/bddpsysa

For many respondents, the lack of direct, reliable and well-timed public transport made attending healthcare appointments difficult to plan and sustain. This was particularly evident for routine hospital outpatient, GP and community-based appointments, where infrequent services, long walks to bus stops and unreliable timetables increased the risk of lateness or cancellation. Respondents described cancelling appointments when buses operated only once an hour or failed to arrive, and others highlighted the difficulty of aligning fixed appointment times with limited service availability.

> "Public transport options are poor where I live, nearest bus stop is 0.7 miles and buses are only once an hour so getting to Markinch (GP/pharmacy), Leven (optician) or Kirkcaldy (dentist) in time for appointment would be very difficult."

Parking and reliance on private transport

Across NHS Fife, respondents consistently reported that poor hospital parking is a major barrier to accessing healthcare and is a key reason why many feel forced to rely on private cars rather than public transport. Parking problems were reported at both GP surgeries and hospitals but were most frequently associated with Victoria Hospital in Kirkcaldy and Ninewells.

Lack of available spaces, particularly disabled parking, was a recurring issue. Several respondents with Blue Badges stated they were still unable to secure suitable parking, with one noting: "Despite having a blue badge, I rarely get a disabled space." Others described having to arrive 45 minutes to an hour early just to find parking, adding significant stress to already worrying appointments. One participant described the experience as a

> "Stressful nightmare"

Parking difficulties also undermine patient safety and carer support. Some carers reported needing to drop off vulnerable patients before searching for a space, leaving them temporarily unsupported. One respondent explained:

> "I can't get parking, therefore have to abandon him, try find parking, hope he can get to his appointment safely without my support."

For wheelchair users, parking problems are compounded by poor accessibility from remote parking areas, including uneven pavements and long walking distances. One respondent noted that even when council parking is available, surfaces make it:

> "Difficult to push a wheelchair over uneven surfaces."

The emotional impact of parking stress was particularly evident for patients undergoing major treatment. One respondent stated clearly:

> "Parking at hospital causes huge stress to cancer patients."

Others described driving in circles for extended periods due to lack of spaces and unsafe parking conditions.

In rural areas and during evenings, limited public transport further increases reliance on private cars, intensifying pressure on already constrained hospital parking. One respondent noted that travelling to Kirkcaldy and then trying to park late at night is:

> "So stressful... when there is no public transport."

Accessibility and health-related needs

Respondents across NHS Fife highlighted that physical accessibility, health conditions and caring responsibilities significantly limit how people can travel to healthcare. For many, public transport is either difficult or impossible to use due to mobility needs, treatment requirements or caring duties.

Several participants reported that public transport is physically inaccessible, including issues such as steep steps on coaches and insufficient time for those with mobility difficulties to board and disembark safely. One carer explained that buses are:

> "Restrictive for the person I care for because they need more time to react, stand up, walk down... before the bus can move off."

For people with disabilities or complex health needs, public transport is often not a viable option at all. One respondent stated clearly:

> "Public transport isn't an option, travel by car is the only option due to disabilities."

Another added that a car is essential when caring for an elderly relative with "mobility, sight and dementia issues."

Caring responsibilities further restrict travel options. Carers described situations where they must make long, complex journeys when the usual driver becomes the patient. One respondent noted:

> "I am carer for my husband who is the driver. So, if he's the one in hospital, I have to get two buses to get there."

Others described the physical impossibility of dropping off dependants and then parking separately due to disability.

Limited access to clear transport information also creates accessibility barriers. Some respondents highlighted that timetables are often only available online, which excludes those without smartphones:

> "Bus or train timetables are in general only accessible using a smart phone."

Reductions in local bus services disproportionately affect those with limited mobility, particularly when walking to alternative stops is not possible. One participant explained that when a nearby service is unavailable, they are simply unable to reach appointments due to their limited walking ability.

Stress, cost and limited alternatives

Many respondents described significant financial and emotional strain linked to the cost of travel and the lack of affordable alternatives for getting to healthcare appointments across NHS Fife.

Transport costs are a major barrier, particularly where taxis are required for part of the journey. One respondent explained that travelling to Kirkcaldy often means:

> "a taxi for at least one part of the journey which costs £40–£50".

while others stated simply that "cabs are extremely expensive." Even accessing GP services can involve high costs, with one respondent noting:

> "Our GP surgery is now based in the next town requiring £20 taxi fares to attend."

Fuel costs were also highlighted as a constraint, particularly for those travelling long distances by car.

The cost of time is equally significant, with many people losing income to attend appointments. Respondents described

> "Hours lost in pay from time taken off work"

and the difficulty of attending appointments that are only available during working hours. One person said:

> "I work full time; I avoid going to the doctor's because they are only available during working hours."

Travel time and costs combine to create additional pressure when appointments are limited to weekdays.

Poor communication and information barriers add to stress and undermine confidence in the transport system, particularly for disabled passengers. One respondent who is sight-impaired described being left behind during a replacement bus service despite explaining their needs, with the driver and colleagues:

> "Walking past me, not saying a word"

and only learning the bus was leaving when strangers intervened. This experience highlights gaps in disability awareness and service communication.

At hospital sites, poor signage and wayfinding further increase anxiety at already stressful times. One parent described arriving for an ENT appointment at Victoria Hospital in Kirkcaldy but being unable to identify the correct building, noting that:

> "Nothing about that building told me we were in the right location"

and that small fixes to signage could make a major difference.

Summary of insights for NHS Fife

The evidence from NHS Fife highlights a pattern of broadly accessible local primary care, contrasted with significant challenges accessing secondary care, especially for residents of rural, coastal and semi-rural communities. These challenges arise from settlement patterns, uneven public transport coverage, reduced bus service frequency and the centralised location of specialist hospital services.

Key themes emerging from the data and lived experience

- **Good access to primary care, but long and complex journeys for hospital-based care**
  Most respondents reach GP surgeries and pharmacies within 15 minutes, indicating strong local provision. However, journeys to Victoria Hospital and other specialist centres often exceed 60 minutes, particularly for residents in North Fife, East Neuk and more rural inland settlements. These longer trips frequently involve multiple bus changes and extended waiting times.

- **High reliance on the private car, driven by limited and indirect public transport**
  Car use is the most common way to reach healthcare across Fife. Public transport plays an important role for those without car access, but respondents consistently described indirect routes, reduced frequencies and unreliable services. Some communities, such as Limekilns and Tayport, reported losing direct links to Fife hospitals, with services now routing via Dundee.

- **Public transport reliability issues contribute to missed and delayed appointments**
  Over one third of respondents reported missing or postponing appointments due to transport issues. The most common reasons included delayed or cancelled buses, traffic congestion, long walking distances to stops and difficulty aligning appointment times with hourly services.

- **Parking pressures at major hospitals create significant stress and reinforce car dependency**
  Victoria Hospital in Kirkcaldy was repeatedly described as difficult to access by car, with respondents reporting long search times, limited disabled parking and high stress levels, particularly for older patients and those undergoing major treatment. Poor accessibility from distant parking areas further affects wheelchair users and carers.

- **Disabled people and those with mobility or health-related needs face the greatest transport barriers**
  Respondents with disabilities described public transport as physically inaccessible, unpredictable or too demanding for their condition. Many stated that the car is the only viable mode. Carers also reported challenges when they become the patient or must accompany relatives with complex needs.

- **Transport costs remain a barrier for a minority, especially in rural areas**
  While most respondents did not report cost-related barriers, those reliant on taxis faced significant expense. Single journeys to Kirkcaldy costing £20–£50 were commonly reported, alongside lost income due to time taken off work.

- **Strong demand for flexible, coordinated and affordable alternatives**
  Respondents expressed the highest support for demand-responsive transport, followed by improved direct public transport routes, better coordination between services and expanded hospital transport provision. Clearer travel information and enhanced support for disabled people and carers were also priorities.

NHS Borders – evidence summary

Area overview

NHS Borders covers the Scottish Borders Council area and is characterised by a predominantly aging population. It is the least populus Health Board in the SEStran region and most rural in nature. Major towns include Galashiels in the centre of the authority (connected by rail to Edinburgh), Hawick in the South, Peebles and West Linton in the West and Eyemouth on the East coast.

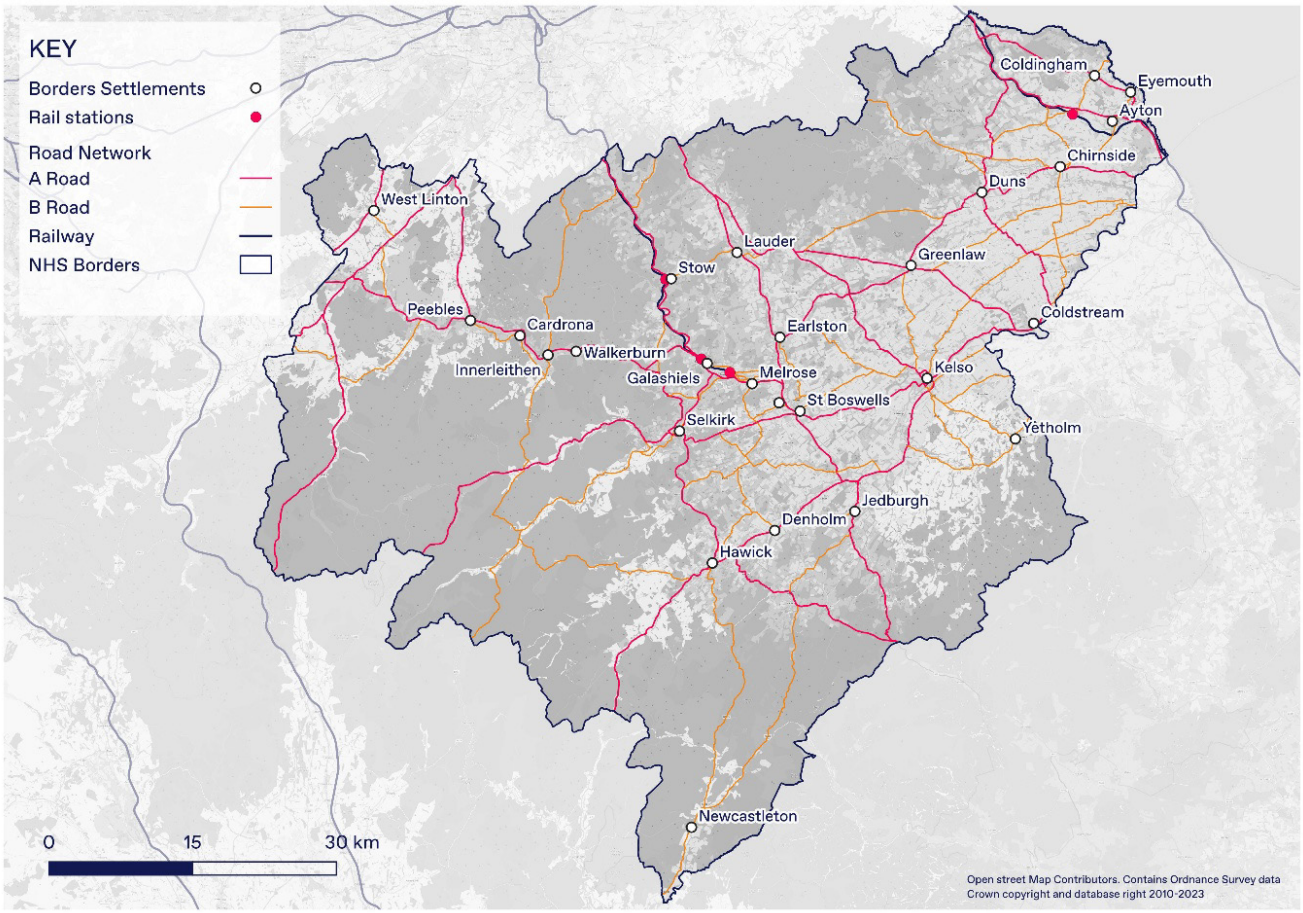


Figure 70: Border settlements

The most significant hospital in the area is the Borders General Hospital in Melrose with other community and smaller hospitals in Peebles, Hawick, Kelso and Duns.

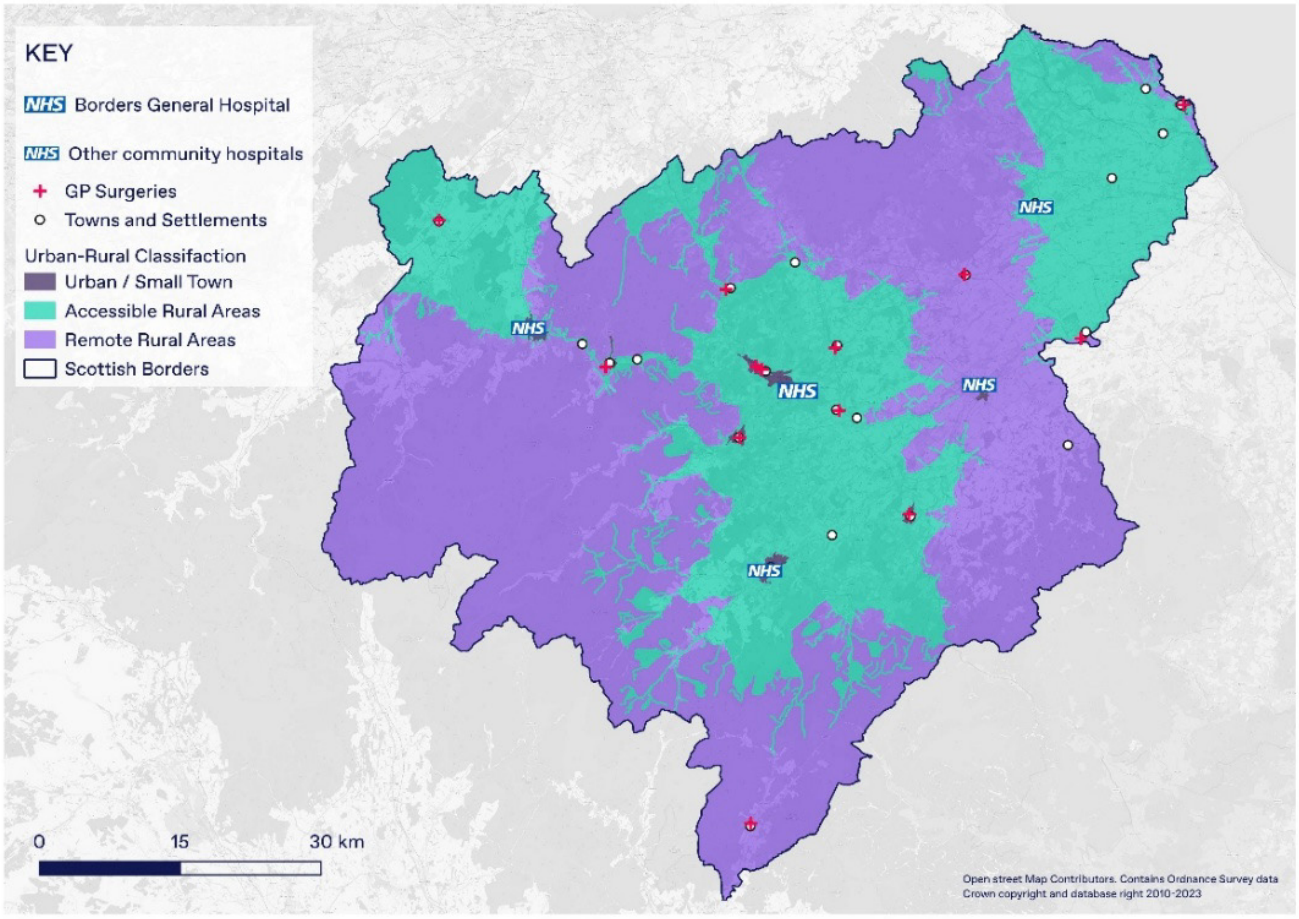


Figure 71: Spread of facilities

Primary healthcare, including GPs, is generally easier to access with most towns having a local GP surgery or health centre. However, a few settlements over 1,000 population lack a dedicated GP facility within 2 miles, for example, Chirnside, whose branch surgery of Merse Medical Practice has closed.

Access to the Borders General Hospital (BGH) is the most pressing issue for Transport to Health in the Borders. Accessing treatment in the BGH from towns like Newcastleton, Hawick, Eyemouth, Peebles or West Linton can prove difficult. This is acutely felt for those living in the rural areas and villages surrounding these settlements. For towns to the West and South of the BGH, travelling to appointments often require at least one change before reaching the hospital. This was a common issue for those living in Peebles and Selkirk. The journey time to the BGH from 9:30AM on 08/12/25 as well as number of buses required to reach the hospital has been mapped below.

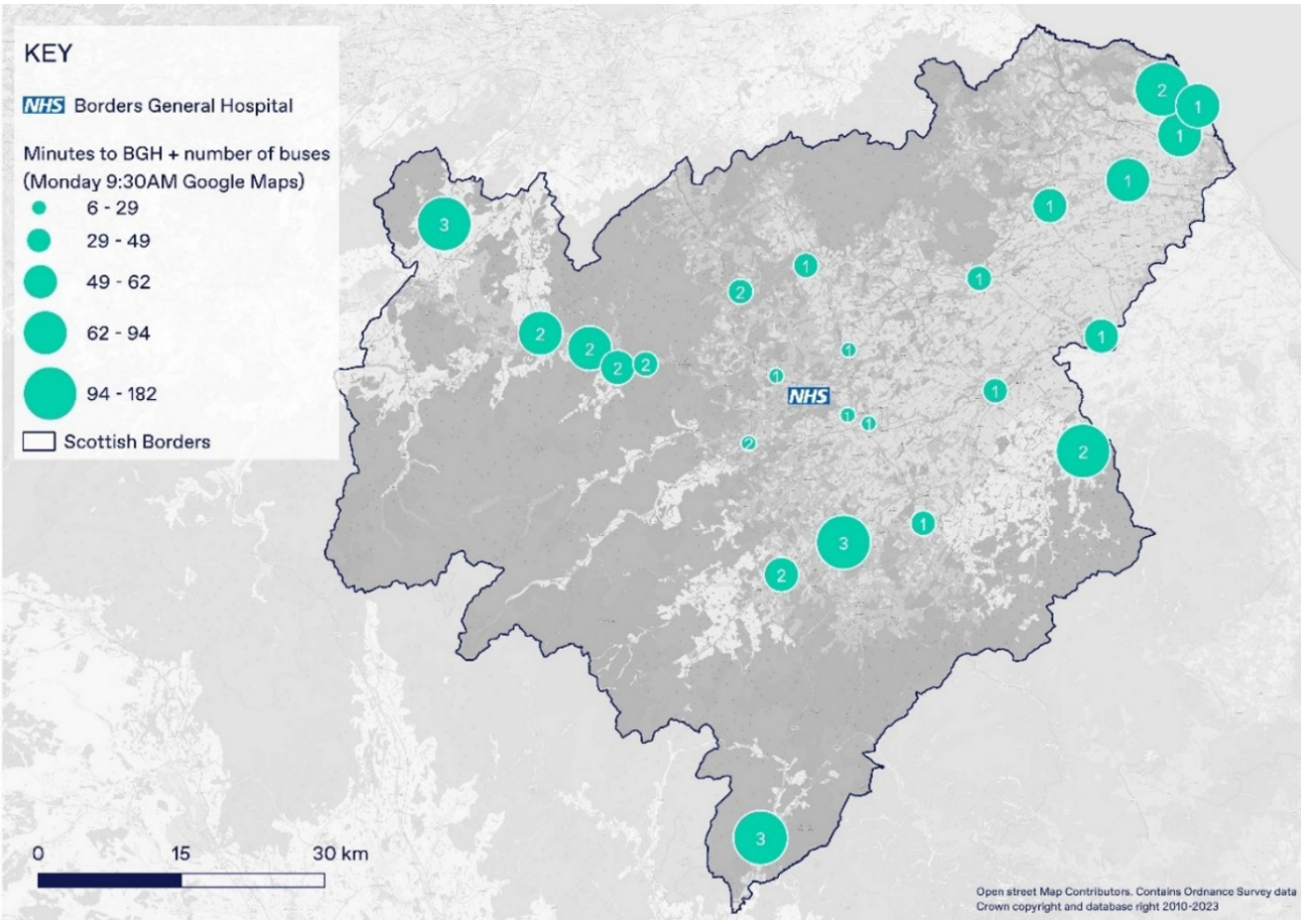


Figure 72: Minutes taken to reach the BGH and number of buses taken at 9:30AM 08/12/25 via google maps

It can be seen in Figure 58 that the requirement to change at Galashiels Transport interchange for towns to the West and South (e.g. Innerleithen 61 minutes) contributes significantly to increased journey times as opposed to towns a similar distance away in the East (e.g. Kelso 40 minutes).

In addition to travel to healthcare within the Scottish Borders many secondary and tertiary services are only available in major hospitals like the Western General and Royal Infirmary in Edinburgh, St John's in Livingston and in some circumstances hospitals in Glasgow. The Western General Hospital on the North side of Edinburgh being the designated oncology treatment facility for the Scottish Borders is a theme in survey responses.

Figure 73 shows a much smaller percentage of the Scottish Borders population resides in the 20% most deprived data zones than the Scottish average. Only 6% of the population of the Scottish Borders lives areas in the most deprived quintile.

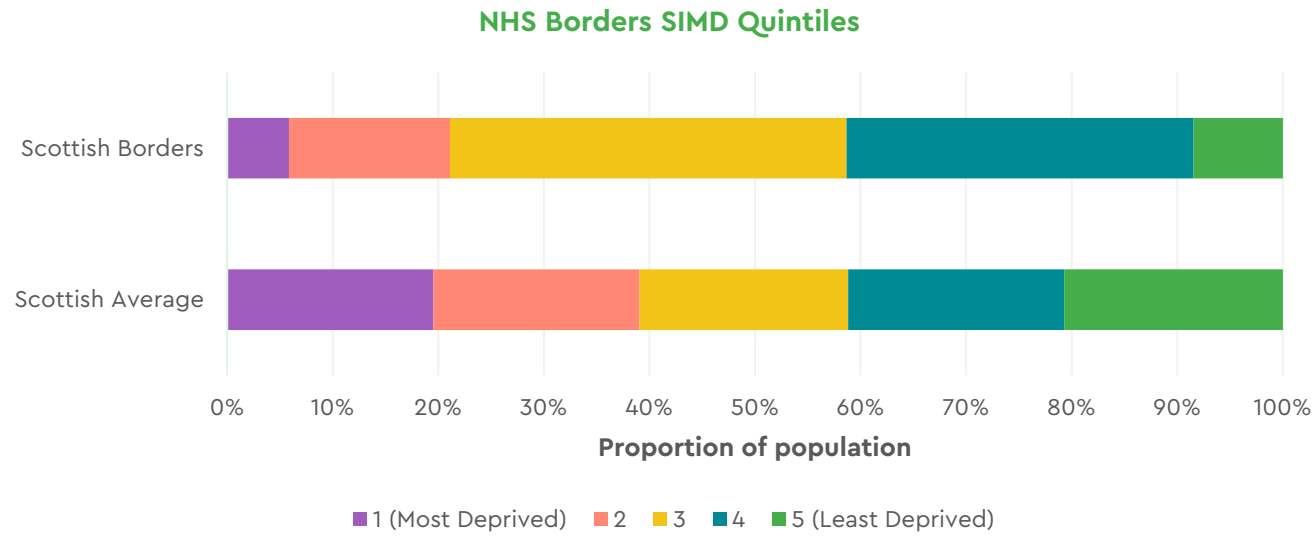


Figure 73: Proportion of NHS Borders population in each SIMD quintile

Respondent characteristics

Survey respondents from the Scottish borders are less likely than average to have access to at least one car. This differs from the majority of health boards where responses were skewed in favour of those with car access.

Survey respondents from the Scottish Borders were not more likely to be older than survey respondents overall. However, the overall 2022 census population of the Scottish Borders skews older with 34% being over 60 years old compared to a SEStran average of 26% over 60 years old.

Similar to other Health Boards, Borders respondents were more likely to have a long-term health condition or disability and more likely to provide unpaid care.

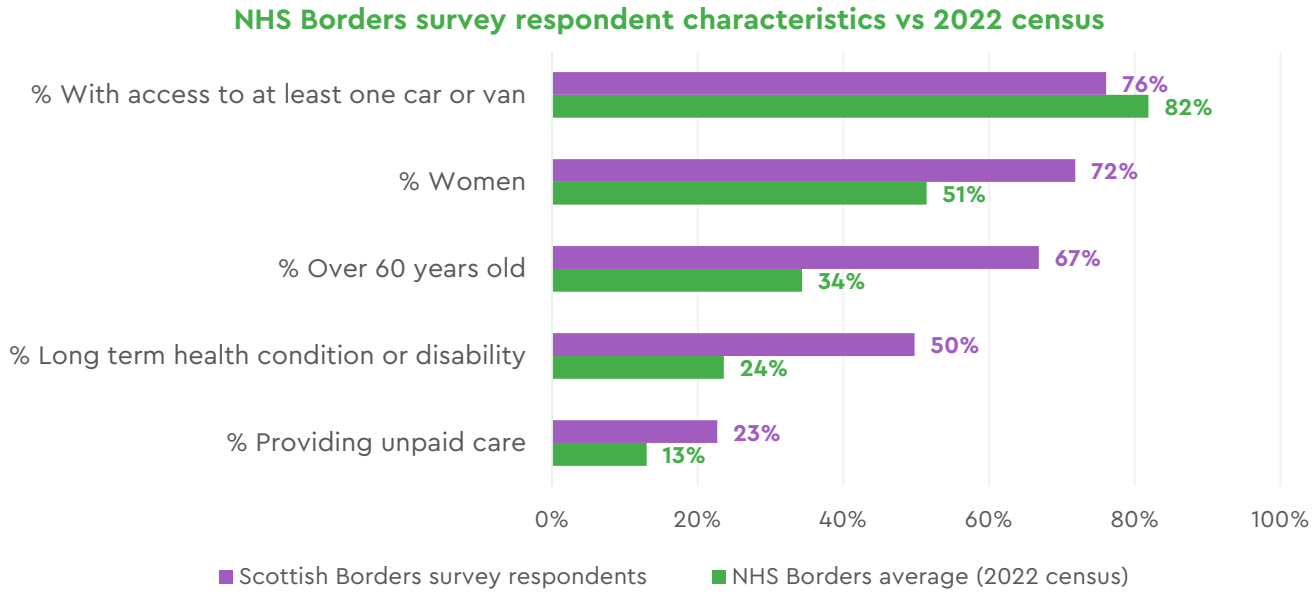


Figure 74: NHS Borders survey respondent characteristics compared to general Scottish Borders population via the 2022 census

Patterns of healthcare use

In the Borders many people engage with a healthcare on a high frequency basis:

- 70% use pharmacies at least monthly
- 36% go the GP at least monthly
- 21% go to outpatient (day) hospital appointments at least monthly

Dentist appointments are fairly frequent, usually once every few months, while optician appointments are less frequent, usually once a year. In-patient appointments are irregular and rarer with 68% respondents reporting not travelling for an overnight stay in a hospital for the last twelve months while the remaining 42% had at least once.

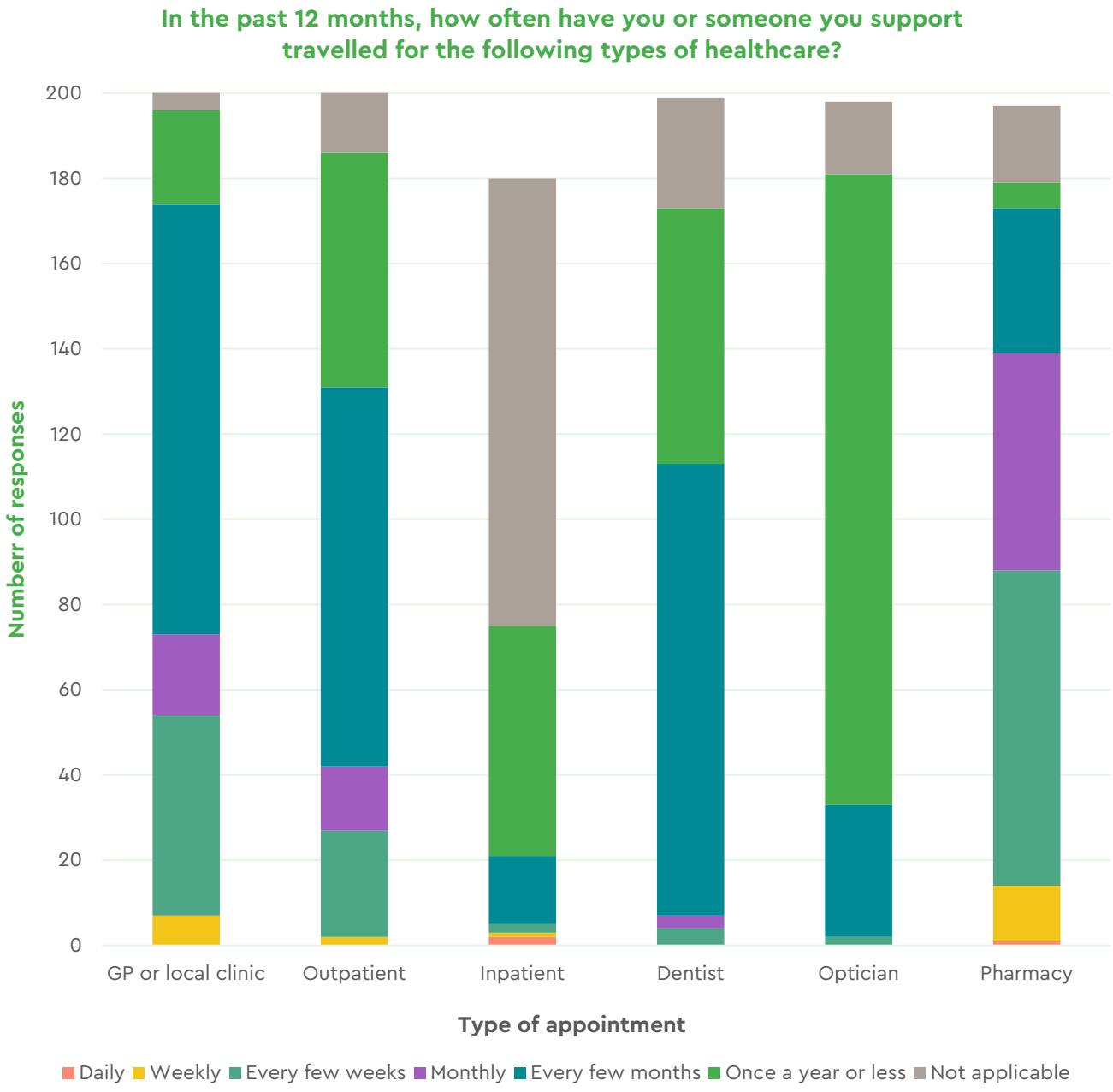


Figure 75: Frequency of healthcare appointment type

How long journeys take

Figure 76 demonstrates the disparity between the much shorter journey times for primary care services such as GPs, pharmacies, opticians and dentists versus the longer journey times for secondary and tertiary care service which occurs at hospitals.

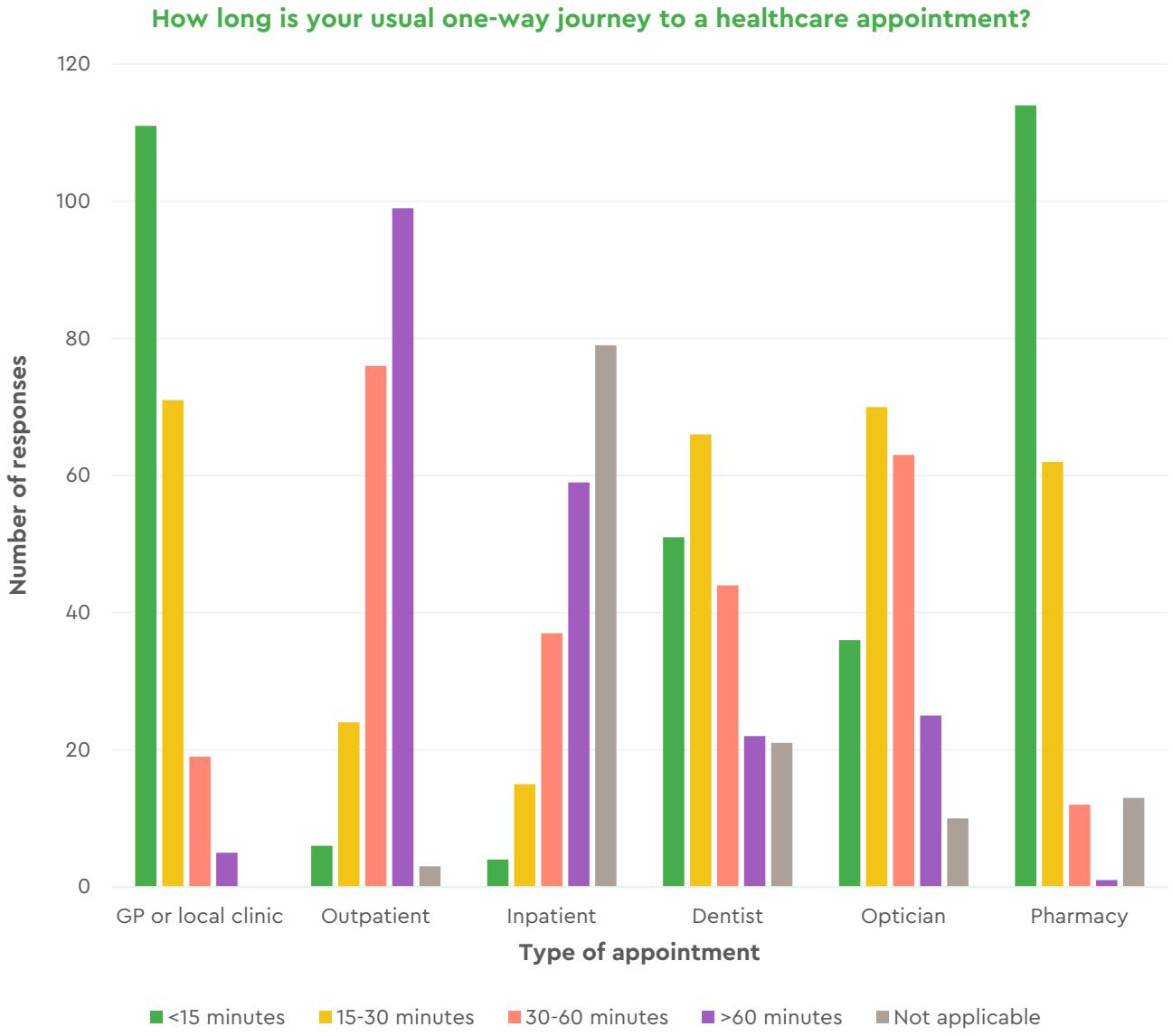


Figure 76: Reported journey time to different types of healthcare appointments

These results align with the spatial distribution of health services in the Scottish Borders. Considering only Scottish Government defined settlements over 500 in population:

- **27%** of settlements don't have a pharmacy or dispenser
- **38%** of settlements don't have a local GP
- **62%** of settlements don't have a dentist
- **85%** of settlements don't have a community or general hospital
- The BGH covers **all 4,732 km²** of the Scottish Borders

How people travel to healthcare

The primary mode people use to access healthcare in the Scottish Borders is driving with 68% of respondents choosing a car either as a driver or passenger. The second most used mode is bus with 24% of respondents choosing it as their main mode with a further 16% using it as a secondary mode. Of the 51 respondents who use the bus as their main mode 21 use the bus despite having access to at least one car in their household.

Fewer respondents picked active travel modes with only 4% respondents selecting walking as their primary mode and 1 wheeling. Active travel was slightly more popular as a secondary mode choice with 6% selecting walking.

Patient and community transport usage are the least popular options reflecting the limited appointments available for patient transport and volunteer shortages amongst community transport options.

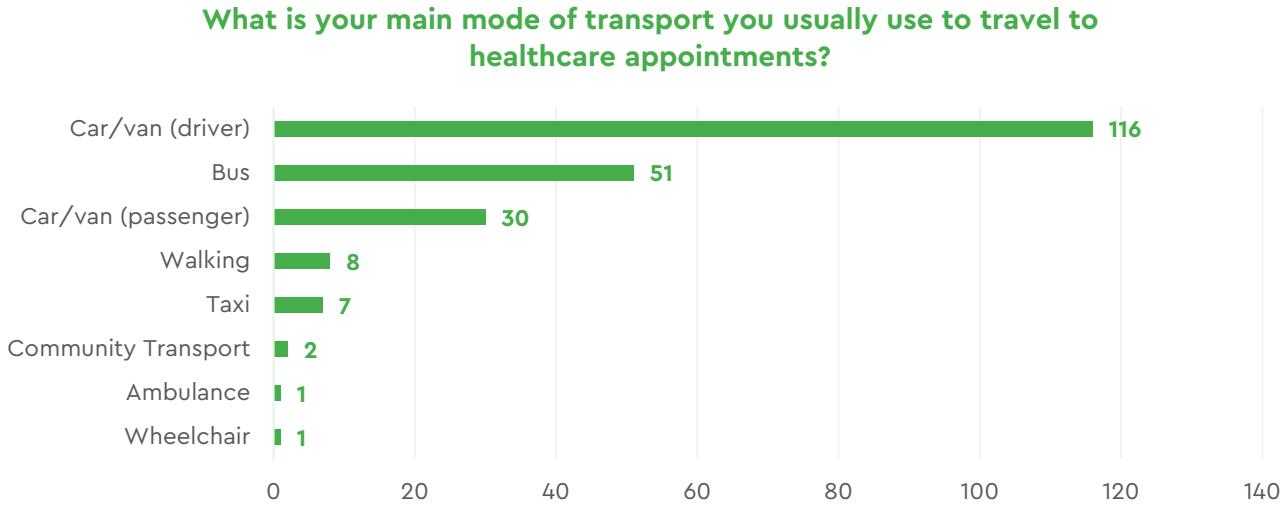


Figure 77: Main travel mode for healthcare appointments

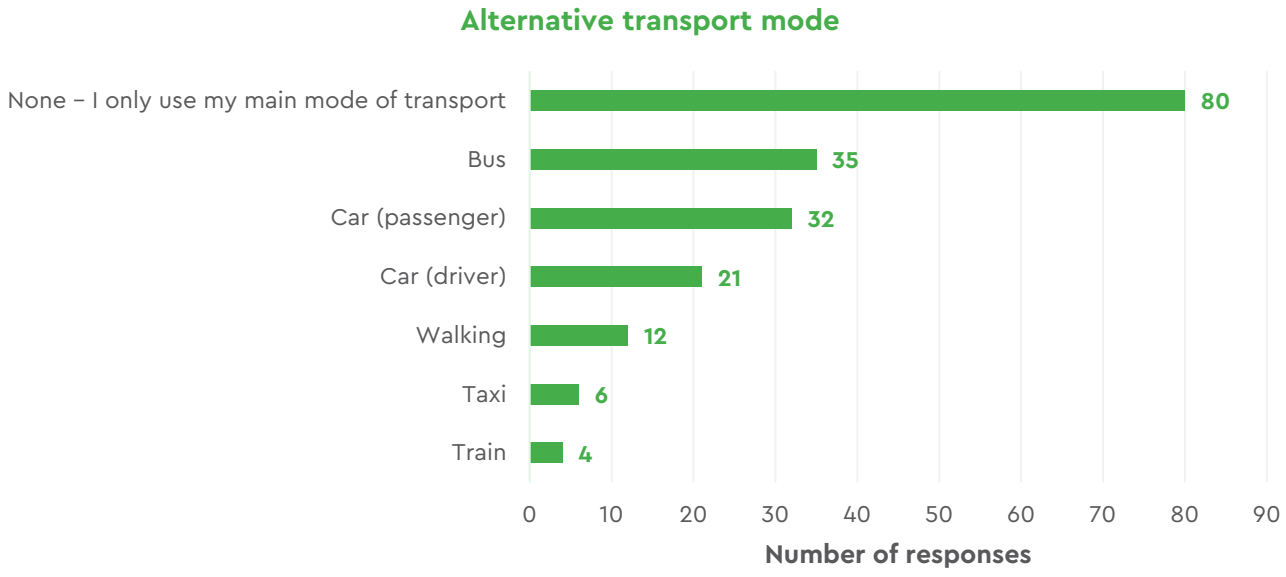


Figure 78: Alternative transport mode for healthcare appointments

Reliability of available transport

Only 26% of respondents characterise their transport choice as 'always reliable' with a further 39% choosing 'usually reliable'. However, when split into the main the main mode of respondents it shows that 82% of 'always reliable' responses come from those who drive a car as their main mode. Those who are usually car passengers (e.g. reliant on lifts) or bus users do not characterise their journeys as 'always reliable'.

Across all modes, the least frequently selected option was 'often unreliable', showing that there is a baseline level of reliability for most respondents.

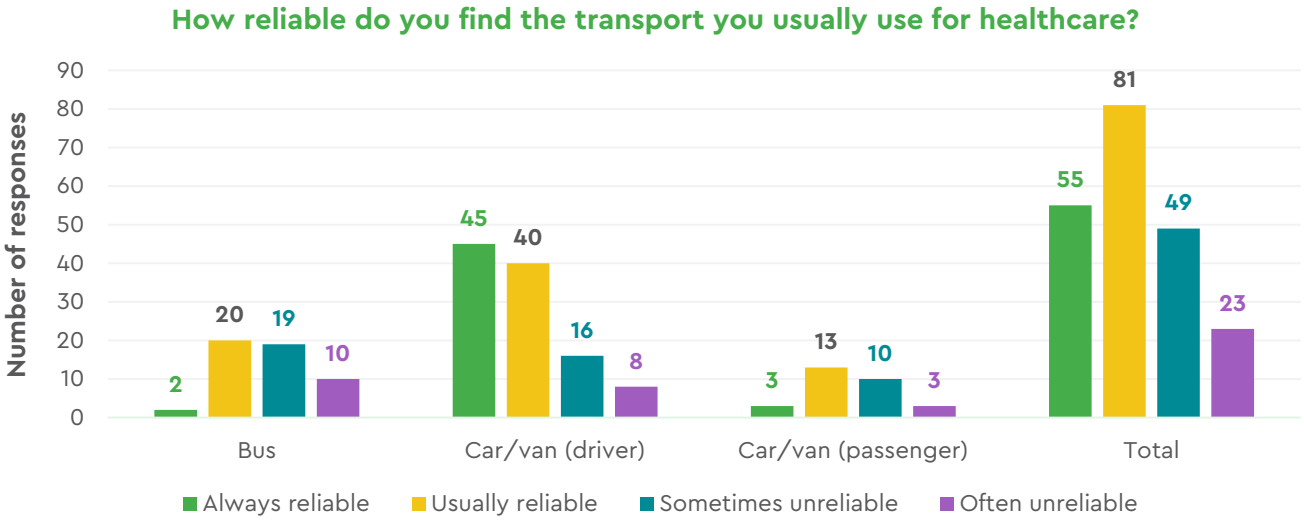


Figure 79: Perception of reliability of transport to healthcare by mode choice

Missed or delayed appointments due to transport

Of respondents, 39% had reported missing or delaying a healthcare appointment due to transport issues. This demonstrates that transport issues play a major role in the reasons for missed appointments.

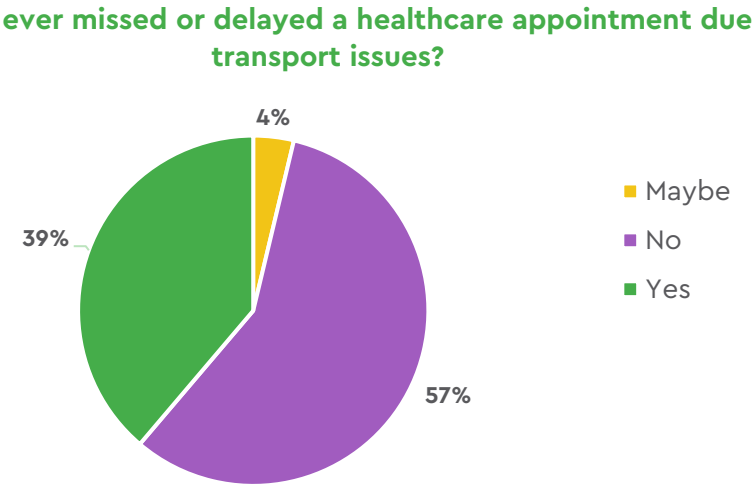


Figure 80: Proportion of respondents who missed or delayed a healthcare appointment due to transport issues

The top reason amongst those who said they had missed or delayed an appointment due to transport was 'Lack of suitable transport options' (45%), and 'poor connections between services' (24%). This reflects that bus service issues are the most common reason for people missing their appointments. This could be a lack of services altogether in their area, a timetable which doesn't suit appointment times, bus stops too far to walk from their origin or destination, long transfer times between services or a range of many more service issues.

Figure 81: Reason for missing or delaying healthcare appointments

Effect of transport costs on attendance

The majority of respondents reported that transport costs did not affect their ability or decision to attend healthcare. This suggests that poor transport links or the inability to travel is a greater deterrent than cost when it comes to attending healthcare.

When responses are filtered by those who are non-bus pass holders, the proportion who say that costs affect their ability or decision to attend healthcare increases slightly. Those with no car access were even more likely to report transport costs deterring them and those with no car or bus pass were the most likely to report transport costs playing a role. Despite cost playing a lesser overall role in missed appointments, it has a much greater impact on those who do not have access to a private car or free bus transport.

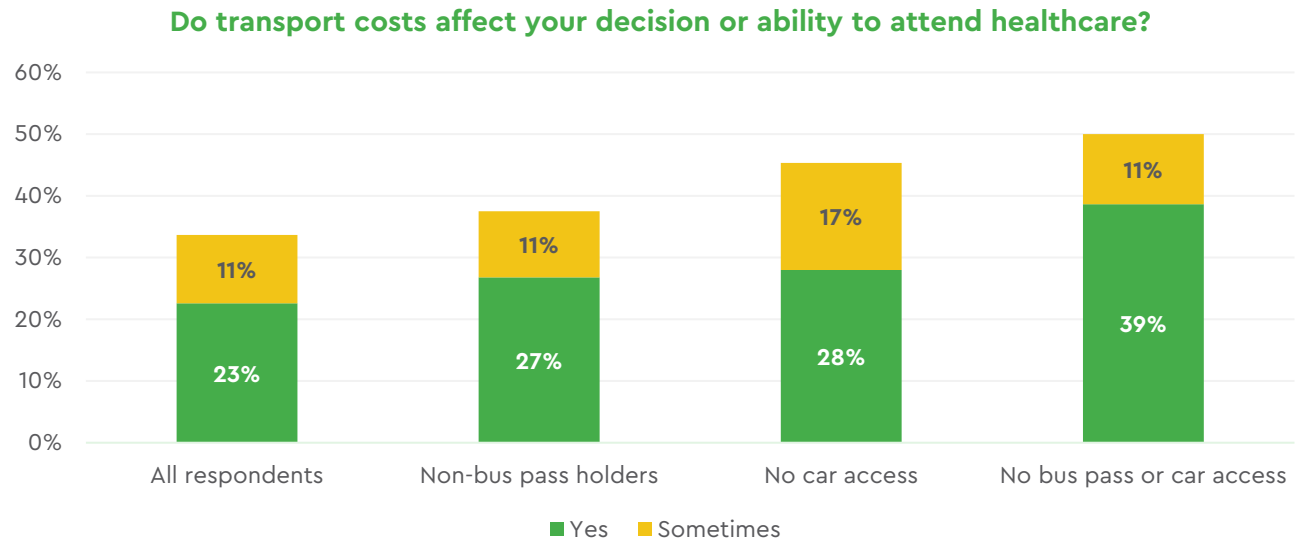


Figure 82: Proportion of respondents who report transport costs affecting their ability to attend healthcare by bus pass holders and car access

Cost of the most recent healthcare journey

The cost of a healthcare journey varies considerably depending on factors like mode choice and distance to hospital.

The most common response was 'It didn't cost anything' at 33%. This category was made up of 49% bus users, likely due to being bus pass holders. Overall, 70% of those who selected their main mode as the bus also reported paying nothing for their most recent healthcare journey. 26% of those who reported paying nothing were car drivers, this may be because they were driving someone else's car without paying for fuel or because they don't perceive driving as a costly activity. A further 12% who reported paying nothing were car passengers.

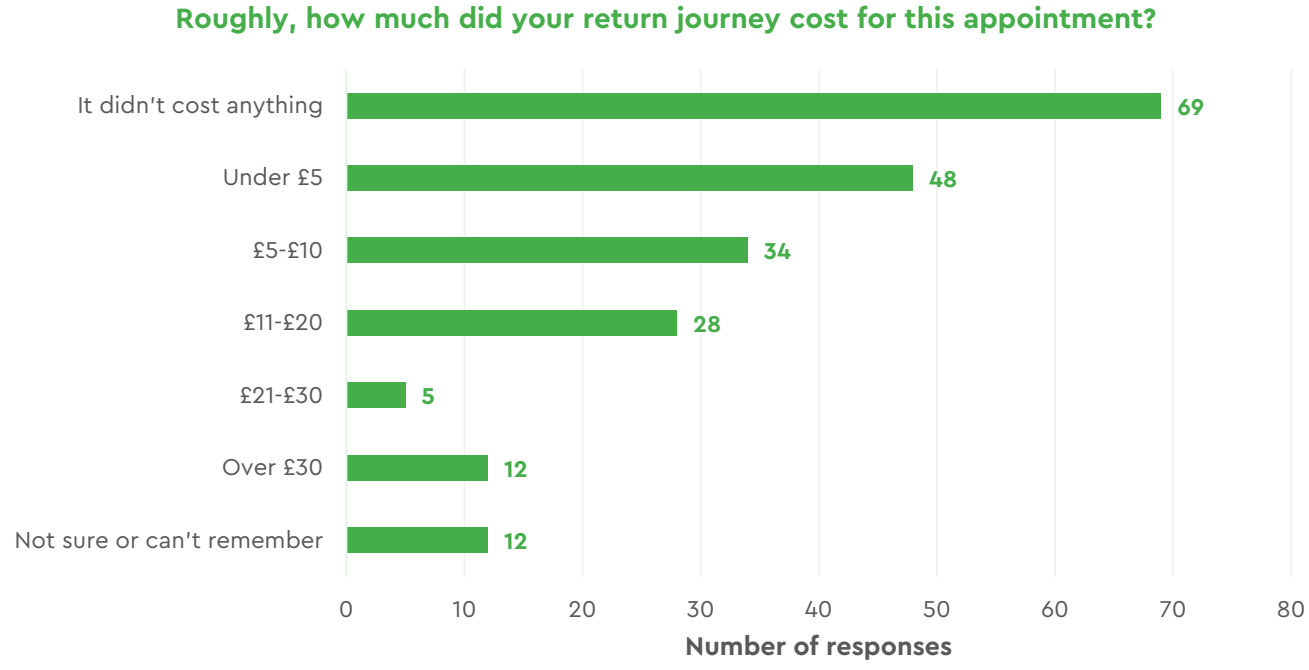


Figure 83: Cost of return journeys for most recent healthcare appointment

23% of respondents reported paying less than £5. 16% of respondents reported paying £5-10 and a decreasing proportion of respondents reporting paying higher amounts.

When considering healthcare costs by appointment type it can be seen that primary care trips to the GP, dentist, pharmacy, or optician rarely cost more than £10 for a return journey, with most respondents either travelling for free or for less than £5.

However, hospital appointments for both inpatient and outpatient can be much more expensive with those who aren't travelling for free (bus pass holders, car passengers etc.). To reach secondary care involves often paying more than £10 per appointment. Taken together 61% of hospital inpatients and outpatients pay at least £5 for a return journey with 40% paying over £10.

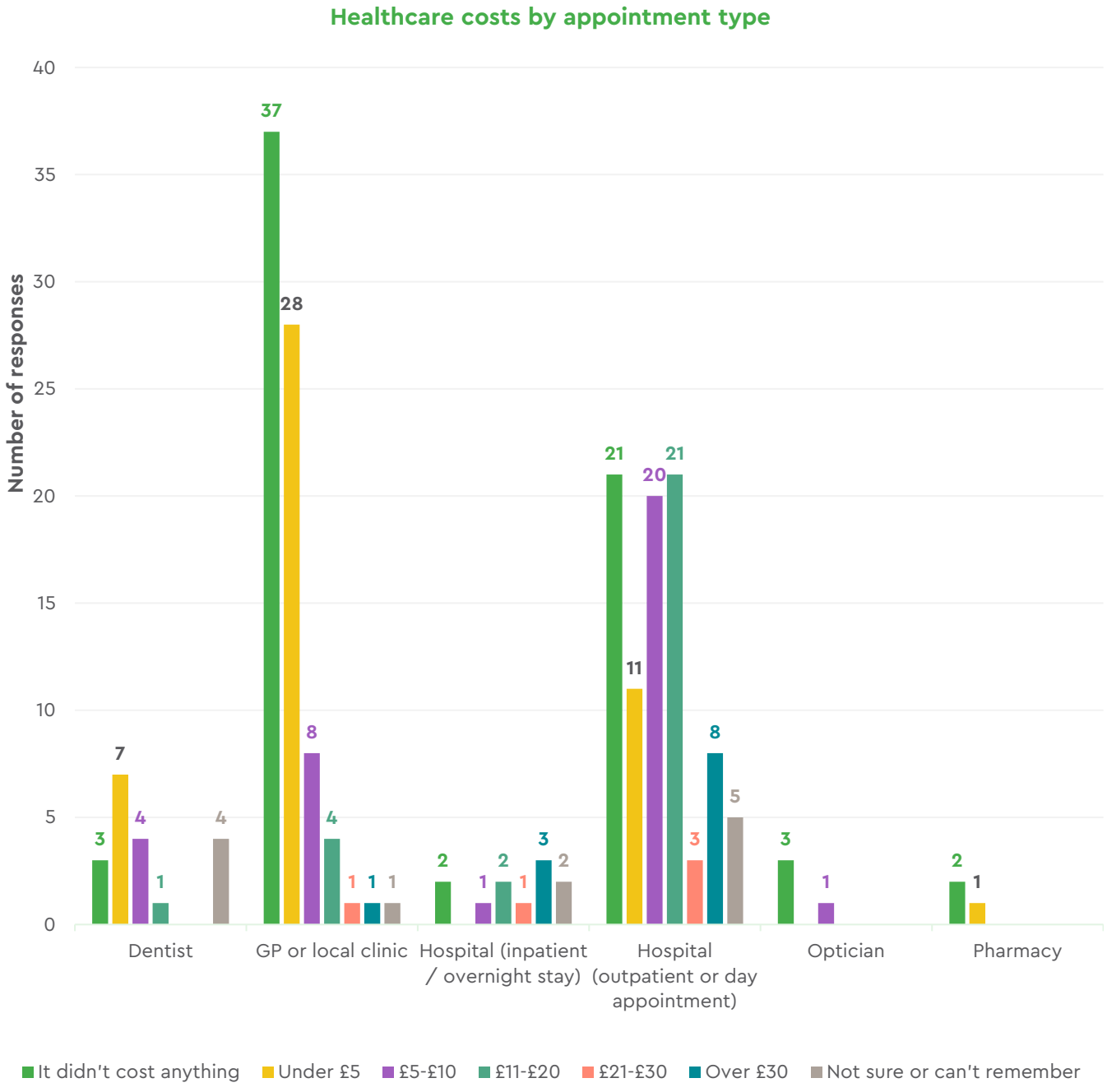


Figure 84: Transport costs by healthcare appointment type

How people find travel information

The most popular way to find travel information is online (68%). 32% using google or Bing maps and 36% using other online resources including Traveline and NHS Inform.

Other popular methods include 'information given in patient letters' (21%) and 'word of mouth' (20%).

Fewer respondents selected receiving information from community transport providers, NHS staff/advice or through the Scottish Ambulance Service.

A large proportion of respondents the 'other' option to specify additional methods they find travel information. Themes that recurred in these responses included those that use their own transport (drive), have local knowledge, expressed that there is lack of information available or that they use other online methods like the Borders Buses App.

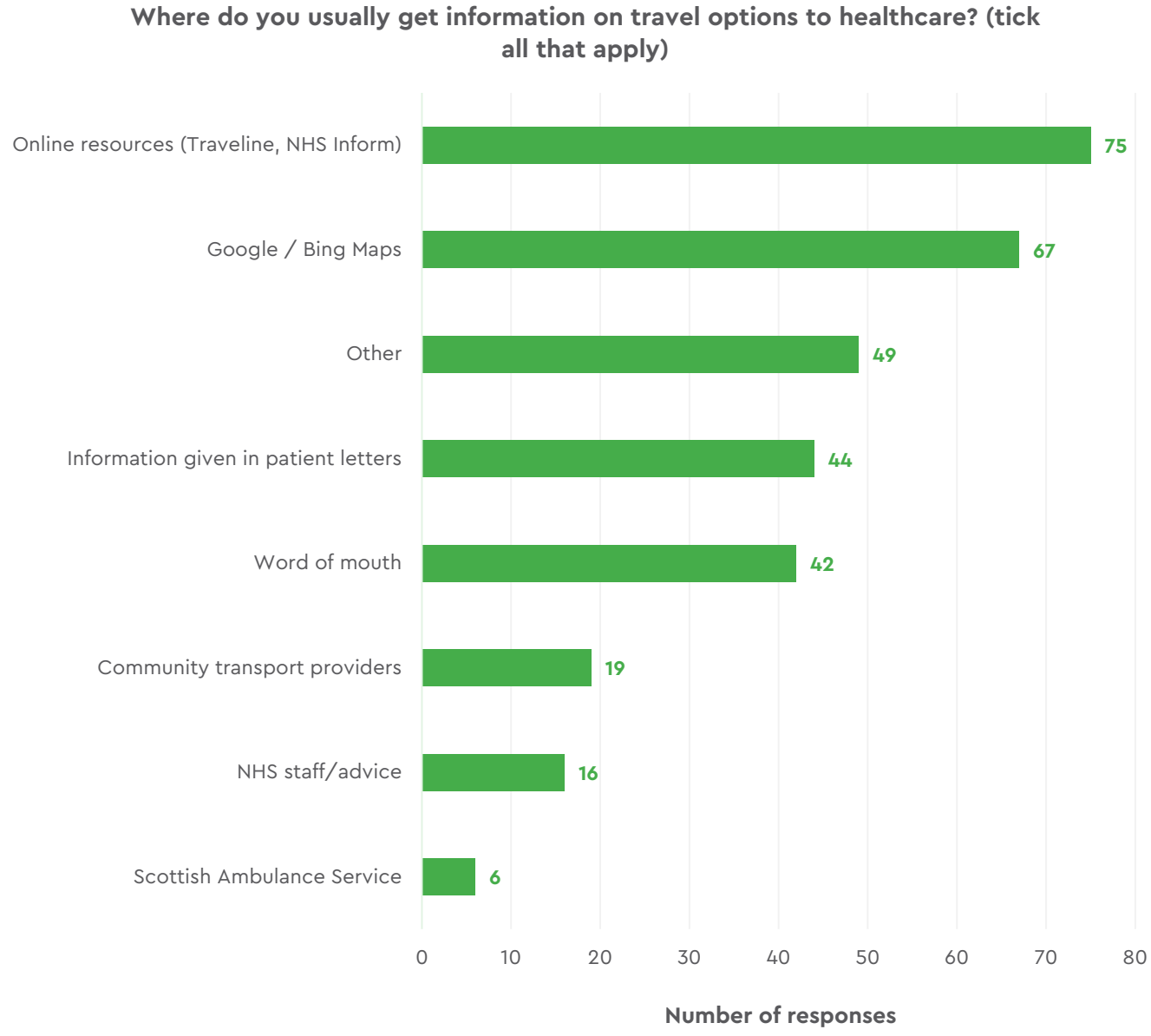


Figure 85: Most popular methods to get travel information for healthcare journeys

Digital confidence in planning healthcare travel

Most respondents where either fairly or very confident using online or digital tools to find travel information.

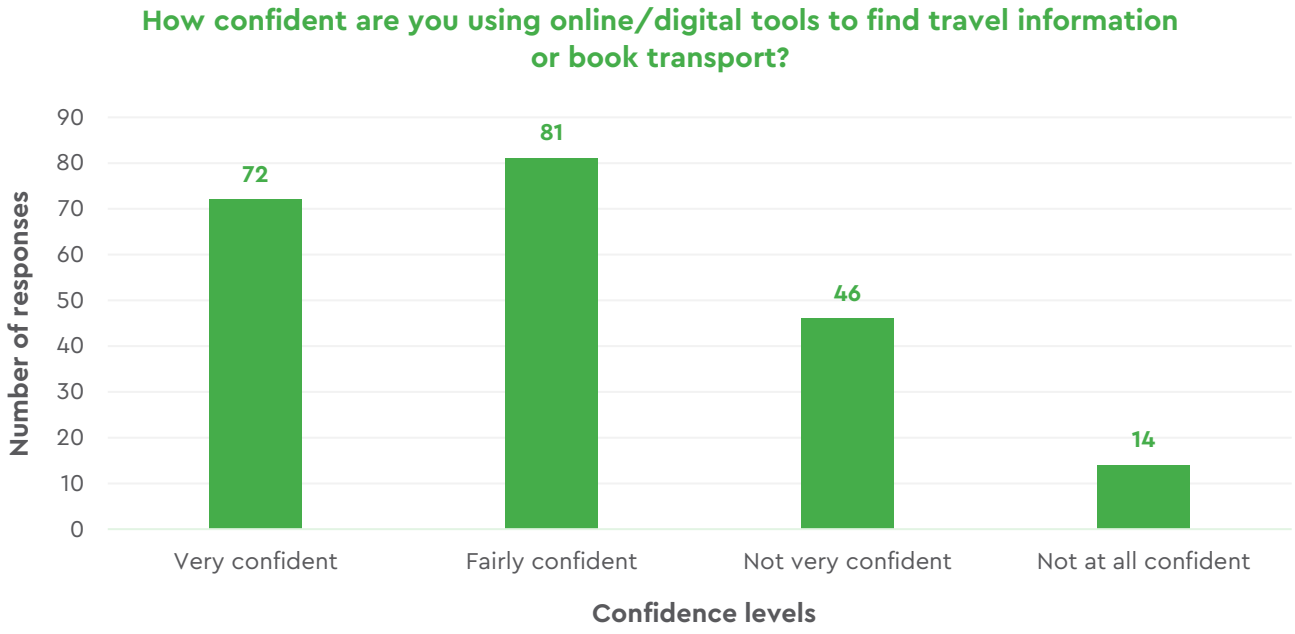


Figure 86: Confidence using online tools to find travel information or book transport

74% of respondents use online or digital tools to find travel information or book transport either 'usually' or 'sometimes'. This demonstrates that online methods are now the primary way people tend to interact with information about transport. However, a small proportion of people report never using digital or online tools demonstrating that off-line options must still be made available. Like physical timetables, information leaflets and phone line services.

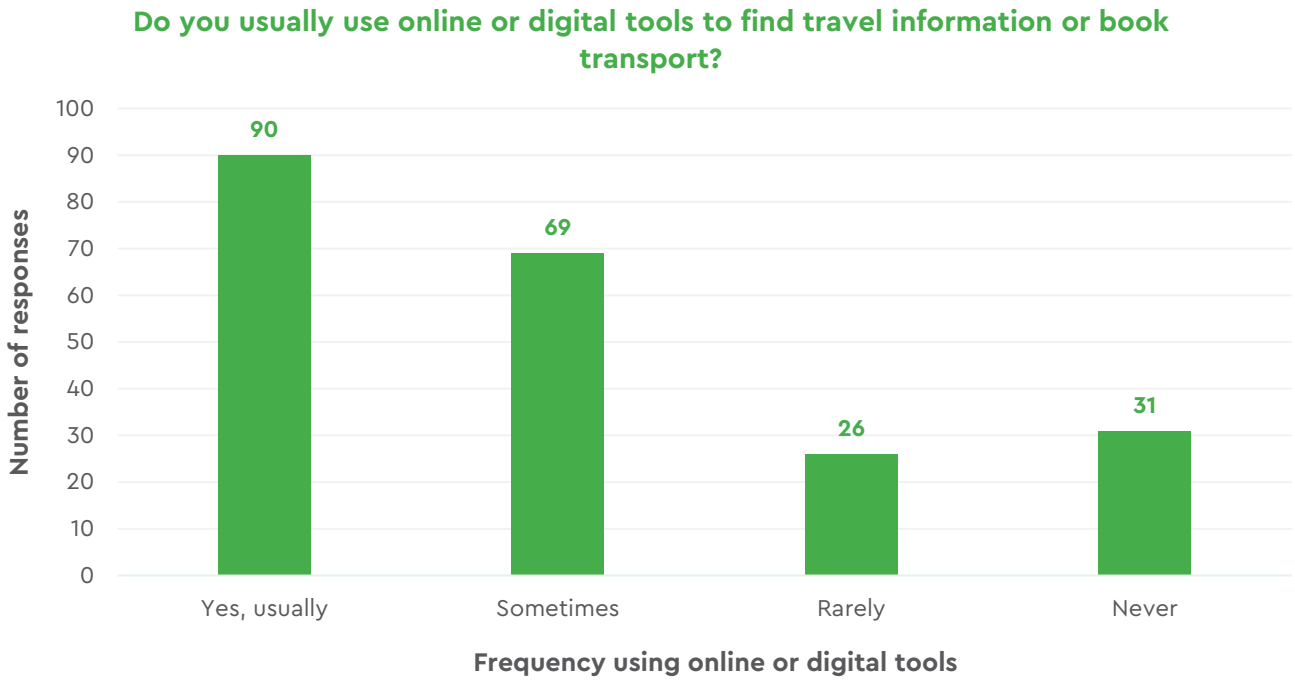


Figure 87: Frequency of using digital or online tools to find travel information or book transport

Severity of transport barriers

This question asked respondents to rate a series of transport barriers on a scale from 1-10 with 10 being the most severe barrier to Transport to Health. The highest rated barrier was 'a lack of reliable or available transport' demonstrating that for many a suitable, local, direct transport option is not available or convenient for all their healthcare journeys.

Rural isolation was the second highest rated option. This suggests that residents in the Scottish Borders can often feel isolated from major healthcare centres either at the BGH or at other acute centres in Edinburgh, Livingston or Glasgow.

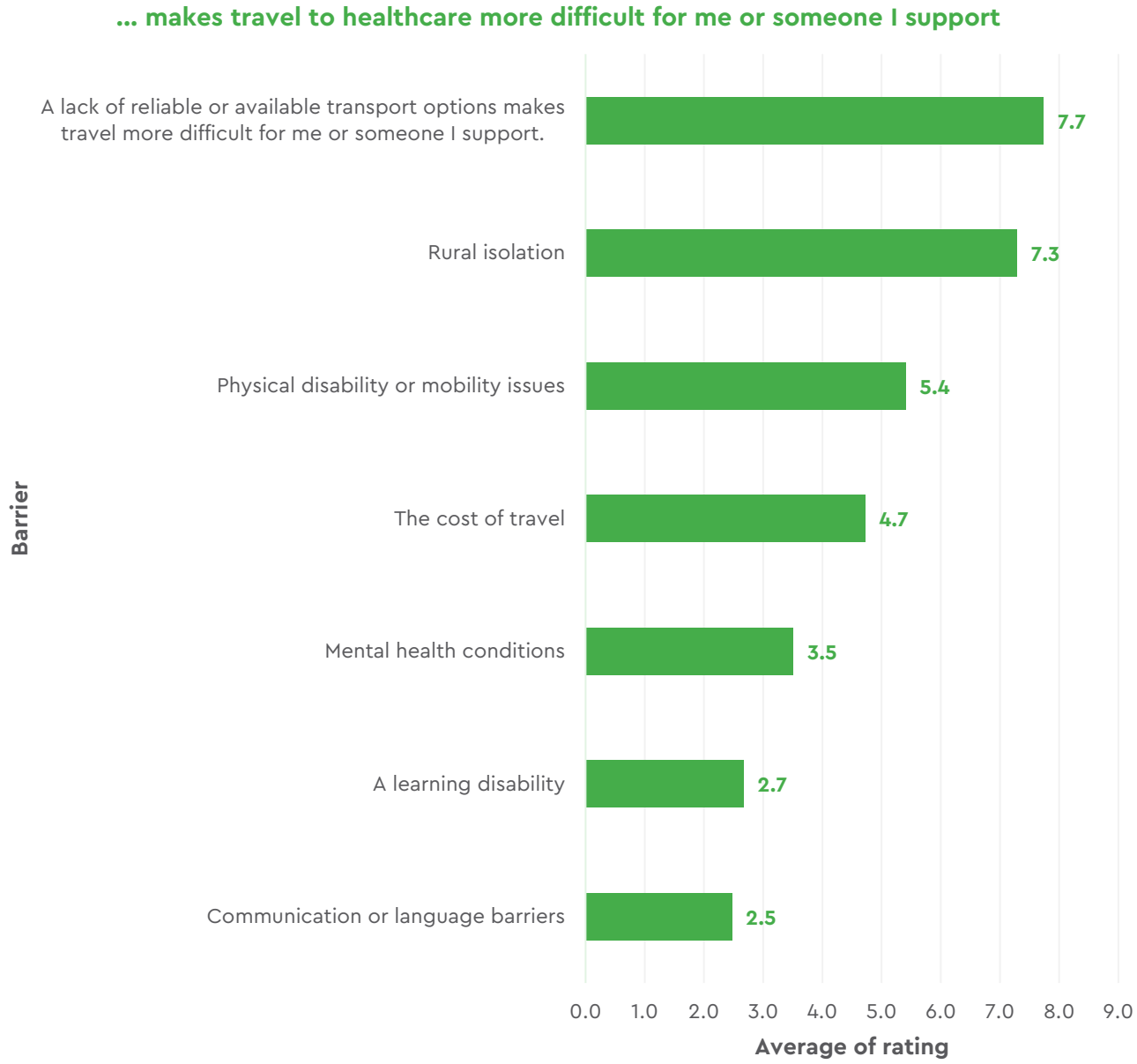


Figure 88: Average severity score given to barriers to travel to healthcare

Which group experience the greatest barriers

Figure 89 demonstrates that those who are disabled score 'physical disability or mobility issues' as a larger barrier than non-disabled respondents. In addition, there is also a disparity between disabled and non-disabled people when it comes to barriers like mental health and learning disability. Cost is also a more significant barrier for disabled people, especially for those unable to use public transport and more reliant on taxis and community transport.

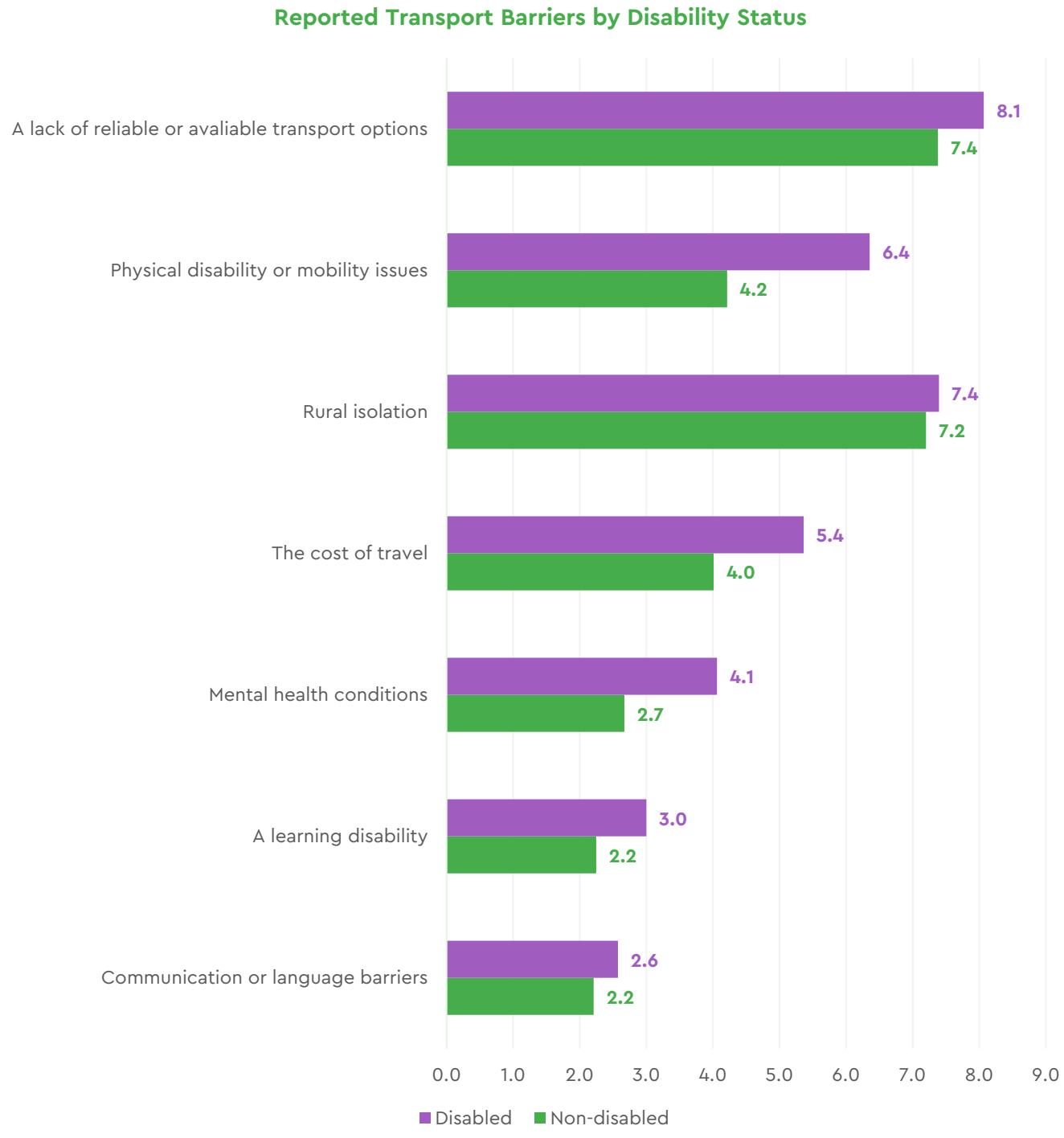


Figure 89: Average severity score of barriers to travel to healthcare by disability status

What improvements people want

By far the most popular option to improve access to healthcare was 'more direct public transport routes' at 79% of respondents. This reflects the factor that to access the BGH many people are required to change at Galashiels interchange which increases travel times. For those living in smaller villages in remote locations 2 changes can be required to reach the BGH. Additionally, to get to out of area healthcare appointments often requires at least one interchange. One respondent stated:

> "There are no direct buses to the BGH from our locality, several stages are needed to get to the appointment. Out of area hospital appointments by public transport is a logistical nightmare for an 8am appointment."

40% of respondents chose 'better connections between different services'. This reflects a desire where interchanges are required for timetables to be coordinated between services, including services of different transport modes.

36% of respondents selected 'improved parking access'. Qualitative responses show that respondents find searching for a parking space stressful, especially when arriving for time-sensitive health appointments. A lack of parking at the BGH and hospitals in Edinburgh were of particular note.

24% selected 'better information and coordination across agencies' demonstrating a desire for a clearer, unified system of distributing transport information.

Fewer respondents selected 'reducing cost of travel' which may reflect a disproportionately high amount of bus pass holder and others paying low amounts for transport responding to this survey. It also demonstrates that, for healthcare journeys, the cost of transport is generally secondary to how convenient it is to travel.

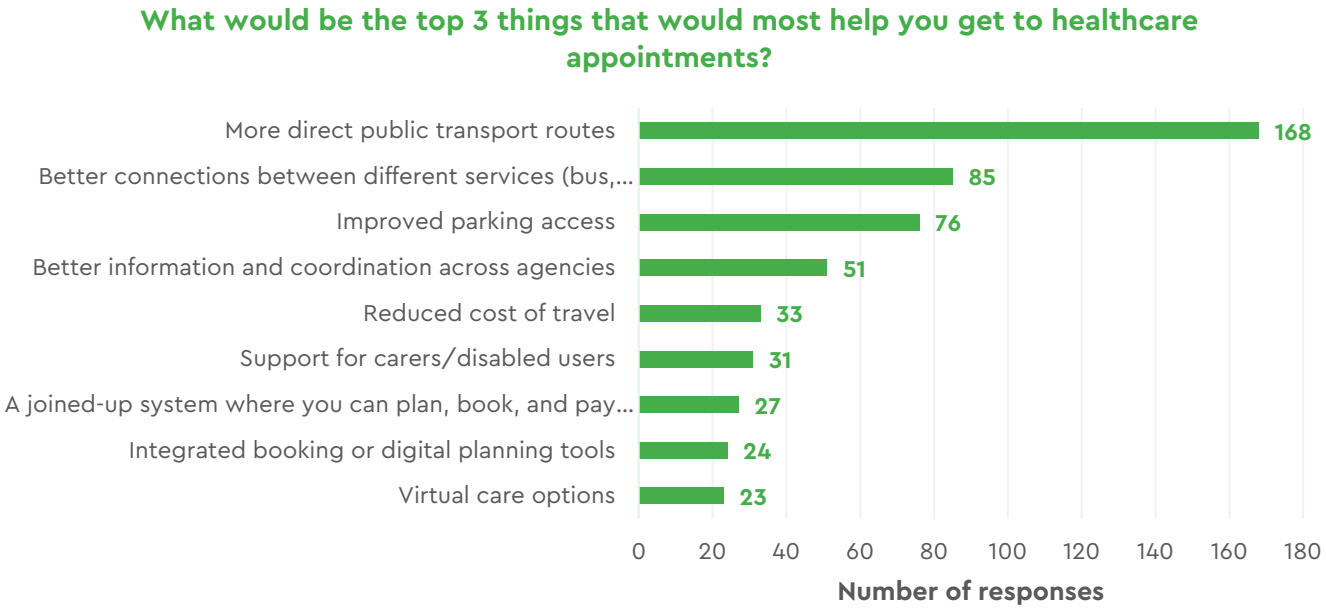


Figure 90: Most popular interventions to improve access to healthcare appointments

When it comes to interventions to improve access to travel information and ease of booking transport a plurality of respondents reported not requiring additional help. However, easier to use digital tools and paper timetables were both popular options to improve transport information for healthcare appointments.

Figure 91: Most popular interventions to improve access to travel information and booking

Qualitative insights: Lived experience of travelling to healthcare

Primary and community care

Generally travelling to primary and community services were viewed more positively than secondary and tertiary care in the Scottish Borders.

> "GP, dentist no problem within walking distance. Optician just a local 20-minute bus ride away."

However there remains significant problems with access to primary and community healthcare.

GP surgery closures at Chirnside and Coldingham in the Eastern Borders have pushed primary care further away for some people. Coldingham has a higher than average than average proportion of over-65s at 29%[23].

> "Reduction in local GP surgeries (Chirnside) means longer trips and more difficult parking"

Despite it broadly being easier for people to get to primary services like dentists, pharmacies and GPs, those that have chronic health conditions or are elderly can still struggle to travel:

> "The GP is a 15-minute walk which I can't manage now between sight and disability, and I often have to reschedule vital appointments because I have no way of getting there."

For those unable to walk far, alternative services like community transport, taxi services or Demand Responsive Transport can often be missing, unreliable and expensive.

> "On my one occasion my partner was told to attend the GP immediately following test results indicating kidney failure. He was too ill to drive, and I was in Yorkshire for work. He was told to get a taxi - there were none."

Public transport can also be infrequent which can lead to difficulty getting to appointments:

> "GP appointment buses do not go close to Drs and run every hour so hard to schedule a same day urgent appointment and manage to get back. No time to visit pharmacy usually."

[23] National Records of Scotland (2022), Population estimates for settlements and localities in Scotland: mid-2020

Secondary and tertiary care

Distance to healthcare

Distance to healthcare is a major issue for residents in the Scottish Borders. 22% of 239 coded qualitive responses to questions 21 and 41 mention it as a difficulty in accessing healthcare.

Distance to the BGH is a common issue for residents as well frequently being referred to appointments in Edinburgh, Livingston and Glasgow.

When asked what locations particular difficulties in terms of Transport to Health have, 52% of respondents mentioned the BGH. Usually alongside issues related to in-direct and infrequent services and difficulty finding parking.

One respondent described the issue of long distances for healthcare both in the case of the BGH and out of area appointments:

> "Having to go to a hospital can be problematic, nearest hospital is over 20 miles away but sometimes you need to go to a city hospital which is much more challenging. The time taken to do this makes an appointment a whole day event. It also means additional costs."

Often key secondary and tertiary care services are located outside the Borders. For example, many Oncology appointments are located at the Western General Hospital in Edinburgh. This requires many public transport transfers to reach which can be challenging for a vulnerable group of patients.

> "Western General. Zero public transport from Borders (really expected to put an 80yr old cancer patient on a bus?)"

Many respondents in areas in the Eastern and Southern Borders, such as Eyemouth or Newcastleton expressed their wish to attend more specialist appointments in England (commonly Berwick or Carlile) rather than in the central belt of Scotland.

Public transport

56% of responses to questions 21 and 41 mentioned public transport service issues as a difficulty in accessing healthcare whilst 3% mentioned expense of public transport as a difficulty.

Indirect services

The lack of direct services to the BGH was one aspect which respondents mentioned as well as long journey times to hospitals outside the Health Board area:

> "There are no direct buses to the BGH from our locality, several stages are needed to get to the appointment. Out of area hospital appointments by public transport is a logistical nightmare for an 8am appointment."

Respondents emphasised that having to take 2-3 buses each way to reach an appointment was time consuming, stressful and often didn't line up with appointment times.

Patients living West and South of the BGH often have to change at Galashiels, plus additional transfers for those in remote areas. Some in the Eastern Borders report having to catch buses south of the border into Berwick and change to reach the BGH for appointments at certain times.

Lack of public transport in local area

Respondents often commented on there being no local bus in their area or a long walk to the local bus stop:

> "Our increasing age may eventually mean we cannot drive and there is no public transport from our home or near it. Nearest bus service is over three miles away"

Infrequent services

Infrequent services was a major theme of responses. The negative impact of infrequent buses can be multiplied by poor connections between indirect services.

> "I cannot rely on public transport for any appointments as it is not frequent enough through my village. To get to the local hospital it takes over 2 hours on a bus and are so infrequent it would cause a lot of waiting around."

Parking at major hospitals

Parking was a major issue for respondents with 10% mentioning parking problems in answer to Q21 and 41. The BGH was the most cited location in answers related to parking, with respondents finding it stressful to find a spot, often worrying they could miss their appointment:

> "Parking at the Borders General Hospital is a nightmare I usually arrive an hour early to secure a parking place"

As the quote above indicates patients often arrive early to their appointment to secure parking.

Community transport

Community Transport can be unreliable, unavailable or expensive in the Scottish Borders.

One wheelchair user stated:

> "Community transport is not always available. Taxi is too expensive."

As well as being unavailable, community transport is often expensive. As mentioned by several respondents:

> "Community transport support is very expensive and not fully reliable due to volunteer shortages."

One GP who responded to the survey said they didn't know what to recommend to patients to get to hospital appointments they were referring. They mentioned community taxi services:

> "Community taxi services can cost more than 60 pounds for a single hospital trip and do not seem to be reimbursable. I've had patients decline treatment due to lack of transport."

The available community transport options and their prices in the Scottish Borders are listed in Table 2.

Table 2: Community Transport Services: Scottish Borders

Service	Description	Price	Relevant survey quotes
Borders Wheels	"The Borders Wheels Community Transport Service operates a number of wheelchair accessible vehicles, supported by volunteer drivers. Our service is available for individuals living independently or in care who need help with transport, and also for community/voluntary groups."	Individual journeys: 50p/mile Minimum charge of £10 and a flat rate surcharge of £5 per journey.[24]	"I have tried the likes of Teviot Wheels but have found them hit and miss"
Cancer Cars Scotland	Transport support for cancer patients in the Scottish Borders based at Border Macmillan Centre	55p/mile for non-cancer patients For cancer patients a minimum donation is suggested- e.g. £25 Borders to Edinburgh return[25]	
Royal Voluntary Service	Community transport for health appointments and social isolation	£8 minimum charge	"I have never been able to access voluntary drivers always unavailable and needs one week notice"

[24] Borders Wheels, Community Transport

[25] Cancer Cars Scotland, Cancer Support Cars

Patient transport

Patient transport was mentioned it was usually in relation to difficulty getting an appointments or other problems with the service. This reflects the changed Patient Needs Assessment and stretched resources of the Scottish Ambulance Service. One respondent described being refused patient transport:

> "I have breathing problems and difficulty getting about I have several times tried to get patient transport and have been refused"

This lack of capacity from the SAS leads more acutely ill patients struggling to find ways to reach appointments. It often means relying more on lifts from friends and family, using expensive taxis or community transport.

Accessibility

Many respondents mentioned accessibility issues in their answers. Accessibility covers a range of needs and circumstances. Some of the issues raised by respondents with disabilities, long term health conditions or mobility issues include:

- Public transport to be more accessible for wheelchair users
- Being unable to drive due to disability or condition
- Lack available community transport as an accessible alternative to public transport
- Inflexibility of patient transport services (fixed pick-up times)
- Lack of available taxi services and wheelchair accessible taxis, appointments have to be booked in advance
- Disabled parking difficult to find at BGH and parking being too far from the entrance
- A long walk/wheel to nearest public transport which is difficult for those with mobility issues

Being reliant on lifts for transport

> "No public transport, I don't drive and am a wheelchair user, so transport is a major issue, especially for early morning appointments when taxis are on the school run and I need blood tests at specific times."

Additional impacts

This section describes some of the impacts on those travelling to healthcare, caused by the problems described in the previous sections.

Forced or encouraged to drive / Reliant on lifts

A common impact of long distances to healthcare appointments and indirect public is being reliant on a car or on lifts from other people. 21% of qualitive responses mentioned being reliant on their car or lifts from others to access healthcare often due to public transport issues, disability and mobility issues, or the long distances required to reach healthcare.

> "Wouldn't be able to attend without a car, public transport does not fit around hospital appointments"

A recurring theme of people who feel driving is their only options to attend healthcare appointments, is a strong concern about how they will cope when they are too elderly to drive. This reflects the older demographics of people who responded to our survey. It also highlights that an aging population will find it increasingly harder to reach healthcare, especially in the rural areas found in the Borders.

Time off work or wasted time

6% mentioned that poor Transport to Health had wasted their time or caused them to have to take additional time off work to attend appointments.

> "a full day off work to visit the hospital for a short appointment costs money or holiday time"

Forced to use expensive / unavailable taxis

9% mentioned they were forced to use expensive taxis for healthcare appointments. Additionally, many respondents mentioned that taxis were often unavailable.

> "I have to get a taxi when I am not well enough to walk to the bus it is very expensive"

Often those who are reliant on taxis have other underlying health conditions or are wheelchair users.

Worsens condition / acute impact on vulnerable group

Long journeys by public transport can often be unformattable or painful for elderly people, people with long term health conditions, and those returning from receiving major treatment.

> "Bus would make journey very long and take the whole day and my person suffers with chronic fatigue"

Missed or delayed appointments

Missing, delaying or cancelling an appointment was one of the impacts of poor Transport to Health. Common reasons for not travelling to appointments or delaying appointments include appointment times not lining up with bus schedules, no public transport options the area, or long and in-direct public transport options making travelling unfeasible.

> "No public transport I don't drive so rely on the local taxi service which is costly and sometimes I'm unable to afford to attend."

Summary of insights for NHS Borders

The challenges which face NHS Borders are similar in nature to many Health boards but exacerbated by a challenging rural geography and older population. Access to secondary care facilities was the biggest priority from those who responded to our survey. Problems included having to attend healthcare appointments multiple hours away from their home, indirect public transport options to Borders General Hospital, stretched parking facilities, and accessibility issues making reaching transport options difficult.

Increasing distance to primary care

For those who have recently lost a GP in their village or who live in small villages and rural areas access to primary healthcare can be challenging. This is especially the case for those who don't drive or have mobility issues. Even when the local GP, dentist or Pharmacy is in walking distance this can be an issue for disabled people, those with mobility issues, and elderly people.

Distance to healthcare

Distance to secondary and tertiary healthcare services was a massive barrier for many in the Scottish Borders. In the first instance, the BGH covering the whole of the Scottish Borders from West Linton to Newcastleton to Eyemouth means there is a challenge in making the site accessible by driving as well public and community transport over distances stretching up to 40 miles.

The second aspect of this theme is the distance to out of area appointments, often in the central belt (Edinburgh, Livingston or Glasgow). This can turn travelling for healthcare into a time consuming and expensive process, even for those who have access to a car or someone who can give them a lift. For those reliant on public, community or patient transport, the issue of distance to healthcare sites is exacerbated.

Public transport service issues

The most cited issue amongst qualitive responses were issues related to public transport service.

- **Indirect services** force patients to take multi-stage journeys with long transfer times. This is seen as time-wasting, and an extra burden for those suffering with health conditions and mobility issues. In-direct services were also often blamed for struggling to attend appointments at certain times of day such as the morning.
- **Lack of public transport** in the local area was repeated across responses. Respondents often stated that there was 'no public transport'. This demonstrates that for those in smaller rural settlements, public transport is not an option. Another issue was the distance required to reach public transport, with those with mobility issues struggling to walk or wheel to the nearest bus stop, with some using a taxi to get to their nearest bus stop.
- **Infrequent bus services** were cited as problem for getting to appointments on time. Bus services often only run once per hour or a few times per day, meaning some appointment windows at hospitals and local primary healthcare sites become unreachable.

Parking at major hospitals

Respondents often reported having to arrive early for appointments to get a parking space at the BGH. This means additional time and stress for many worried about missing appointments

Community transport

Community transport was seen as limited due to the driver volunteer shortage, meaning there was difficulty booking appointments and reliability issues. The cost of community transport was also seen as a drawback for those who use it.

Patient transport

The primary issue with non-emergency ambulance is a lack of capacity from the SAS, which means patients are often refused travel. This makes them reliant on lifts from others or using other modes which are unsuitable for their condition.

Accessibility

Accessibility issues covered a wide range of problems. These often stem from being unable to drive to appointments. These include the accessibility of public transport, a lack of accessible taxis available, difficulty travelling to the nearest bus stop. Disability, mobility issues and old age often exacerbated the problems outlined above, having a more acute impact.

NHS Forth Valley – evidence summary

Area overview

NHS Forth Valley covers the local authority areas of Falkirk, Clackmannanshire and Stirling, serving a population of around 300,000 people. However, this Health Board area does not align with our study area as Stirling lies outwith the SEStran partnership area. Within the SEStran region, the analysis in this report focuses on Falkirk and Clackmannanshire. The area includes a mix of settlement types and healthcare facilities, including:

- **Urban centres** such as Falkirk, Grangemouth and Larbert
- **Growing commuter and suburban towns** such as Polmont, Bo'ness, Denny and Bonnybridge
- **Rural and semi-rural communities** across Clackmannanshire (including the Hillfoots towns of Dollar, Tillicoultry, Alva and Menstrie)
- **Primary hospitals and specialist centres:** Forth Valley Royal Hospital (Larbert) as the main acute hospital, supported by Stirling Health Centre and Falkirk Community Hospital for local and outpatient services

These contrasting geographies shape the transport needs of the population. Urban areas generally benefit from stronger public transport coverage, while many rural and semi-rural settlements face longer or indirect journeys to reach FVRH or other hospital-based services.

Figure 92 illustrates this geography, showing the distribution of settlements, key A-roads and motorways (including the M9 and M80), and rail corridors such as the Edinburgh–Glasgow line and the Croy–Larbert corridor. Transport accessibility is strongest along these strategic corridors, whereas parts of Clackmannanshire and rural Falkirk experience weaker public transport provision.

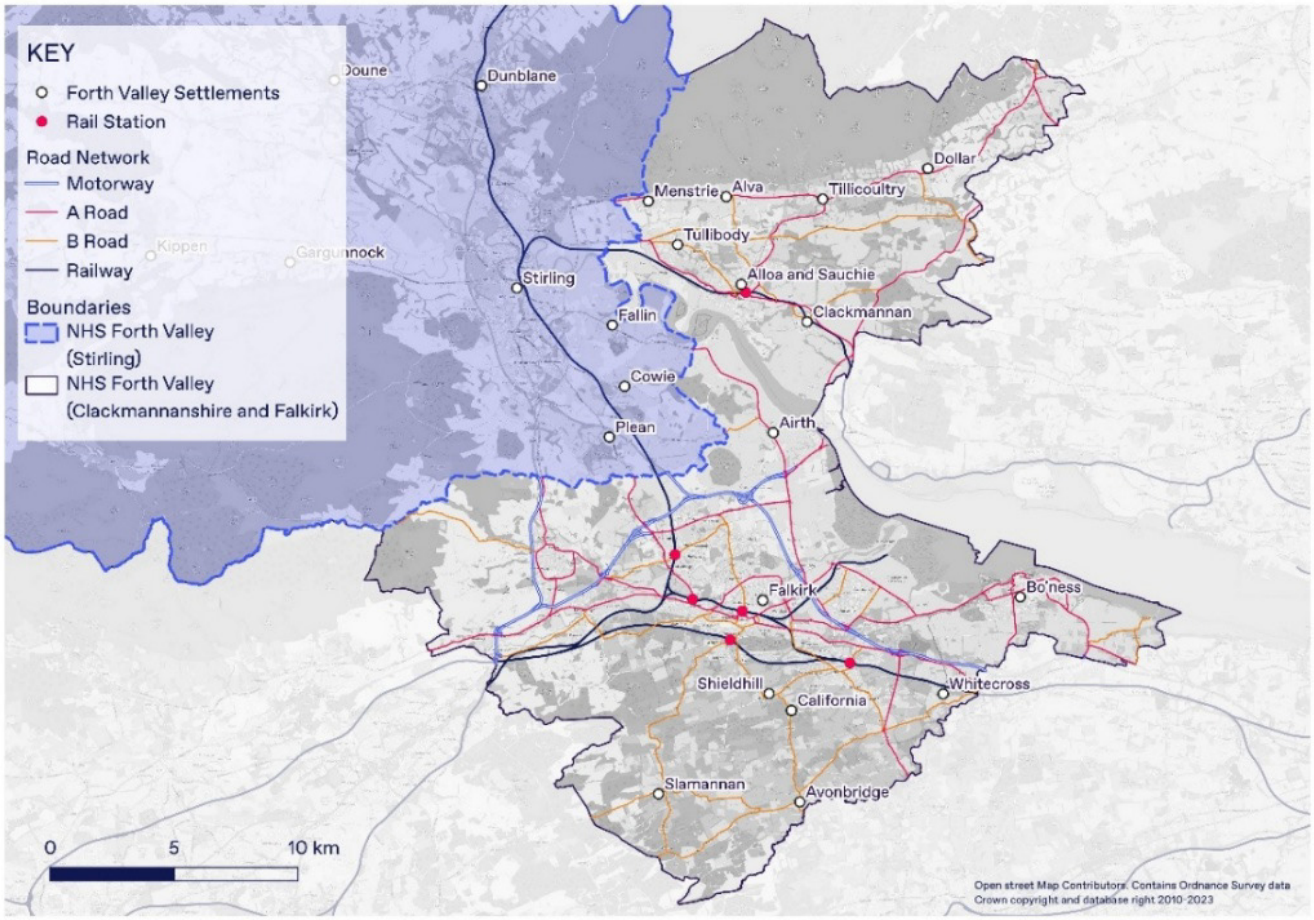


Figure 92: NHS Forth Valley settlements

Primary care facilities are generally aligned with local population centres; however, Figure 93 shows that secondary and acute healthcare services are highly centralised. Forth Valley Royal Hospital acts as the single regional acute hospital, meaning that significant cross-boundary and cross-settlement travel occurs from Falkirk, Clackmannanshire, Bo'ness, the Hillfoots towns and other communities. This centralisation results in longer travel times for many residents, particularly those without access to a private car.

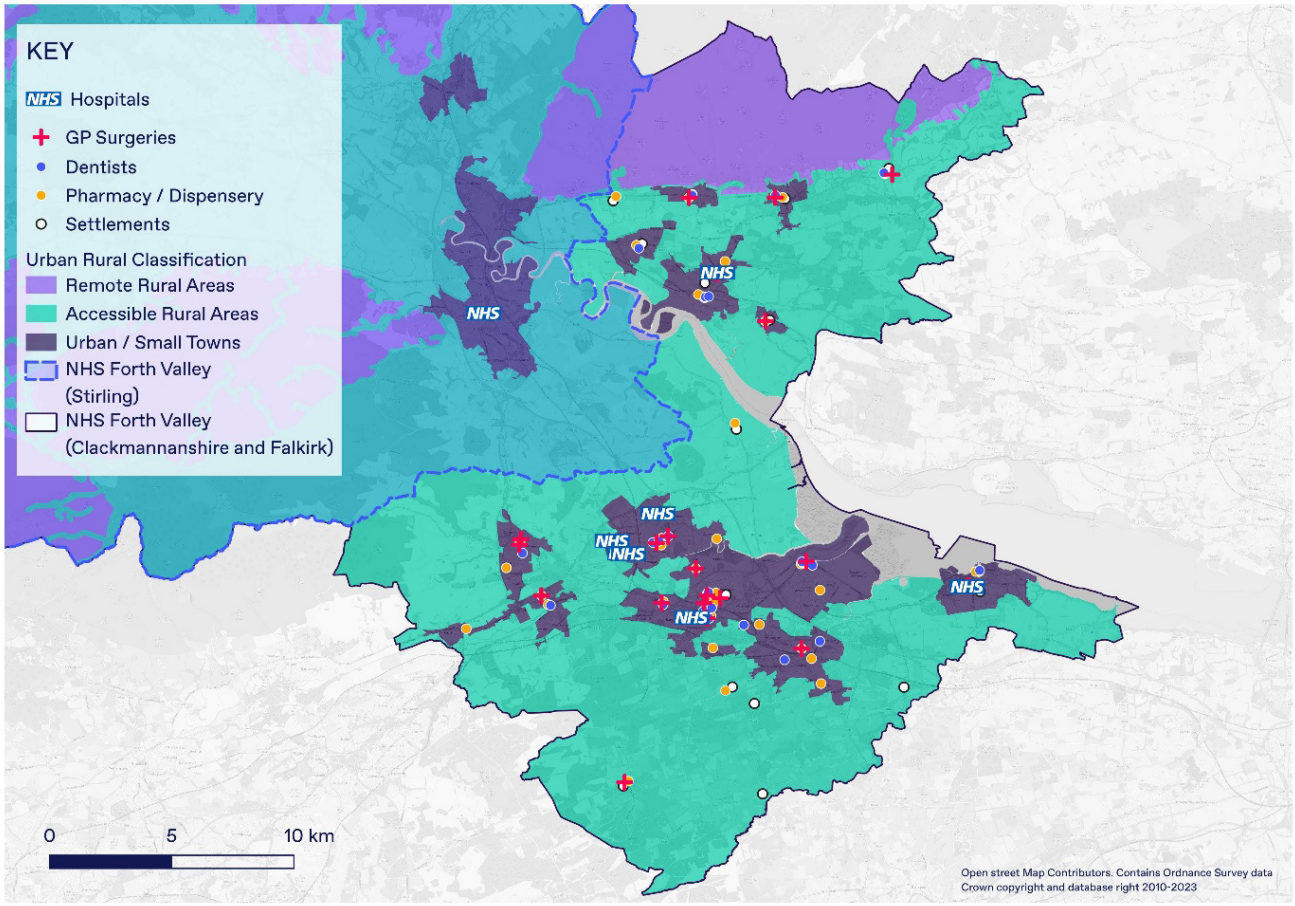


Figure 93: NHS Facilities Forth Valley

Figure 94 presents modelled public transport travel times from Transport Scotland's TRACC model. This model was chosen for this area due to patients often travelling to the two primary hospitals in the area FVRH and Stirling Community hospital. Most areas in Clackmannanshire have journey times exceeding 40 minutes to FVRH or Stirling Community hospital with a few areas exceeding 60 minutes. Some areas in the East Falkirk like Bo'ness also experience longer journey times of some exceeding 1 hour.

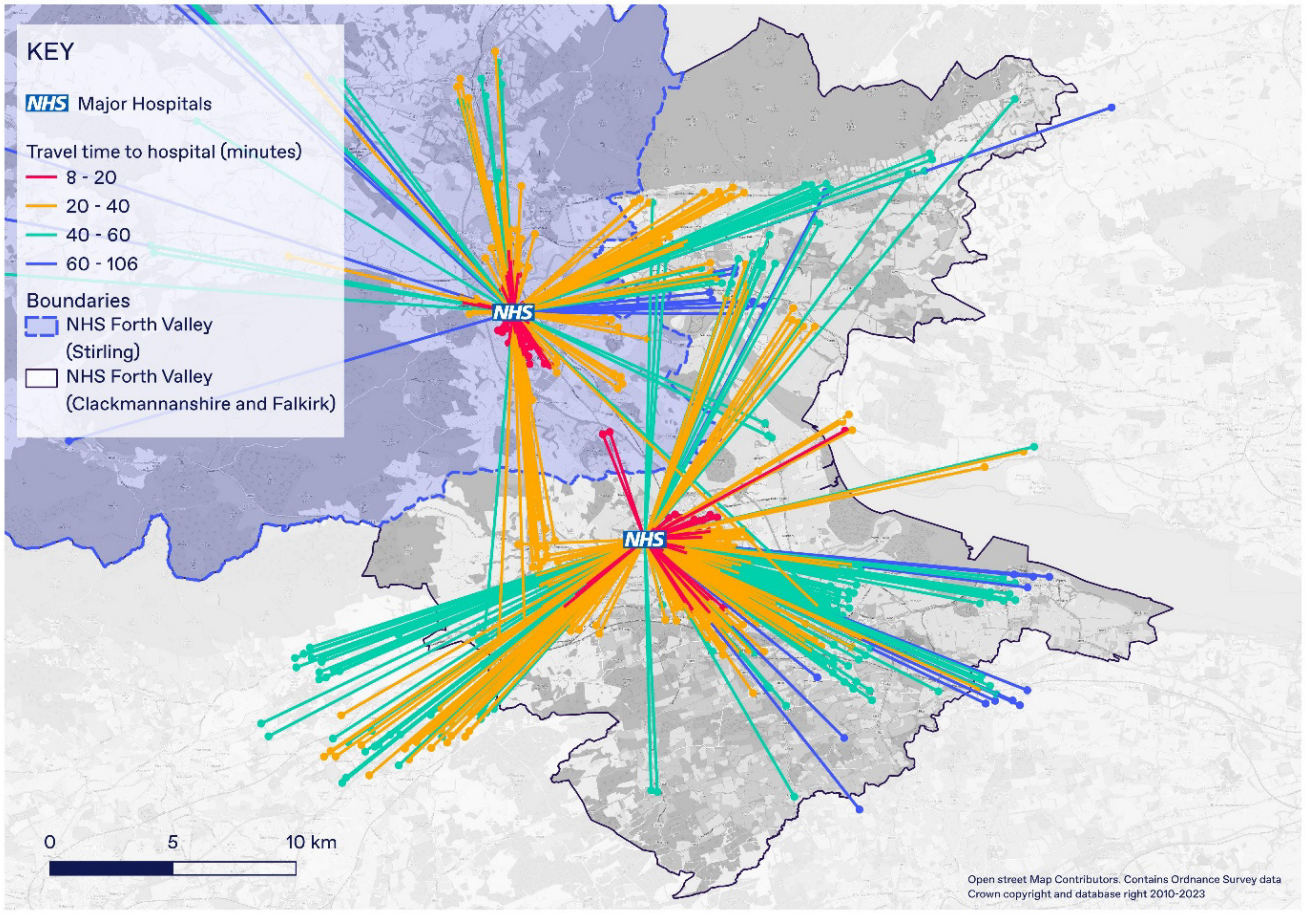


Figure 94: Public transport travel times and number of interchanges to FVRH

Figure 95 shows the proportion of the population which lives in each of the 5 SIMD quintiles. The index of deprivation quintiles represent 5 equal segments of the Scottish population from 1 (most deprived) to 5 (least deprived). Among the two local authorities in both NHS Forth Valley and our study area Falkirk has a lower proportion of the population in the most deprived 20% than the Scottish average. Clackmannanshire on the other hand has more of its population in datazones which are in the 20% most deprived. This is in addition to longer journey times to hospitals at FRVH and Stirling community hospital; these areas should be a priority focus for intervention.

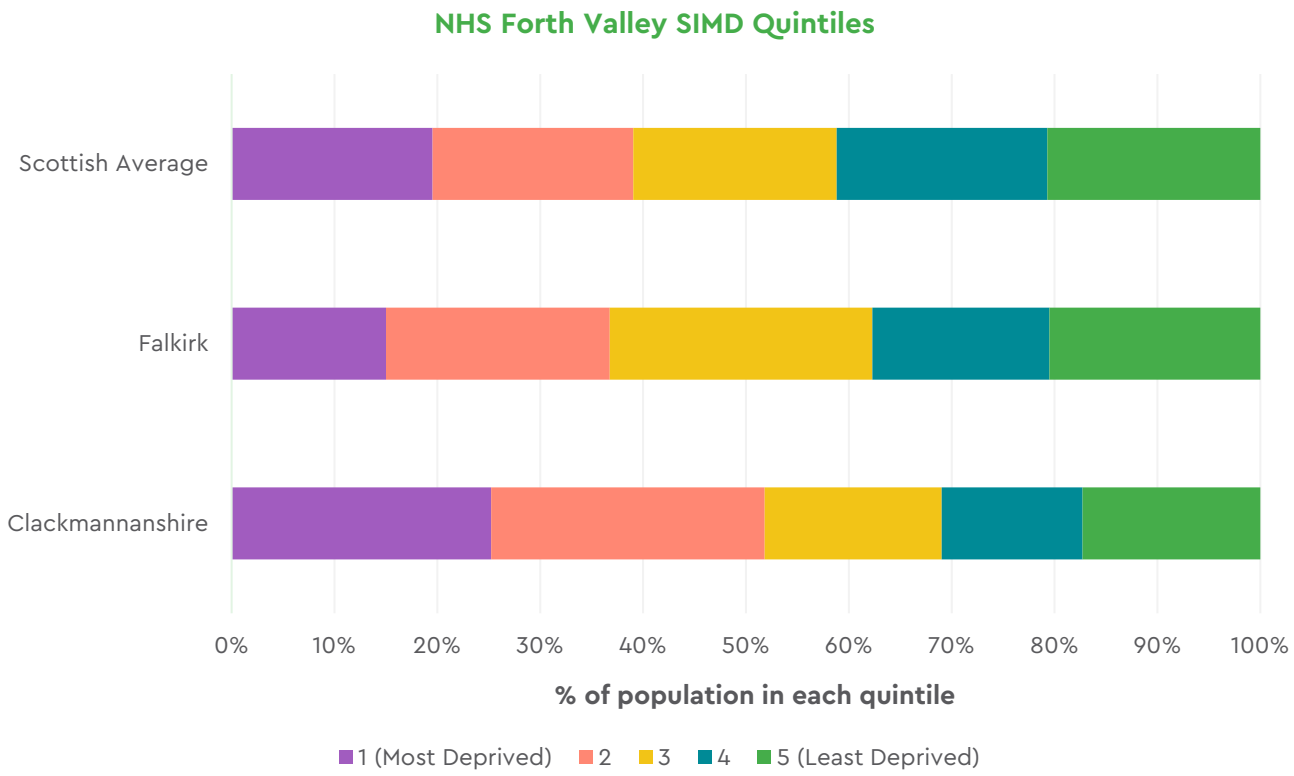


Figure 95: NHS Forth Valley proportion of population in each SIMD quintile

A total of **196 survey respondents** survey respondents live within the NHS Forth Valley area, providing detailed insight into the transport challenges and behaviours of residents in Falkirk and Clackmannanshire when accessing healthcare services.

Survey respondent characteristics

Survey respondents from the Forth Valley are less likely than the general population to have access to at least one car or van. This could show a greater interest in the survey from those who struggle to reach healthcare without having access to private transport.

An even greater majority of respondents from the Forth Valley area were women at 79%. 67% were over 60 years old which is in line with the overall survey average.

Similar to other Health Board areas, Forth Valley respondents were more likely to have a long-term health condition or disability and were more likely to provide unpaid care to others.

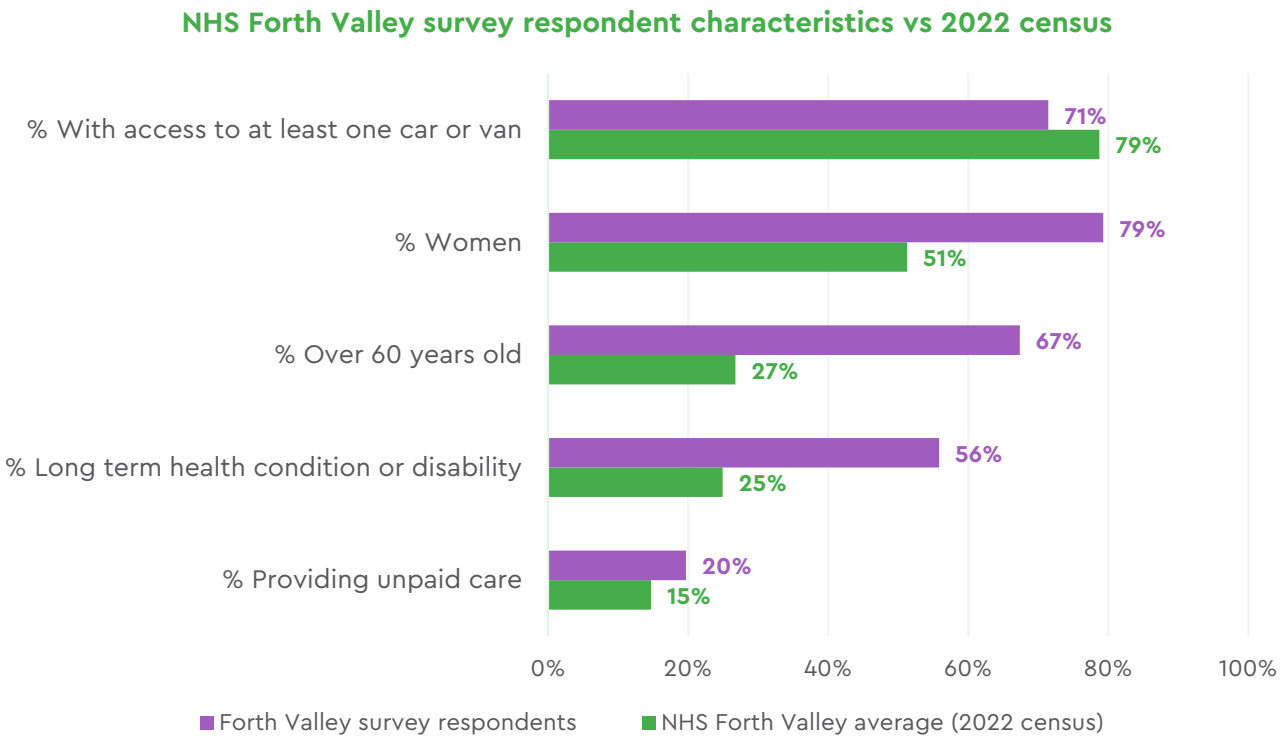


Figure 96: NHS Forth Valley characteristics – respondents vs census

Patterns of healthcare use

Most respondents in NHS Forth Valley reported travelling for healthcare relatively infrequently. The majority of journeys across most appointment types were reported as either once a year or less, or every few months. As expected, GP and local clinic appointments were attended more regularly than hospital-based services, reflecting their role in routine and ongoing care.

Outpatient secondary care appointments are a common healthcare journey type in the area with most respondents reporting attending one at least every few months. This journey type varies in length as many outpatient appointment types can be held at more local community facilities like Stirling Community Hospital and Clackmannanshire Community Healthcare Centre. This reduces the need to travel long distances, especially for those living in Clackmannanshire. However, the precise split between appointments at community facilities and the FVRH is not known.

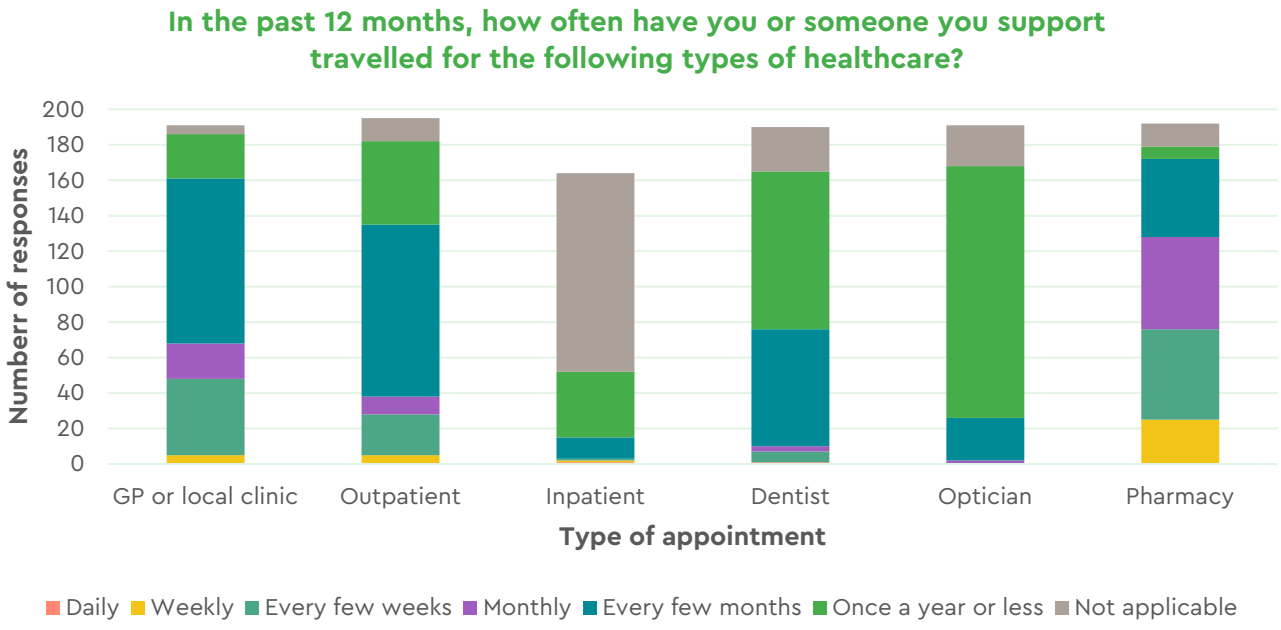


Figure 97: Frequency of visits

Pharmacy visits showed higher frequency than other services, with a notable proportion of respondents attending monthly or every few weeks. Inpatient appointments were least frequent overall, and most commonly reported as not applicable or occurring once a year or less.

How long journeys take

Journey times vary considerably depending on the type of healthcare being accessed. Travel to GP surgeries, pharmacies and local clinics was most commonly reported as taking under 15 minutes, reflecting their closer alignment with local settlement patterns.

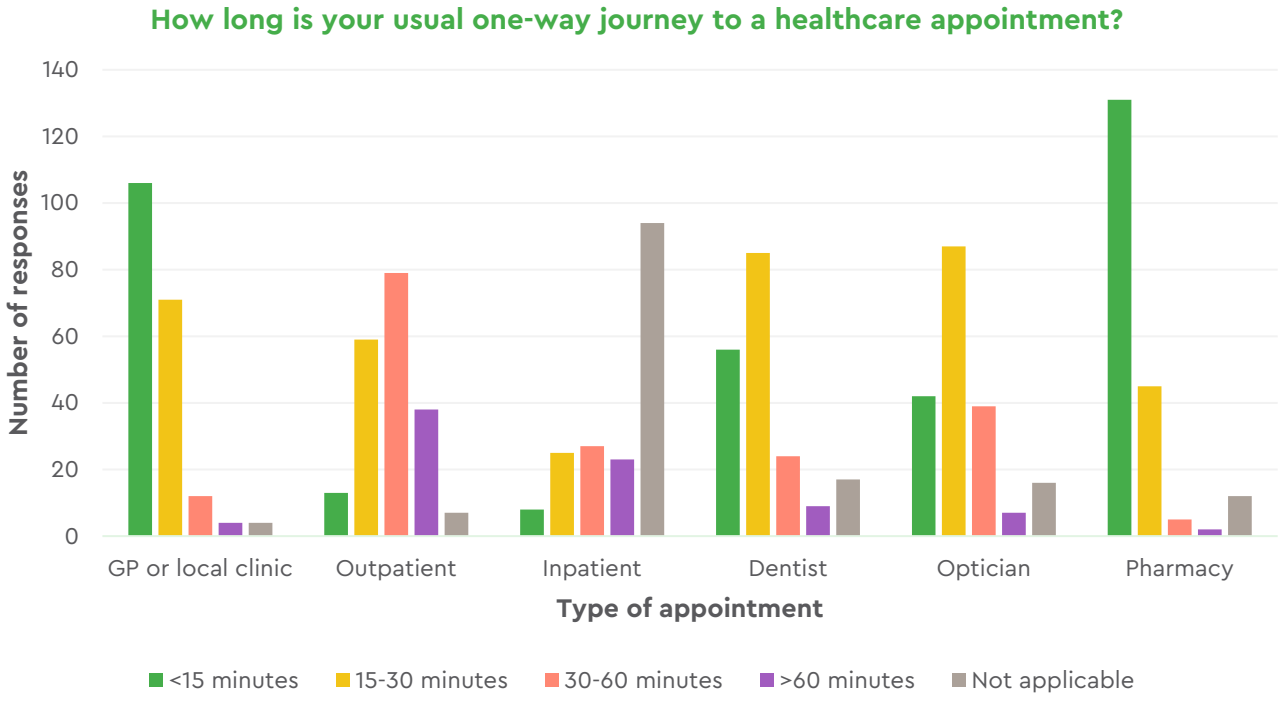


Figure 98: Journey time

In contrast, journeys to hospital-based services, particularly Forth Valley Royal Hospital, were more likely to exceed 30 minutes. A significant proportion of respondents reported travel times of over 60 minutes for inpatient and specialist appointments, especially those travelling from Clackmannanshire or the outer parts of Falkirk. These longer journeys often involved indirect routes or multiple stages.

How people travel to healthcare

Private car use dominates healthcare travel across NHS Forth Valley, either as a driver or passenger.

Bus travel is the most commonly used public transport mode, particularly for local services and for respondents living in urban areas. Walking plays a role mainly for short trips to GP surgeries or pharmacies.

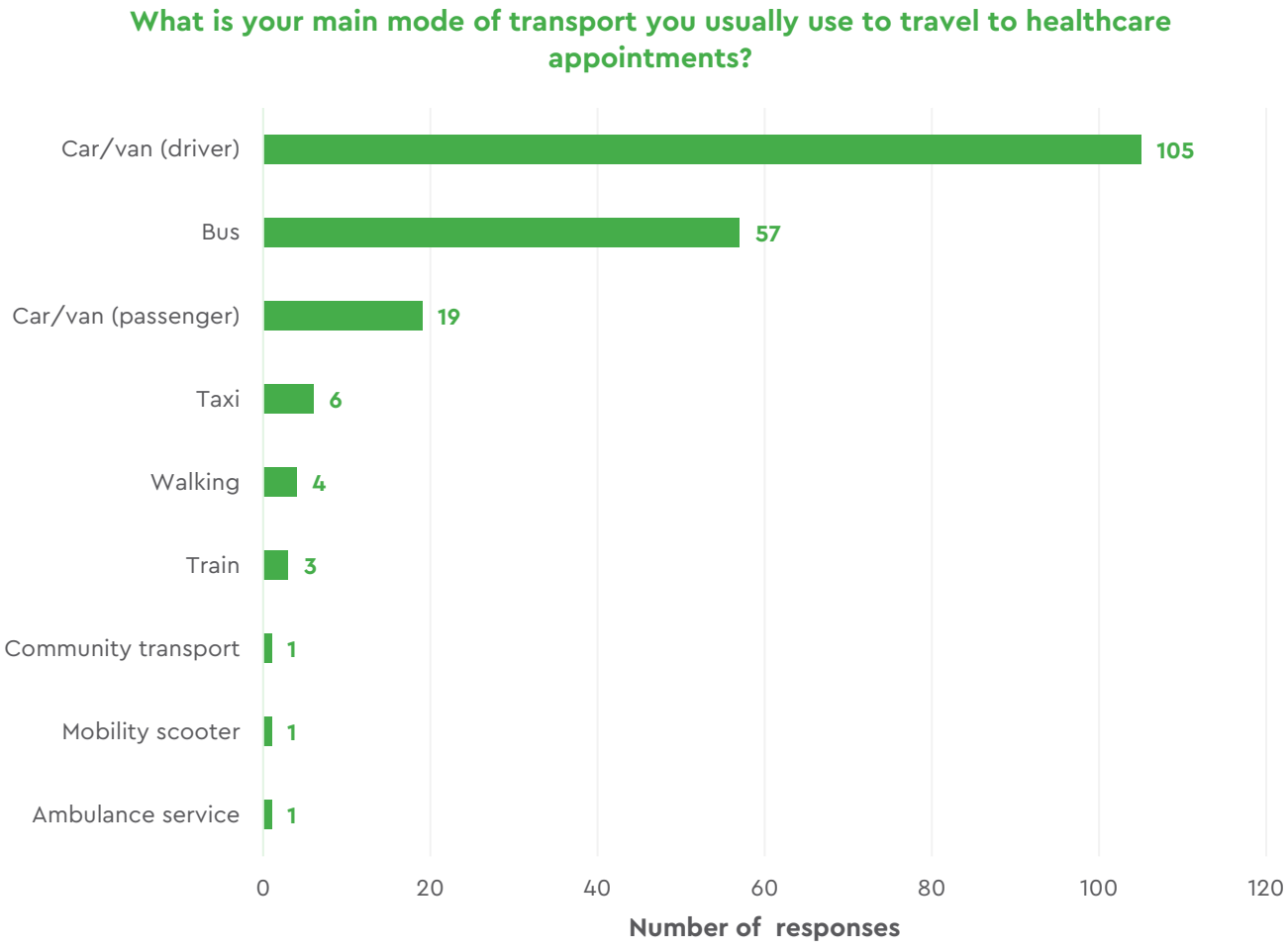


Figure 99: Main mode of transport

When considering backup options, many respondents indicated they would rely on lifts from family or friends if their main mode was unavailable. Public transport and taxis were also cited as alternatives, although a small but important group reported having no suitable backup option, increasing the risk of missed appointments if their usual transport fails.

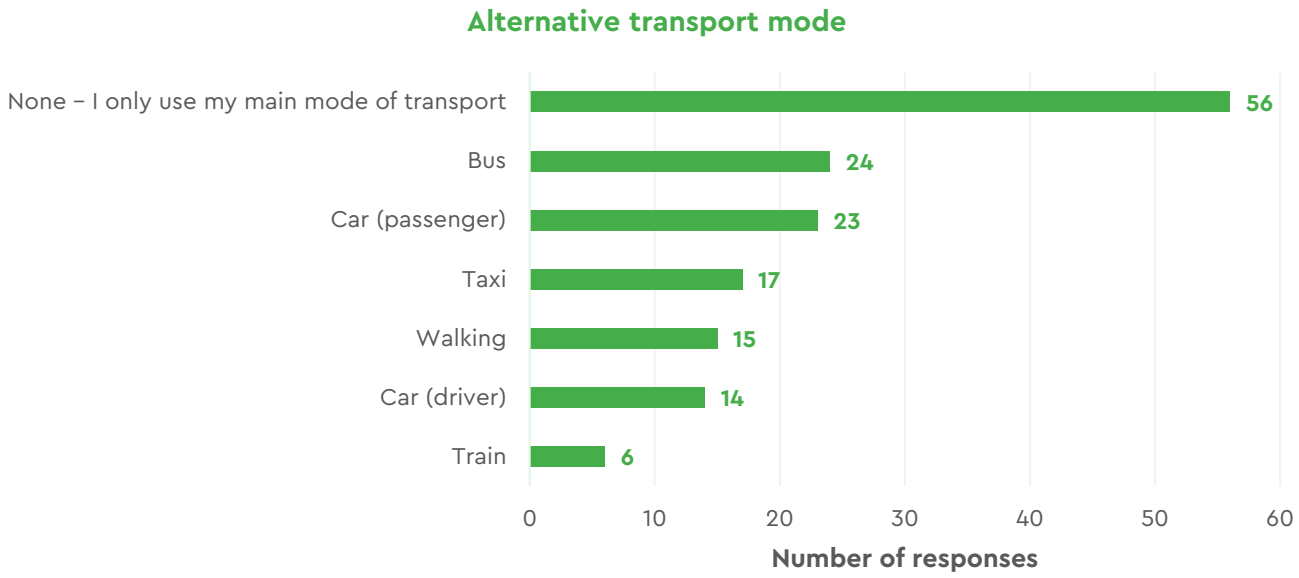


Figure 100: Alternative transport mode

Reliability of available transport

In line with other health board areas, most respondents described their usual transport to healthcare as reliable. However, a notable minority reported that transport is only sometimes reliable or frequently unreliable. Issues such as delayed or cancelled bus services, missed connections and congestion around hospital sites were highlighted as sources of uncertainty, particularly for time-sensitive appointments.

When considering reliability by mode car drivers found their mode the most reliable whilst, car passengers mainly selected 'usually reliable' and bus users were most likely to select 'sometimes reliable'.

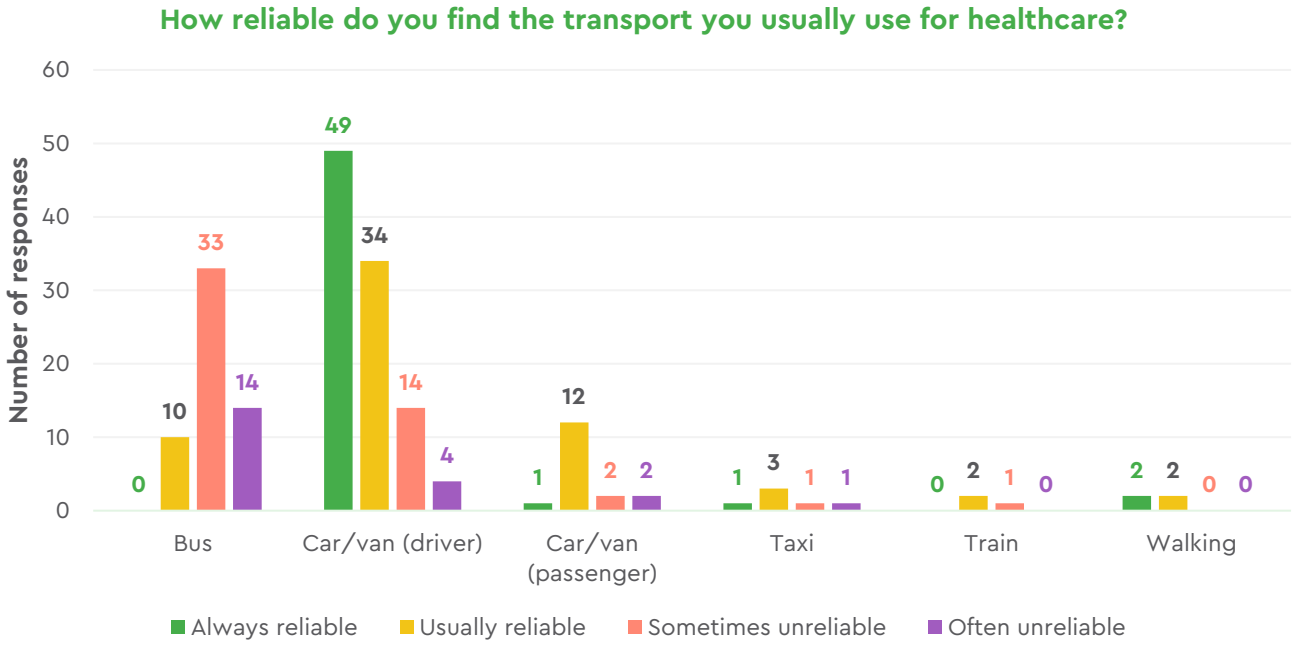


Figure 101: Transport reliability

Missed or delayed appointments due to transport

Around one third of respondents reported having missed or delayed a healthcare appointment because of transport-related issues.

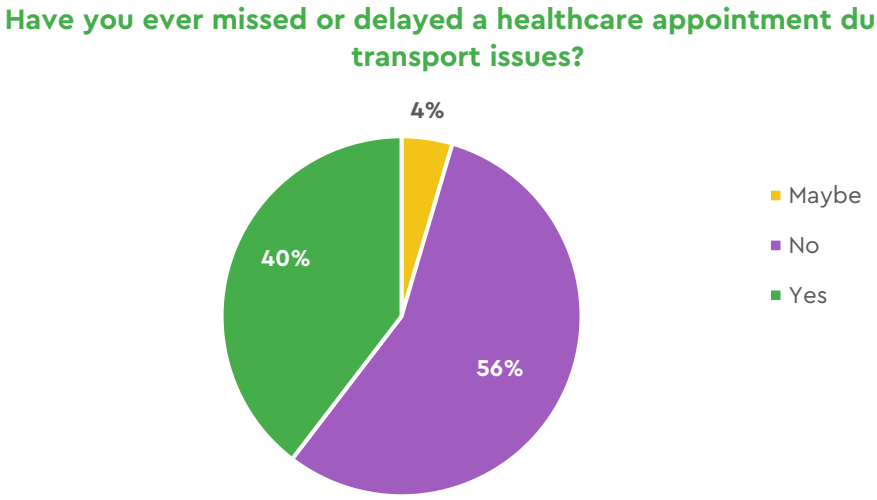


Figure 102: Missed appointments

The most commonly cited reasons were delays to public transport services, traffic congestion and difficulties with parking. Accessibility and mobility-related barriers also featured strongly, particularly for respondents with long-term health conditions or caring responsibilities. In some cases, reliance on others for transport or the lack of suitable alternatives contributed to missed or postponed care.

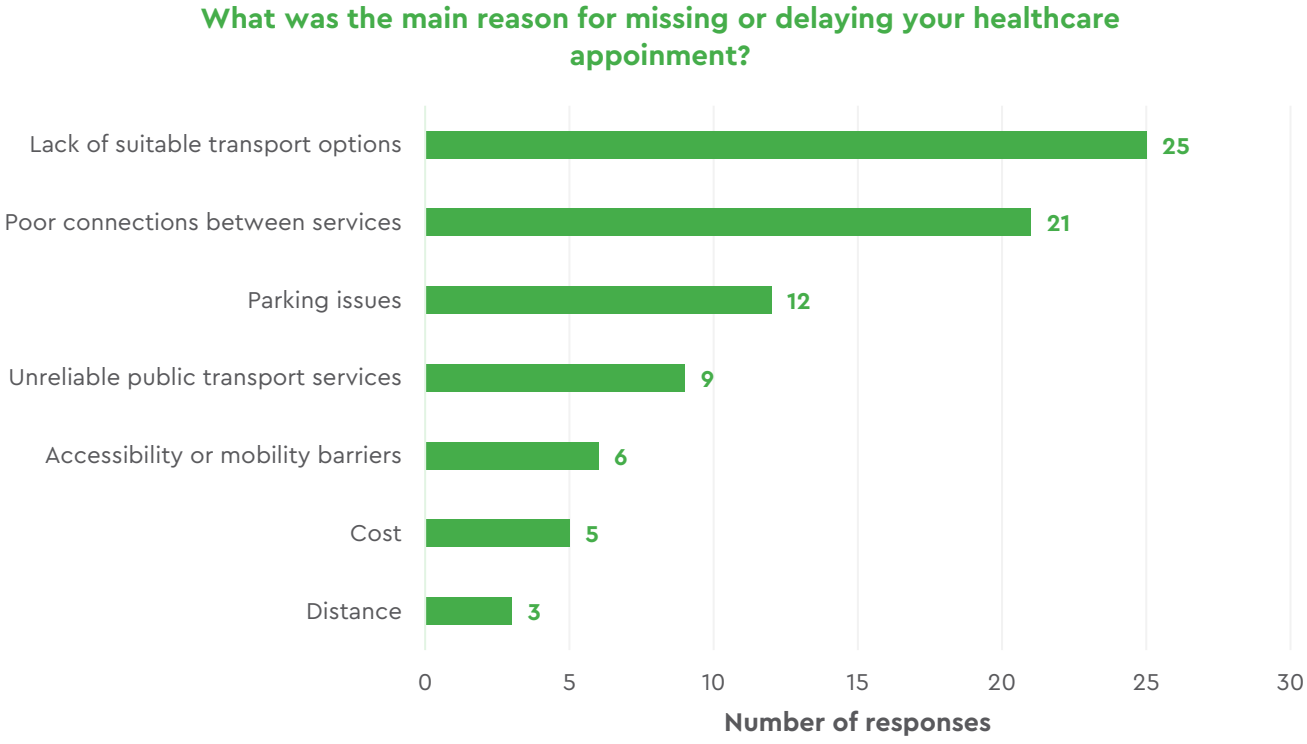


Figure 103: Reason for missed appointment

Effect of transport costs on attendance

Most respondents stated that transport costs do not affect their ability to attend healthcare appointments. However, a minority reported that costs either sometimes or regularly influence attendance, indicating that affordability remains a barrier for some groups, particularly those requiring frequent or long-distance travel.

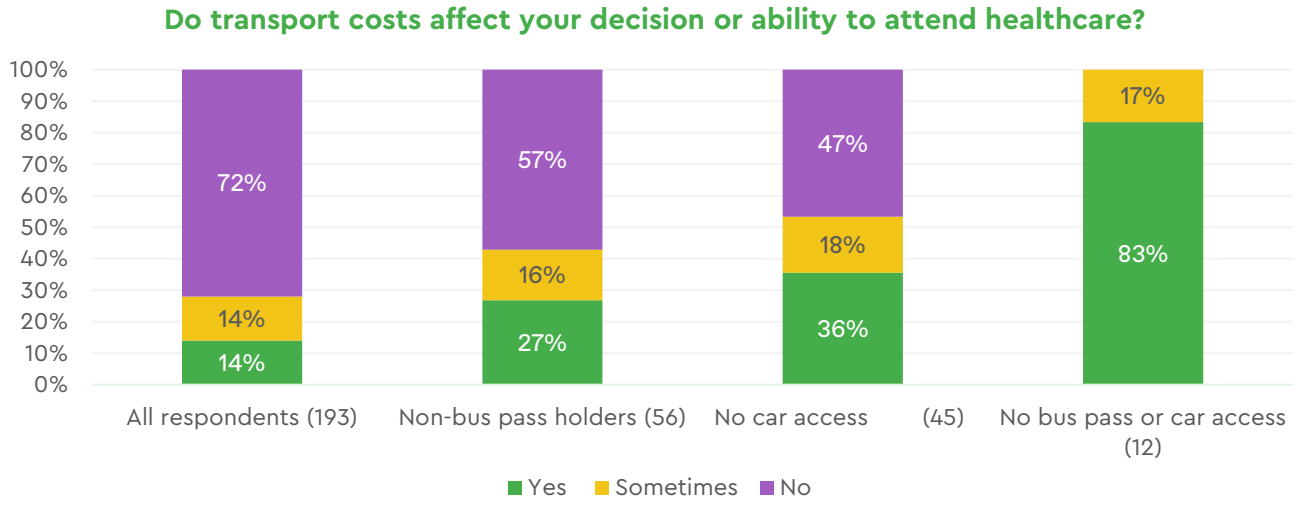


Figure 104: Cost of journey affects attendance

When considering those that face more up-front costs non-bus pass holders were more likely to report transport costs as a barrier and those without access to a car were even likelier to find transport costs a barrier.

Cost of the most recent healthcare journey

The majority of respondents reported that their most recent healthcare journey involved no direct cost. Among those who did incur costs, most spent under £10, with only a small number reporting higher expenses. This suggests that while many journeys are low-cost, a minority of patients face significant travel expenses.

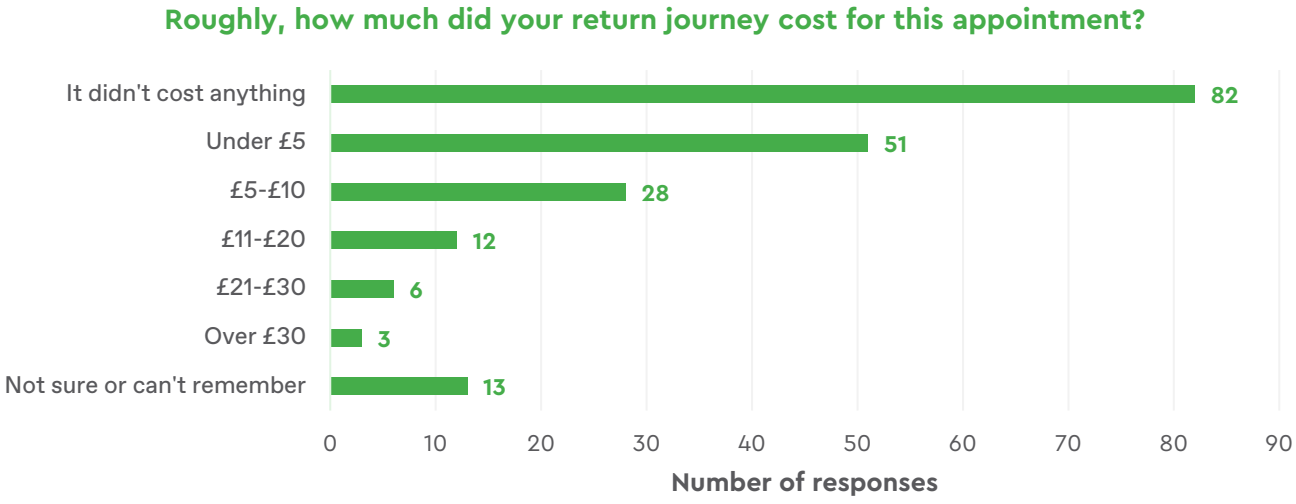


Figure 105: Cost of journey

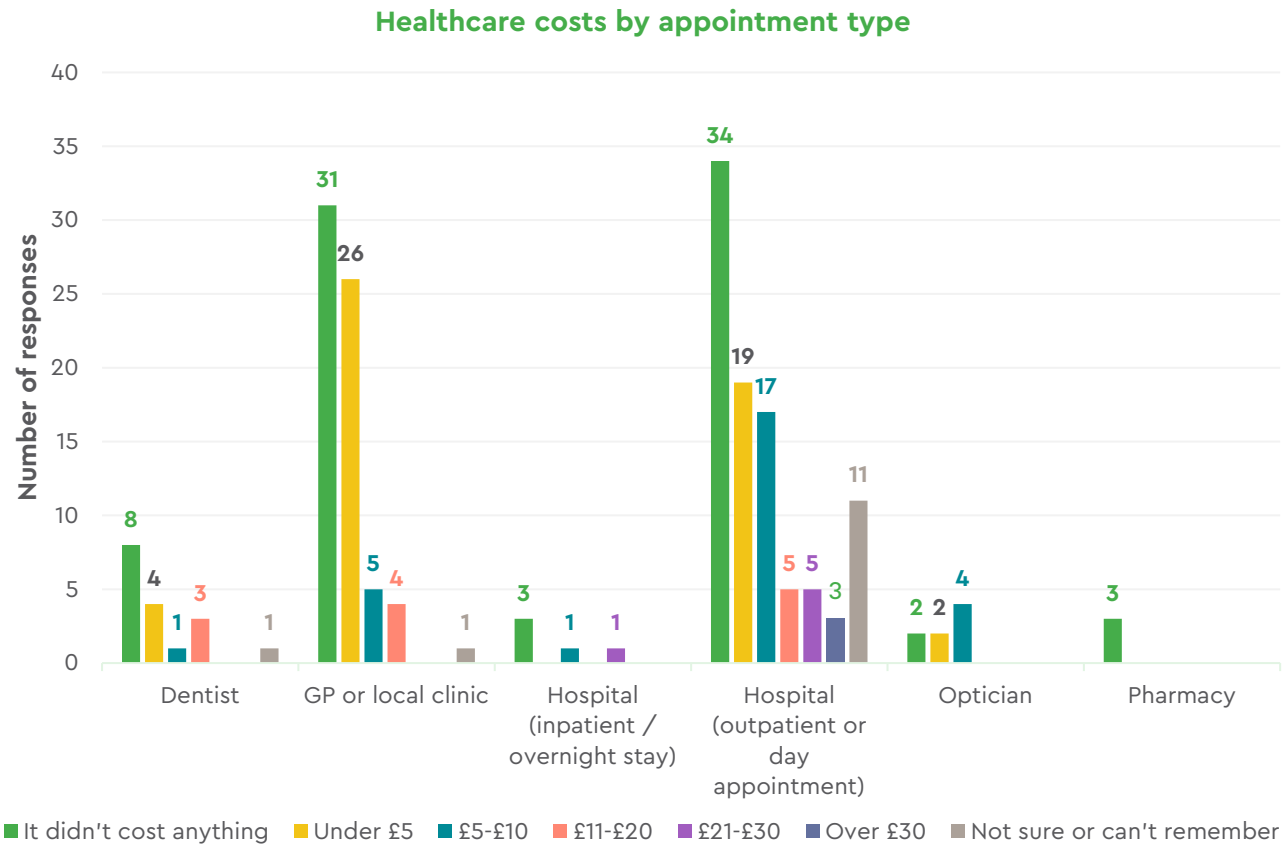


Figure 106: Cost of healthcare per appointment type

Healthcare travel costs vary by appointment type. GP, pharmacy and local clinic visits are most likely to incur no cost, reflecting their proximity to where people live and the ability to walk or use short bus journeys. In contrast, hospital-based appointments, particularly outpatient and inpatient care, are more likely to involve a financial cost. Where costs are incurred, they are most commonly associated with longer journeys, use of private cars, or reliance on taxis where public transport options are limited or unsuitable. This indicates that travel costs are more closely linked to the location and type of service than to healthcare use overall.

How people find travel information

Respondents most commonly used digital tools such as online maps and journey planners to find travel information. NHS websites and appointment letters were also important sources. Fewer respondents relied on advice from healthcare staff, community transport providers or local transport apps.

Ease of accessing and understanding information varied. While many reported that information is usually easy to find, a notable minority had trouble particularly where journeys were complex or required coordination across different services.

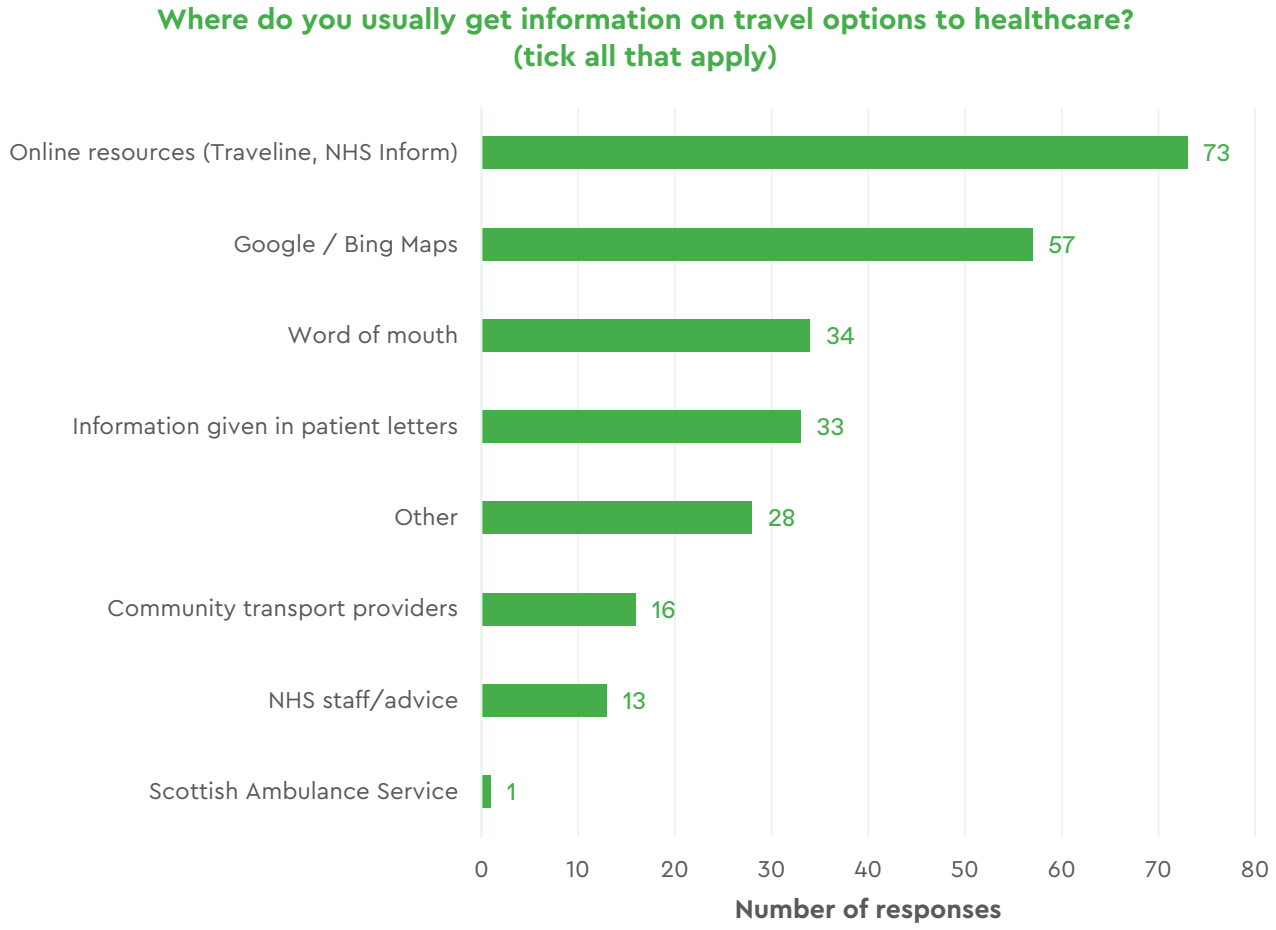


Figure 107: Where do you get your information?

Digital confidence in planning healthcare travel

Overall digital confidence among respondents was high, with most reporting that they are confident using online tools to plan or book travel. However, a smaller group reported limited confidence or reliance on non-digital methods, highlighting the continued need for accessible offline options.

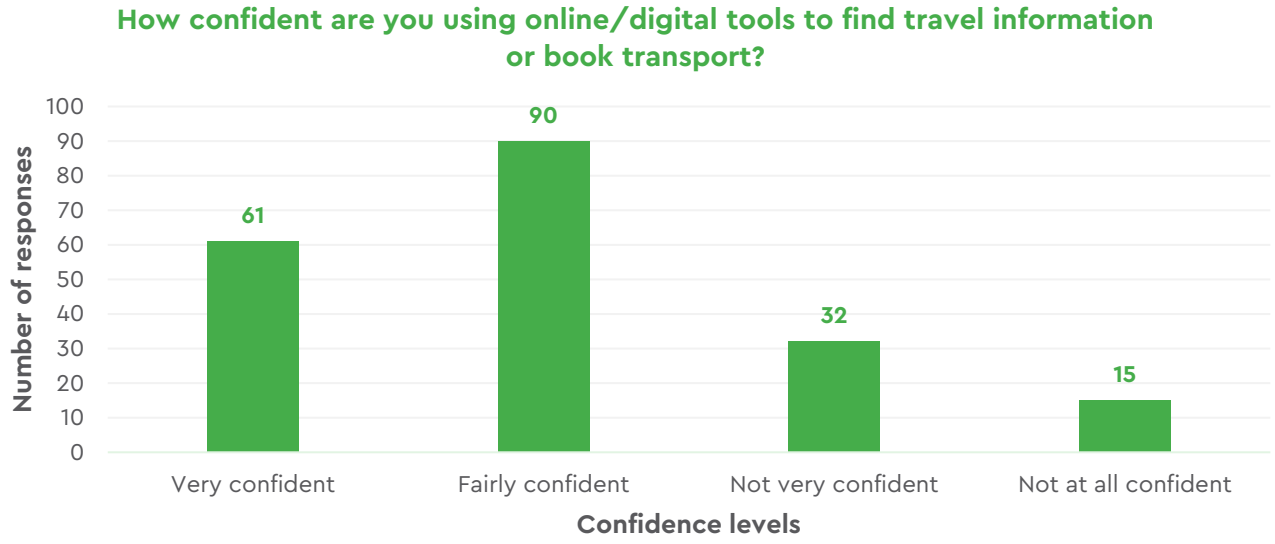


Figure 108: Confidence online

Most respondents reported that they usually use online or digital tools to find travel information or book transport for healthcare appointments. A further proportion said they use digital tools sometimes, while a smaller group reported that they rarely or never do so. This suggests that digital tools are the primary method for planning healthcare travel for most people in NHS Forth Valley, but that reliance on non-digital options remains important for a minority, particularly where confidence, accessibility or complex journeys present barriers.

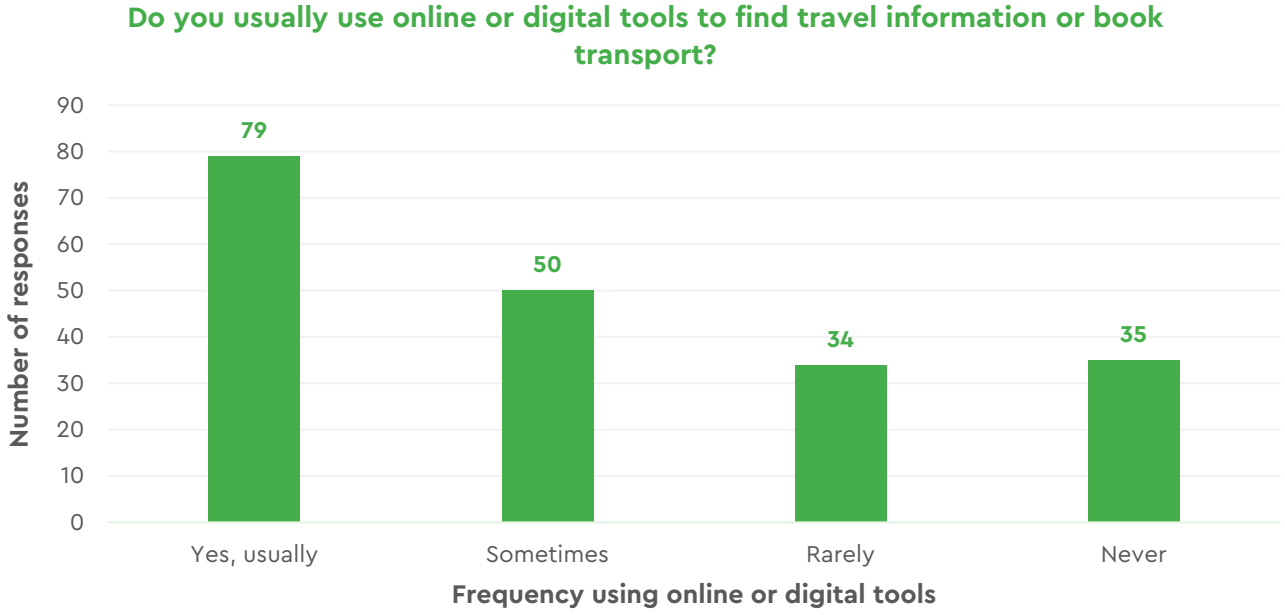


Figure 109: Do you utilise online tools

Severity of transport barriers

The most significant barriers reported relate to the lack of direct public transport routes, limited-service frequency and parking difficulties at hospital sites. Poor coordination between services and challenges linked to accessibility and mobility were also highlighted. Cost was identified as a barrier for fewer respondents, but where present, its impact was substantial.

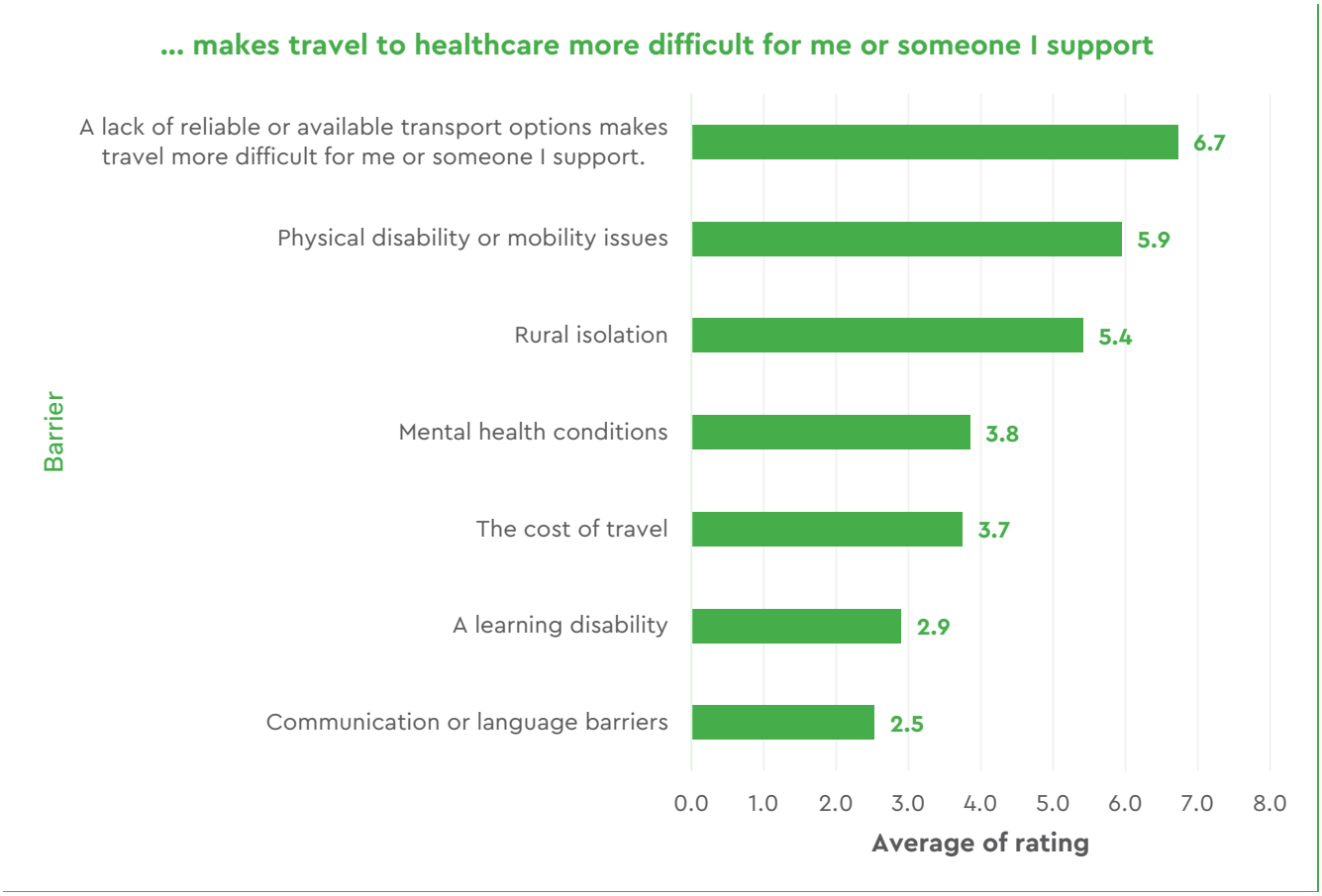


Figure 110: Difficulties with travel

Which group experience the greatest barriers

People with disabilities, long-term health conditions and caring responsibilities were more likely to experience transport-related barriers. Older people and those without access to a private car reported particular difficulty with indirect journeys, digital tools and service reliability.

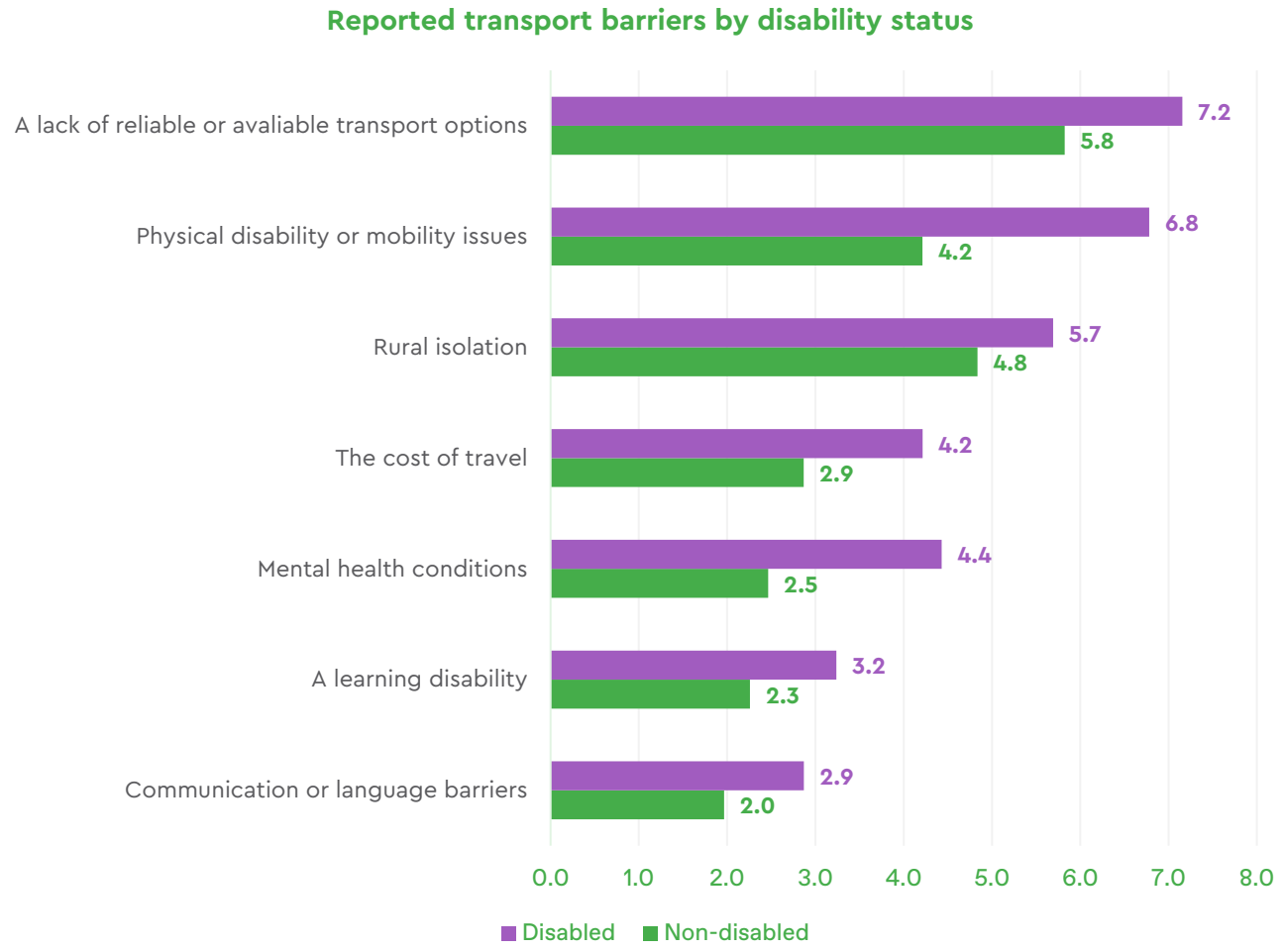


Figure 111: Transport barriers

What improvements people want

Respondents most frequently called for more direct and reliable public transport services to healthcare facilities. Improved parking provision, better coordination between transport services, clearer travel information and enhanced support for disabled users and carers were also widely requested. Reducing the cost of travel and improving access to specialist transport were identified as additional priorities.

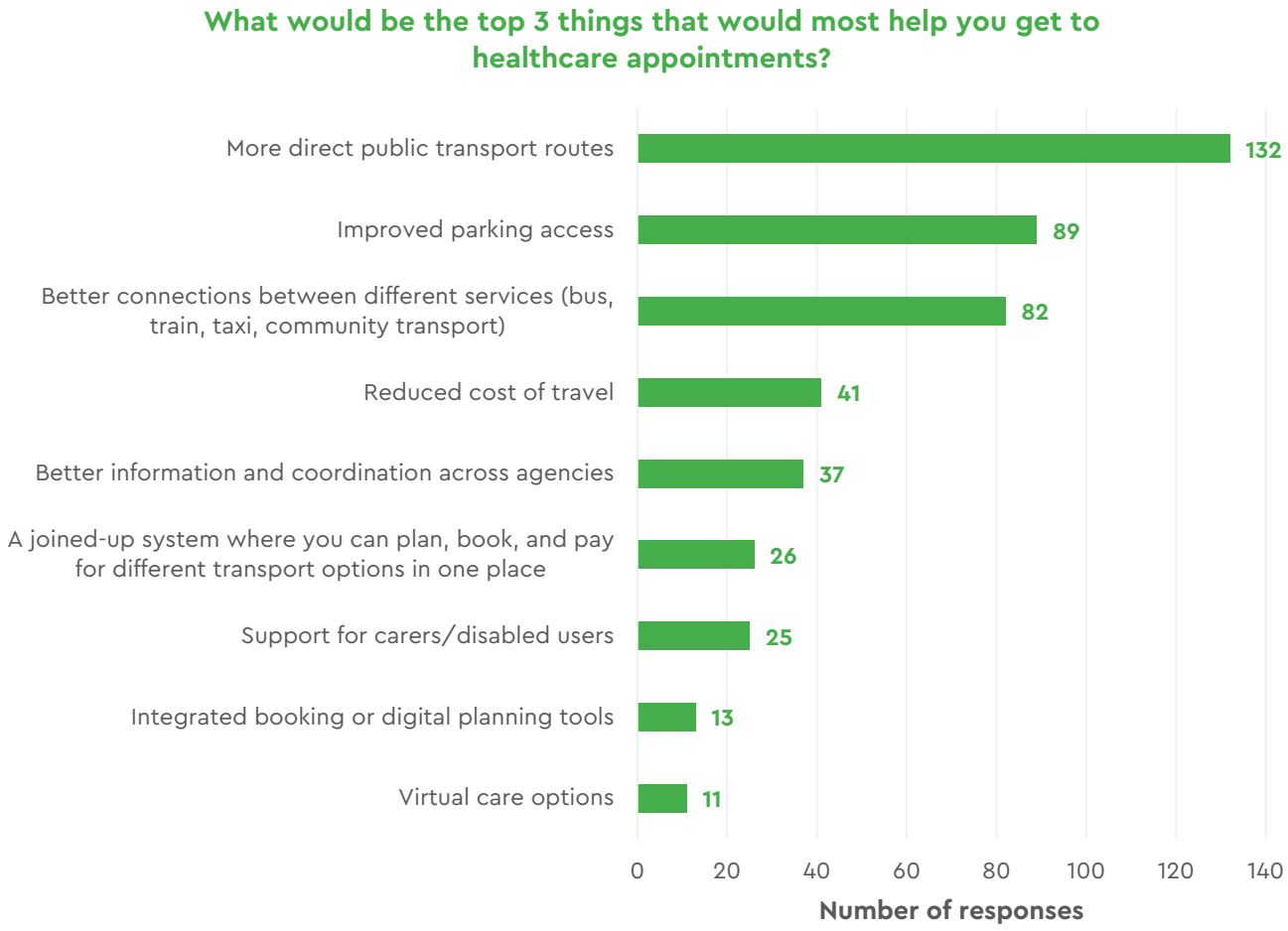


Figure 112: What would help access healthcare appointments

Responses show a mixed picture of support needs. The most common response was that no additional help is needed, suggesting many respondents are confident finding or booking travel independently. However, a substantial number identified specific improvements that would make this easier.

Paper timetables or printed leaflets were the most frequently requested form of support after this, highlighting the continued importance of non-digital options. Easier-to-use digital tools and websites were also widely requested, indicating that while many people use online tools, usability remains a barrier for some.

Smaller numbers of respondents said that phone helplines, in-person support at clinics or hubs, or advice from GPs and NHS staff would help. Community organisations were mentioned least often.

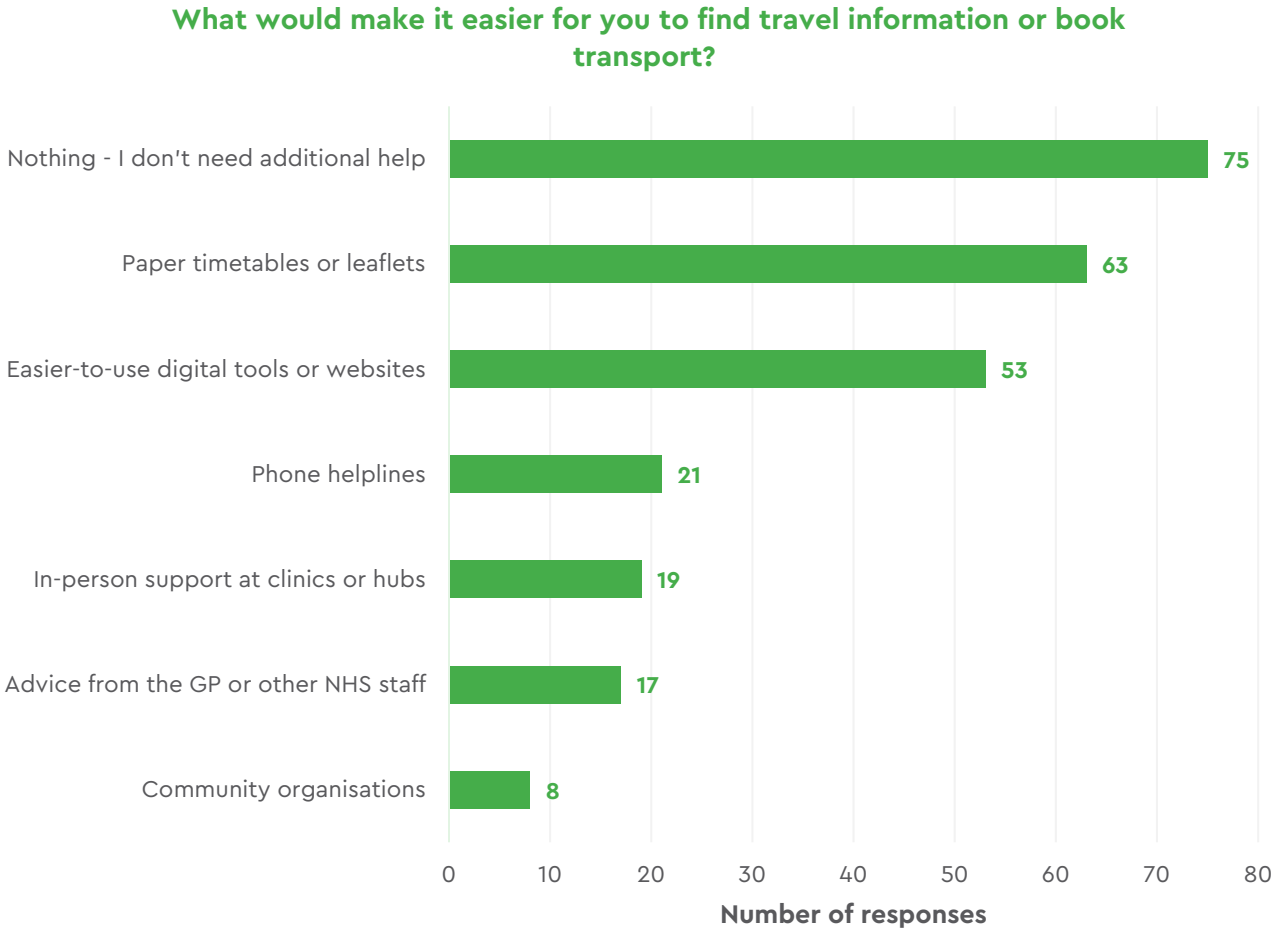


Figure 113: What would make it easier to find and book transport

Qualitative insights: Lived experience of travelling to healthcare

Primary and community care

Travelling to primary and community healthcare services was generally perceived as easier than accessing secondary or tertiary care across NHS Forth Valley. Many respondents described GP practices, pharmacies and dentists as being relatively close to home, particularly in more urban areas such as Falkirk, Stirling and Alloa.

> "Usually, I walk to the GP surgery or pharmacy."

However, despite this more positive overall picture, significant challenges remain for particular groups. Respondents with mobility issues, long-term conditions, or caring responsibilities reported ongoing difficulties reaching even local services.

> "Without access to a car & because access to public transport requires a long walk - which I am unable to do, I'd find it virtually impossible to attend a health care appointment."

Rurality and local service availability also affected access to primary care. Respondents in smaller towns and rural areas described fewer local services, limited appointment choice, and greater reliance on transport.

> "Dollar is simply not set up for healthcare access for anyone who cannot drive a car. Especially the elderly."

For some, appointment timing compounded these issues, particularly where public transport did not align with urgent or same-day appointments.

> "When the GP service does a phone appointment and then they decide they want to see you in 15 and you don't feel well enough to drive to the practice."

Secondary and tertiary care

Distance to healthcare

Distance to hospital-based care was a recurring theme in qualitative responses. Many respondents highlighted the challenges of travelling to Forth Valley Royal Hospital (FVRH), particularly from Clackmannanshire and more rural parts of Falkirk.

> "Trying to reach Forth Valley Royal Hospital from the Braes area"

For some patients, specialist appointments located outside the Health Board area added further complexity, often involving longer journeys and additional transport changes.

> "Travelling outside local health board area to access various appointments"

Respondents described how long travel distances increased fatigue, stress and costs, particularly for those attending repeated appointments or managing ongoing conditions.

Public transport

Public transport issues were one of the most frequently raised barriers to accessing healthcare. Respondents described services as indirect and infrequent. Infrequent services which often mean long wait times before or after appointments where a suitably timed bus is not available.

Indirect services and journey complexity

Many respondents reported needing to take multiple buses or trains to reach hospital appointments, increasing journey times and uncertainty.

> "Hospital appointments a lot more effort if using bus - 4x time due as bus doesn't take a direct route. Need to go via town centre and change."

Complex journeys were seen as particularly challenging for older people, those with disabilities, or people attending early morning appointments.

> "I suffer from social anxiety, changing buses and no direct routes can cause more stress and anxiety on top of anxiety already feeling going to appointment"

Infrequent or limited services

Infrequent services were commonly cited, particularly outside peak hours or in less urban areas.

> "Local bus service is poor. Only comes at most hourly, and never on a Sunday."

Respondents noted that return journeys were often more problematic, leading to long waits after appointments and additional fatigue.

Parking at major hospitals

Parking at Forth Valley Royal Hospital was a major concern raised by respondents. Difficulties finding a parking space were frequently described as stressful and time-consuming.

> "Parking at Forth Valley Royal Hospital is a nightmare for parking"

Several respondents reported building extra time into their journey solely to secure parking, adding to the overall burden of attending appointments.

> "Need to go about 30 minutes early and hope a space becomes available."

Concerns were also raised about the distance from parking areas to hospital entrances, particularly for those with mobility issues.

Community transport and taxis

Community transport and taxi services were often described as unreliable, unavailable, or expensive. Respondents noted difficulties booking services, limited capacity, and long notice periods.

> "Phoning transport is a nightmare; I wouldn't get transport to GPs or dentist."

The cost of taxis was highlighted as a significant barrier, particularly for those on low incomes or requiring frequent hospital visits.

> "We mostly have to get a taxi, though very rarely a friend takes us."

Some respondents reported being unsure what options were available, suggesting a lack of clear information about transport support.

Patient transport

Patient transport services were mentioned mainly in relation to difficulties accessing them. Respondents described being ineligible, refused transport, or struggling with inflexible pick-up times.

> "Very few patients are allowed hospital transport. Even with disability and health problems you are not allowed hospital transport."

Fixed pick-up times and long waits were reported as problematic, particularly for people with health conditions that made waiting difficult.

Accessibility

Accessibility issues cut across many responses and affected multiple modes of transport. Key issues raised included:

- Being unable to drive due to health conditions or disability
- Long distances to bus stops or stations

- Limited availability of wheelchair-accessible transport
- Inflexibility of patient and community transport services
- Difficulty accessing disabled parking at hospital sites

> "Limited vehicles with wheelchair access with Dial-a-Journey* and limited access to areas outwith Central Region"

* door-to-door transport and mobility service based in Stirling

Respondents highlighted how these barriers often combined, leaving them reliant on others for lifts or forced to miss appointments.

Additional impacts

Reliance on driving or lifts

A common impact of transport barriers was reliance on driving or lifts from friends and family. Many respondents stated they would be unable to attend appointments without access to a car.

> "If I didn't have someone to drive me to hospital appointments or admissions, I would have to get a very unreliable bus"

There was also concern about future ability to attend appointments as people age or if they become unable to drive.

> "Had to give up my car due to failing eyesight."

Time and financial impacts

Respondents described healthcare travel as time-consuming, often requiring time off work or a full day to attend short appointments.

> "Nearly 5 hours for a 17–20-mile journey there and back."

The financial burden of transport, particularly taxis, was also highlighted.

Missed or delayed appointments

Some respondents reported missing, delaying or cancelling appointments due to transport difficulties, cost, or lack of suitable options.

> "Often miss hospital appointments because it is too painful or nauseating to travel there comfortably."

Summary of insights for NHS Forth Valley

The transport challenges experienced by residents in NHS Forth Valley reflect a combination of service centralisation, uneven public transport provision and varying levels of car dependency across Falkirk and Clackmannanshire. While many people are able to access primary care locally with relatively short journeys, access to hospital-based services, particularly Forth Valley Royal Hospital (FVRH), presents more significant and persistent barriers. These challenges are most acutely felt by people without access to a private car, those with disabilities or long-term health conditions, older people, and carers.

- **Centralisation of acute healthcare at Forth Valley Royal Hospital**
  The centralisation of acute and specialist services at Forth Valley Royal Hospital is a defining feature of Transport to Health in NHS Forth Valley. While the site benefits from good strategic road access, it generates long and complex journeys for many residents, particularly those travelling from Clackmannanshire, the Hillfoots towns and the outer parts of Falkirk. Public transport journeys to FVRH are often indirect, require multiple stages and can exceed an hour, turning routine appointments into time-consuming and tiring experiences. This centralisation increases reliance on private cars and disadvantages those unable to drive.

- **Contrast between primary and secondary care access**
  Access to primary and community healthcare is generally more straightforward, especially in urban areas such as Falkirk, Alloa and Stirling, where GP practices, pharmacies and dentists are often within walking distance or a short bus journey. However, this more positive picture masks ongoing issues for people with mobility problems, those living in smaller towns or semi-rural areas, and those requiring urgent or same-day appointments. For these groups, even short journeys can become challenging where walking distances are too long, or public transport does not align with appointment times.

- **Public transport service limitations**
  Public transport service issues were among the most commonly cited barriers across qualitative responses. Indirect routes, infrequent services and poor alignment with appointment times, particularly early mornings, evenings and weekends, make public transport an unreliable option for hospital travel. Complex journeys involving multiple changes increase stress, uncertainty and fatigue, especially for older people, those with anxiety, or people managing ongoing health conditions. Return journeys were frequently described as particularly problematic, often involving long waits after appointments.

- **High reliance on private cars and lifts**
  Private car use dominates healthcare travel in NHS Forth Valley, reflecting both the geography of services and limitations in public transport. Many respondents stated they would be unable to attend hospital appointments without driving themselves or relying on lifts from family and friends. This reliance raises concerns about future access to healthcare as people age, experience declining health, or lose the ability to drive, highlighting a growing vulnerability among older populations.

- **Parking pressures at Forth Valley Royal Hospital**
  Parking at FVRH emerged as a significant and recurring issue. Respondents frequently described difficulty finding spaces, the need to arrive early to secure parking, and the stress associated with potentially missing appointments. For people with mobility issues, the distance between parking areas and hospital entrances further compounds the challenge, adding physical strain to already demanding journeys.

- **Community transport and taxi constraints**
  Community transport and taxi services were seen as important alternatives but are currently constrained by limited availability, booking difficulties and cost. Respondents described services as unreliable, requiring long notice periods or being unavailable when needed. Taxi costs were highlighted as a particular burden for those on low incomes or attending frequent appointments, making these options unsustainable for regular healthcare travel.

- **Patient transport capacity and eligibility**
  Patient transport services were commonly mentioned in relation to ineligibility or refusal, rather than positive experiences. Fixed pick-up times, long waits and limited capacity were seen as poorly suited to people with complex health needs. Where patient transport was unavailable, respondents were often forced to rely on unsuitable alternatives, such as public transport or expensive taxis, or to delay or miss appointments altogether.

- **Accessibility and mobility barriers**
  Accessibility issues cut across all modes of transport. Being unable to drive, long distances to bus stops, limited wheelchair-accessible vehicles, inflexible transport services and difficulty accessing disabled parking were all highlighted. These barriers frequently interact, leaving disabled people and those with long-term conditions disproportionately affected and more likely to rely on others for transport or to experience missed care.

- **Time, cost and health impacts**
  Although transport costs were not the primary barrier for most respondents, they had a substantial impact on a minority, particularly those reliant on taxis or travelling longer distances for hospital care. Time costs were more widely felt, with many respondents describing healthcare travel as taking several hours or requiring time off work for relatively short appointments. Long and stressful journeys were also reported to worsen symptoms for some patients, particularly those experiencing pain, fatigue or nausea.

Stakeholder engagement

Engagement with partner organisations identified widespread gaps in transport data, limited coordination between services, and ongoing funding pressures.

Several areas report weak governance arrangements and a lack of dedicated responsibility for transport planning. Rural connectivity remains a persistent issue, particularly for NHS Fife and East Lothian, with older and disabled people disproportionately affected by access and affordability problems.

While NHS Lothian has more established transport infrastructure and digital tools, reduced fleet capacity, sustainability pressures and limited alignment with Local Authorities were noted.

The Scottish Ambulance Service was identified as a key stakeholder in relation to non-emergency patient transport. Engagement was sought during the study period; however, it was not possible to secure input within the project timeframe.

Table 3: Findings overview

Group Engaged	Issues identified by group	Key headlines
NHS Assure	Major gaps in patient/staff travel data; missed appointment links; early-stage coordination	→ Data gaps → Fragmentation → Limited coordination
Falkirk Council	Bus-focused support; no community transport links; no health focus in strategy	→ Funding pressure → Poor integration → Limited data
NHS Fife	No dedicated transport lead; poor rural connectivity; developing travel strategy	→ Governance gaps → Rural access issues → Weak data
East Lothian HSCP	Older/disabled access challenges; high costs; poor cross-county links	→ Access challenges → Affordability → Service relocation impacts
NHS Lothian	Central transport hub; reduced fleet; weak LA coordination; good digital tools underused	→ Silo working → Sustainability pressures → Misinterpretation of data

Scottish Borders popup session

A total of 65 insights were gathered from 51 participants, including patients, visitors and staff, highlighting a wide range of experiences relating to travel to and from the Borders General Hospital in Melrose, Scottish Borders. Staff input was included in this session to complement patient perspectives, as hospital staff are frequent users of local transport and often reside within the hospital's catchment area, making them potential patients in the future.

Including staff also helped identify areas where patient and staff experiences overlap, and where improvements to transport provision could benefit both groups. Staff perspectives were not collected elsewhere in the study, as the primary focus for other engagement activities was on patient and community experiences.

What works well?

Many respondents value the availability of free or discounted travel, particularly concessionary card holders and railcards, which enable affordable access across Scotland. Those living locally or with access to a car generally report few issues, citing reliable journeys, good traffic flow in normal conditions, and positive experiences with patient transport services. Some participants highlighted the reliability of local bus services and welcomed existing overflow parking arrangements such as 'park and walk' options.

What could be better?

Significant challenges were raised around parking capacity, particularly at peak times, with overflow parking being distant and difficult for those with mobility issues. Staff working late shifts are especially affected by limited bus timetables, with the last bus departing before many shifts end. Public transport issues include long journey times due to connecting buses, cancelled routes, high costs for staff, poor waiting conditions in bad weather, and overcrowding. Concerns were also raised about misuse of disabled parking spaces and the impact of overflow parking on the surrounding village.

Opportunities for improvement

Improving local bus services emerged as the most consistent theme. Suggested actions include more direct routes from smaller towns and villages, extended operating hours, better communication of timetable changes, and more responsive engagement from the bus operator. Participants also proposed park-and-ride schemes, expansion or redesign of parking facilities, and improved management of disabled and staff parking. There is a clear need for more reliable community and voluntary transport options, particularly for elderly patients and those whose conditions are deteriorating.

Community transport operators

Interviews with community transport providers highlight their essential role in enabling access to healthcare in rural and semi-rural areas, alongside significant capacity and system-level constraints.

Borders Wheels one of the primary community transport providers across the Scottish Borders, covering a large rural area. Around half of all bookings are healthcare-related, reflecting limited local services and the need for long-distance travel to Edinburgh and Glasgow. Similar patterns are seen in Lothian, where community transport supports access to specialist hospital care over long distances.

Demand for healthcare transport is rising, often at short notice, particularly when patient transport services are unavailable. Limited public transport, especially at weekends, further restricts access, with some rural journeys to hospital taking several hours one way.

Providers identified common structural challenges, including digital exclusion, funding models that do not reflect true costs, fragmented coordination between the NHS, Local Authorities and transport providers, and constraints linked to insurance, licensing and unclear legislation.

Despite these pressures, community transport can offer strong value for money. In Lothian, a council taxi contract costing £98,000 annually was replaced by a community transport service costing £35,000, saving over £60,000 per year. However, providers stressed that clearer coordination, fairer funding and better integration with statutory services are essential if community transport is to meet growing healthcare demand.

Case study: Clackmannanshire

Clackmannanshire Council, in partnership with NHS Forth Valley and regional transport agencies, launched a pilot patient transport service aimed at improving access to healthcare at Falkirk Community Hospital (FCH). The initiative runs from October 2025 through March 2026, operating on Wednesdays.

The pilot seeks to improve hospital access for residents in FK10–FK14, particularly those facing cost, distance, or mobility challenges, while collecting feedback and usage data to inform potential future adjustments to the service.

The pilot is financed through a People and Place grant supported by the Scottish Government and administered by SEStran, reflecting a collaborative effort across health, transport planning, and local government bodies.

Service Model

- **Direct Door-to-Door Bus Service:** Patients are picked up from home and transported to FCH, then returned after appointments.
- **Booking System:** Seats are reserved via Order of Malta Dial-a-Journey by phone; the provider offers door-to-door assistance.
- **Operating Hours:** 08:30–17:30 on Wednesdays.
- **Affordability:** A £2 single fare per passenger, providing highly subsidised access.
- **Accessibility:** Mobility aids and disabled users are accommodated, and one carer may assist patients from the vehicle to their hospital department.

While the initiative is still in its pilot phase and overall usage is limited, it has the potential to support residents with restricted transport options, provide early insights into patient transport needs in semi-rural areas, and inform longer-term planning, including potential route or schedule adjustments if demand increases.

Problems, opportunities, issues and constraints (POIC)

Introduction

This section synthesises the quantitative evidence, travel-time modelling, socio-economic analysis, public consultation findings and emerging stakeholder insight to identify the key Problems, Opportunities, Issues and Constraints affecting Transport to Health across the SEStran region.

The POIC assessment provides a bridge between the descriptive evidence presented earlier in the report and the development of Transport Planning Objectives in the next phase. It organises the evidence into a clear structure that distinguishes between:

- **Problems:** current negative conditions that prevent the transport system from meeting user needs
- **Opportunities:** positive potential for improvement or innovation
- **Issues:** factors that require further consideration, analysis or resolution
- **Constraints:** fixed limitations (fiscal, legislative, geographic, operational) that shape what can realistically be taken forward

The assessment begins with a regional perspective, recognising the shared patterns that affect all four Health Board areas. It then identifies Board-specific variations, reflecting the distinct geography, transport provision and healthcare configuration within NHS Lothian, NHS Fife, NHS Borders and NHS Forth Valley.

This structured understanding of existing barriers and future potential will inform the development of Transport Planning Objectives and support the generation of a longlist of options in subsequent stages.

Problems

Problem 1 **Public transport journeys to hospital care are long, indirect and significantly slower than car travel**

Travel-time modelling shows that public transport journeys to hospital are typically two to four times longer than equivalent car journeys. Many hospital trips require multiple interchanges, long walking distances and extended waiting times, particularly for people travelling from rural areas, small towns and outer urban communities. These journey characteristics create stress, increase fatigue and reduce the practicality of attending appointments by public transport.

Problem 2 **People without access to a car face disproportionate barriers to healthcare access**

Households without access to a private car are heavily concentrated in more deprived areas, where public transport options are often limited or indirect. These residents are more exposed to long journey times, higher cumulative costs and unreliable services. This reinforces existing health and social inequalities and increases reliance on informal support such as lifts from family or friends.

Problem 3 **Transport barriers contribute to missed or delayed healthcare appointments**

Transport barriers contribute to missed or delayed healthcare appointments, particularly for outpatient and same-day care. Evidence from the public consultation shows that between one third and almost half of respondents across the region have experienced transport-related non-attendance, with the highest rates reported in NHS Fife. Delayed services, infrequent timetables, parking pressures and accessibility barriers are recurring contributing factors.

Problem 4 **Accessibility barriers limit the suitability of public transport for some users**

Disabled people, older adults and those with long-term health conditions face additional barriers, including long walks to stops, inaccessible infrastructure, difficulty transferring between services and limited availability of wheelchair-accessible taxis. These barriers make public transport unsuitable for some users, even where services exist.

Opportunities

Opportunity 1 **Better alignment between healthcare planning and transport provision**

There is scope to systematically align appointment scheduling, clinic locations and service patterns with existing transport networks. Improved coordination between Health Boards, transport authorities and operators could reduce journey complexity and improve reliability for patients.

Opportunity 2 **Greater use of local and community-based healthcare provision**

Expanding the use of community hospitals, local clinics and outreach services for appropriate outpatient activity could reduce the need for long-distance travel to acute hospitals, particularly for routine follow-up appointments.

Opportunity 3 **Improved integration of transport information and booking**

Clearer, more consistent information on travel options, eligibility for support and reimbursement, and available community transport could reduce uncertainty and stress for patients. There is potential to integrate transport information more effectively into appointment communications and digital platforms.

Opportunity 4 **Strengthening community and demand-responsive transport**

Community transport and demand-responsive services already play a critical role in filling gaps where public transport is limited. With better coordination, visibility and support, these services could be scaled or targeted to support healthcare access more effectively, particularly in rural and semi-rural areas.

Opportunity 5 Contributing to wider policy goals

Improving Transport to Health supports the Scottish Government's key priorities, as highlighted by the First Minister. This includes reducing health inequalities, enhancing access to healthcare, strengthening local and community-based services, and promoting sustainable transport to help achieve net-zero emissions. Targeted improvements in patient access and journey reliability can therefore advance both national objectives and regional Health Board goals for equitable, efficient, and sustainable service delivery.

Opportunity 6 Digital delivery

For selected appointment types, such as routine follow-ups or advisory consultations, virtual or hybrid delivery could reduce the need for some in-person journeys. Offering an online consultation option at the point of booking, where clinically appropriate, may help mitigate complex or lengthy travel, particularly in rural areas.

This approach would need to balance clinical suitability and patient preference, while avoiding digital exclusion. Used selectively, virtual appointments could complement wider Transport to Health improvements by reducing avoidable journeys without replacing in-person access.

Issues

Issue 1

Hospital location, appointment timing and transport service patterns are misaligned, increasing journey complexity and non-attendance risk

Evidence from travel-time modelling and the public consultation shows that hospital appointments are frequently scheduled at time when direct public transport services are limited, infrequent or unavailable. Many respondents described journeys requiring multiple interchanges, early arrival or long waiting times due to hourly services, and uncertainty around return travel. This misalignment increases journey complexity, raises the risk of lateness or cancellation, and disproportionately affects people attending regular outpatient appointments, those without access to a car and people with mobility or health-related constraints.

Issue 2

Information about transport options and support is fragmented and inconsistent

Patients often rely on informal sources such as online maps or personal knowledge to plan healthcare journeys. Information on community transport, eligibility for patient transport or reimbursement, and accessible options is not consistently provided or easy to understand. This creates uncertainty, particularly for first-time or infrequent hospital users. This reflects a wider absence of a shared, system-wide approach to Transport to Health information and responsibility.

Issue 3

The role of community transport is critical but not fully integrated into system planning

Community transport providers are filling important gaps, yet their role is often reactive, under-recognised and inconsistently linked to NHS transport planning. Further consideration is needed on how these services can be better coordinated, funded and integrated alongside public transport and non-emergency patient transport.

Issue 4

Parking pressures at major hospitals continue to influence travel behaviour

Limited and unreliable parking availability at acute hospitals contributes to stress, late arrivals and continued car dependency. While parking is not strictly a transport service issue, it strongly shapes mode choice and patient experience and requires consideration alongside wider Transport to Health measures.

Constraints

Constraint 1 **Geographic dispersion and rurality**

The region's settlement pattern includes extensive rural and semi-rural areas where low population density limits the viability of frequent fixed-route public transport services. These geographic realities constrain the extent to which conventional services can meet all healthcare travel needs.

Constraint 2 **Centralisation of acute and specialist healthcare services**

The concentration of secondary and tertiary care in a limited number of hospital sites is driven by clinical and operational requirements. While necessary, this centralisation creates unavoidable longer travel distances for some patients.

Constraint 3 **Funding and resource limitations**

Public transport services, community transport and NHS patient transport all operate within constrained funding environments. This limits the scope for rapid or large-scale service expansion without clear evidence of benefit and partnership funding arrangements.

Constraint 4 **Legislative and operational boundaries**

Transport planning, service delivery and healthcare commissioning sit across multiple organisations with different statutory responsibilities, funding cycles and priorities. These institutional boundaries constrain how quickly and seamlessly change can be implemented.

Transport planning objectives

The Transport Planning Objectives set out in Table 4 (overleaf) translate the evidence presented in this Case for Change into a focused set of outcomes to be achieved through future intervention. They are derived directly from the Problems, Opportunities, Issues and Constraints identified across the SEStran region and reflect both shared regional challenges and variation between Health Board areas.

These objectives will provide the framework for option generation, sifting and appraisal in subsequent stages of developing a Regional Transport to Health Strategy.

Table 4: High-level Transport Planning Objectives

Ref	Transport Planning Objective	Specific	Measurable	Achievable	Realistic	Time Bound
TPO1	Reduce journey time, interchange complexity and uncertainty for secondary and tertiary healthcare trips	Reduce public transport journey times, number of interchanges and excess waiting time for access to major hospital sites across the SEStran region.	Average public transport journey times to key hospital sites; proportion of journeys requiring two or more interchanges; reliability metrics derived from accessibility modelling and operator data.	Delivery dependent on partnership working with operators and local authorities. Achievability to be tested through option development and appraisal.	Directly linked to identified problems of long, indirect hospital journeys and transport-related non-attendance. Supports NTS2 priority on reducing inequalities.	Quantified improvement ranges and delivery timeframes to be defined at options appraisal and strategy stage.
TPO2	Improve reliable and affordable access to healthcare for people without access to a private car	Improve public, community and supported transport connectivity for people and areas without access to a private car.	Proportion of population within defined public transport travel time thresholds to key hospital sites; reduction in self-reported cost barriers in follow-up surveys.	Dependent on funding, service integration and partnership arrangements. Feasibility to be explored during appraisal.	Addresses documented inequities affecting deprived areas, rural communities and non-drivers. Aligns with Fairer Scotland Duty and NTS2 reducing inequalities objective.	Baseline confirmation required before setting percentage improvement targets in subsequent strategy phases.
TPO3	Improve the accessibility and usability of transport for disabled people, older people and those with long-term conditions	Reduce physical, sensory and cognitive barriers associated with healthcare journeys, including walking distance, step-free access and vehicle accessibility.	Increase in accessible journey options; reduction in reported accessibility barriers; availability of wheelchair-accessible or supported transport services.	Influenced by infrastructure investment cycles, fleet renewal and service design. Detailed feasibility assessment required at options stage.	Supports Equality Act 2010 obligations and identified accessibility challenges in the POIC analysis.	Improvement benchmarks to be determined following accessibility audits and further stakeholder engagement.

Ref	Transport Planning Objective	Specific	Measurable	Achievable	Realistic	Time Bound
TPO4	Reduce transport-related missed and delayed healthcare appointments	Improve alignment between appointment scheduling and transport service provision and reduce transport-related non-attendance.	Reduction in self-reported transport-related missed or delayed appointments; NHS-recorded non-attendance attributed to transport factors where data allows.	Achievable through coordinated service planning and reliability improvements, subject to data availability and institutional collaboration.	Responds directly to survey findings showing significant transport-related non-attendance across the region. Supports NHS efficiency and patient outcomes.	Reduction targets to be defined once improved data linkage and baseline confirmation are established.
TPO5	Improve clarity, coordination and accessibility of transport information and support	Integrate transport information within healthcare communications and improve awareness of community transport, reimbursement and eligibility processes.	Increased inclusion of transport information in appointment communications; user-reported ease of journey planning; uptake of coordinated information platforms.	Dependent on NHS digital system integration and inter-agency coordination. Practical constraints to be examined at implementation stage.	Aligns with Transport to Health Delivery Plan commitments regarding improved coordination and information provision.	Phased implementation expected alongside digital system updates; detailed timeframes to be defined in delivery plan.
TPO6	Integrate and enhance community and demand-responsive transport to support healthcare access	Improve formal coordination between NHS Boards and community or demand-responsive transport providers and expand coverage where fixed-route services are not viable.	Increased coordinated bookings; reduction in unmet trip requests; expanded geographic coverage of community or demand-responsive transport services supporting healthcare trips.	Subject to funding models, governance arrangements and operator capacity; to be assessed through detailed option appraisal.	Supports duties under the Transport (Scotland) Act 2019 and addresses identified gaps in rural and semi-rural connectivity.	Improvement targets and service coverage benchmarks to be defined following appraisal and partnership agreements.
TPO7	Reduce unnecessary car dependency and improve system efficiency in healthcare travel	Encourage modal shift for appropriate healthcare trips, reduce parking pressure at major hospital sites and support more efficient use of transport resources.	Changes in mode share for healthcare journeys; reduction in parking demand at key hospital sites; estimated reduction in transport-related emissions where feasible.	Long-term behavioural and system change requiring coordinated investment and policy alignment; feasibility to be examined through appraisal.	Supports NTS2 climate and health priorities, Regional Bus Strategy objectives and wider net zero commitments.	Mode shift and efficiency benchmarks to be established in the subsequent strategy phase, aligned with regional carbon and transport targets.

Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA)

Summary

This Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) is undertaken at the Case for Change stage of SEStran's development of a Regional Transport to Health Strategy. The assessment responds to the Scottish Transport Appraisal Guidance (STAG) requirement to consider equality and socio-economic impacts from the earliest stage of policy development.

STAG requires that EqIA (and other impact assessments) align with each appraisal stage (Case for Change, options, detailed appraisal), but it does not prescribe a specific EqIA document format or template.

This EqIA summarises the equality evidence and baseline, assesses the likely impacts on protected groups and records mitigation options. The summary below sets out the key findings; the full assessment is provided in the accompanying Appendix document and will inform the options available at the detailed appraisal and consultation stage of the Strategy.

Key findings:

The protected groups most affected include:

- Disabled people and those with long-term health conditions
- Older adults (particularly those aged 75+)
- People without access to a private car
- Carers (predominantly women)
- People living in rural and remote areas
- People living in areas of high deprivation
- Pregnant people

Primary equality concerns identified:

1. **Accessibility barriers:** long or complex public transport journeys to hospital care compound accessibility barriers for disabled people and those with mobility impairments, creating disproportionate disadvantage

2. **Gender dimension to care:** 73% of survey respondents providing care when travelling to healthcare appointments are women, reflecting broader patterns of unpaid care responsibility that constrain travel flexibility and compound disadvantage

3. **Spatial deprivation overlap:** communities with highest deprivation show lowest car access and longest public transport journey times to hospital care, compounding health inequalities

4. **Age-related vulnerability:** older adults (75+) experience multiple intersecting barriers including reduced driving confidence, accessibility challenges, lower digital confidence, and sensitivity to service frequency or reliability changes

5. **Rurality and remoteness:** remote rural residents face public transport journey times to hospitals of four to six times longer than urban residents, with significantly reduced service alternatives

6. **Cost accumulation:** while not universally reported as a barrier, cost of transport can be significant for people attending frequent appointments (oncology, dialysis, physiotherapy) and impacts disproportionately on low-income households

Main aspects of the Case for Change that address these concerns:

- → Explicit recognition in Transport Planning Objectives (TPO2, TPO3, TPO5) of accessibility, car-free access and support for disabled and older people
- → Engagement with disabled people's perspectives
- → Gender-disaggregated data on carers captured in survey
- → Distributed analysis by deprivation decile and urban-rural classification
- → Community transport operators explicitly engaged and their role recognised
- → Cross-sectoral partnership approach involving NHS, local authorities and transport providers

The full Equality Impact Assessment, including the detailed assessment against each protected characteristic, cross-cutting equality issues, evidence gaps and recommendations for further work, is provided in the accompanying Appendix document.

Next steps

This Case for Change establishes a robust, region-wide evidence base for Transport to Health across the SEStran area. The Problems, Opportunities, Issues and Constraints identified in this report will inform the next stage of work to develop a Regional Transport to Health Strategy.

The next phase will focus on:

- → **Refining and agreeing the Transport Planning Objectives with partners**
- → **Developing a longlist of potential interventions aligned to these objectives**
- → **Undertaking initial sifting to identify feasible and impactful options**
- → **Considering distributional and equality impacts alongside deliverability and value for money**

This work will be taken forward collaboratively with NHS Boards, local authorities, transport operators, community transport providers and third-sector partners. Ongoing engagement and further qualitative insight, including planned focus groups and pop-up engagement, will continue to inform the development and refinement of options.

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SESTRANSIT

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 SEStran is working with partner authorities, the Edinburgh and South East Scotland City Region team, Transport Scotland and Network Rail to develop a Programme Strategic Business Case (SBC) for an integrated regional transport network, which has the working title of SEStransit.

1.2 The SBC will take forward elements of the Regional Transport Strategy Delivery Plan (RTSDP) and recommendations from Transport Scotland's 2nd Strategic Transport Projects Review, principally Recommendation 12, for the South East of Scotland Mass Transit System.

1.3 The purpose of this paper is to summarise the key findings from the work completed to date, which is referred to as Stage One of the SBC, and outline plans for completion of the SBC.

2. PROJECT UPDATE (update to end of April)

2.1 Stage One will see the completion of the following foundational elements of the core programme-wide business case:

- **Strategic Context** – setting out the socio-economic context, establishing patterns of demand, focusing on identifying cross-boundary connectivity gaps across the South East of Scotland.
- **Case for Investment** – Including connectivity analysis and identification of key problems and opportunities.
- Identification of **Transport Planning Objectives** (TPOs)
- Agreement on a shared **Vision and Governance** among the SEStran partners.

2.2 The summary of findings from Stage One are:

Commuting Patterns:

- ~75% of public transport commuting in the region involves an origin or destination in Edinburgh (of which, around 30% are from other 7 SEStran LAs)
- Public transport commuting in the SEStran area is underrepresented between the SEStran 7
- Of inter SEStran 7 commuting, 94% is by car, 4% by PT

Growth:

- Population projections suggest that the SEStran region is expected to increase by 10% by 2047 (distribution of this varies widely across the region)

- Skills profile required to feed projected GVA growth within the region of 1.5% per annum (2027-2034)

Enhancing Connectivity:

- Some of the areas poorest served by public transport are also where the job growth is expected to arise (SBC, Forth Valley, West Lothian, Fife)
- Anything with a Public Transport:Car travel time ratio of 1-1.5 has a mode share of between 20-50%
- Beyond 1.5-2.0 the mode share drops sharply!

2.3 Agreement of Transport Planning Objectives (TPOs) is a key output from this stage and will enable any future work to identify the infrastructure options which respond directly to the problems evidenced.

2.4 It is anticipated that the Case for Investment report, which will conclude the Stage One work, was circulated to the Steering Group for comment in mid-May and will be presented to the Programme Board following review by SEStran partner authorities.

3. COMPLETION OF THE PROGRAMME SBC

3.1 Based on the evidence presented in the Case for Investment, the completed SBC must:

- Ensure ongoing buy-in from SEStran partners by demonstrating regional benefits and aligning with the system that supports current and future regional ambitions.
- Align with partner Local Authority reporting and decision-making requirements in a programmatic approach.
- Use **appropriate transport models** to identify changing transport needs and identify the distribution of social benefits to demonstrate equitable economic growth.
- Comply with **HM Treasury Green Book** and **Business Case Guidance** across the remaining three cases (Commercial, Financial, Management).

3.2 Network option short-listing will seek to identify, through a process of preliminary appraisal, the suite of options which address these problems, drawing from a comprehensive regional long-list, aligned with the RTSDP and including, but not limited to:

- Tram extensions (North–South, East, BioQuarter/Dalkeith corridors).
- Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) corridors aligned to congested radial/orbital routes.
- Rail enhancements.
- Mobility hubs & integrated ticketing concepts (aligned with RTS).
- First/last-mile connections.
- Phasing options (Quick wins, medium-term, long-term).

3.3 A Network Development Options Report will be produced detailing how connectivity challenges and emerging patterns of demand identified in the Case for Investment are met by a suitable suite of short-listed options. From the emerging Case for Investment, it is likely that these Network options will fall into distinct transport 'niches', likely involving:

- Connectivity between SEStran partner authorities (excluding Edinburgh).
- Connectivity within the Edinburgh 'metro' area, representing the near continuous present and planned urban extent in Edinburgh and the Lothians (say 15km).
- Regional connectivity to the Edinburgh 'metro area'.

These key SEStransit functions would integrate with connections to neighbouring authorities and to key national and international arrival/departure points.

3.4 The completion of the network development and preliminary appraisal is a crucial gateway point. At the conclusion of this stage a reasonable and potentially deliverable set of options will be identified and mapped, with a notionally complete network. The following, detailed appraisal and modelling stage will quantify benefits and refine options, based on strategic transportation modelling.

3.5 A key interdependency of the detailed appraisal is the availability of a suitable transport model, with which to test options. The models can be used to represent tram/BRT priority, interchanges, service patterns and integrated ticketing. As such an early task will be to establish the appraisal methodology, key indicators and model assumptions, including:

- Develop and agree assumptions including appraisal period, discounting and optimism bias.
- Agree the Reference Case and define the number of scenarios to be tested.
- Agree the number and detail of network options to be appraised.
- Define a set of sensitivity tests based around risk and uncertainty.

At this stage several options are available, but the most suitable model has not been determined.

3.6 A Stakeholder Engagement Plan, in collaboration with SEStran and regional partners, will be produced outlining the key elements of the Programme SBC that we will be engaging on. The purpose of this task is therefore to:

- Raise awareness among the general public and harness support for the proposed scheme.
- Gauge buy in from a range of key stakeholders.
- Feed into the overall assessment of public acceptability within the strategic business case.

3.7 The programme-wide SBC must demonstrate that all statutory considerations have been met and that opportunities for SEStransit to enhance the environment and progress equality aspirations are fully explored.

3.8 Finally, Commercial, Financial and Management cases would be produced outlining high-level cost estimate ranges for both capital (CAPEX) and operational (OPEX) elements of the programme, applying optimism bias, risk and uncertainty ranges to those estimations.

4 FUNDING PROPOSALS

4.1 We are currently determining the costs to complete the SBC, which has a target completion date of late Spring 2027. The initial estimate is £500,000 which would cover the tasks outlined in the previous section.

4.2 Transport Scotland has indicated that it is supportive of SEStransit and is confident of providing additional funding towards the completion of the SBC. This is likely to come via the Bus Infrastructure Fund 2026/27. However, it is unlikely that funding from Transport Scotland will cover the remaining costs in their entirety.

4.3 Through the Local Growth Fund, the RTSDP has been allocated capital funding in principle over the next three years. This funding has yet to be confirmed.

4.4 Subject to the level of funding received from Transport Scotland and the Local Growth Fund, all local authorities will be required to contribute a portion of the balance. The total amount required and the basis of apportionment across partners have both still to be agreed (e.g. population, area etc). It is possible that these contributions may be ‘in kind’, but this has yet to be agreed.

5 FUTURE GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE

5.1 As we move into the second phase of the SBC, SEStran will take on a greater project management role. The Consultants will be managed by SEStran and, to supplement the weekly Working Group meetings, formal monthly progress meetings will be established to cover programme, budgets and the risk strategy

5.2 A Programme Board has been formed, consisting of senior officials (e.g. Head of Service) from the local authority partners, and Transport Scotland. The main remit of the Board is to:

- Approve the output from Stage One of the SEStransit Programme Level Strategic Business Case (SBC) to be completed by the end of June 2026.
- Approve the scope for completing the Programme Level SBC.
- Confirm the ongoing support of their respective organisation as the programme develops, by ensuring senior officer representation and elected members' buy in.
- Make applications (or joint applications where appropriate) for external funding to assist the project, with SEStran taking the co-ordination lead.
- Approve the Programme Level SBC.

5.3 The first Programme Board meeting was held on 29th April, and all partners confirmed their support for SEStransit. It was also agreed to invite representatives from Scotland's Railways and ESES CRD to join the Board in an advisory capacity, subject to agreement from Clackmannanshire and Falkirk Councils, which were not represented at the meeting.

5.4 In addition to the Programme Board, it is proposed that the Steering Group Meetings continue and the Management Team continues to provide regular updates to CRD Directors, the CRD Transport Appraisal Board and the SEStran Partnership Board.

6 RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 It is recommended that the Partnership Board notes progress of the SEStransit Programme, and that partner local authorities will be required to make a financial contribution to ensure that the Programme continues to the end of the current financial year.

Stuart Turnbull
Consultant
12 June 2026

Appendix: 3_1 Progress Update

Policy Implications	The implementation of the SEStran RTSDP project, as described in the Project Initiation Document, may influence future policy, especially concerning regional transport governance, prioritisation of mass transit, and the integration of new corridors and strategic sites. As the business case for STPR2 recommendation 12 develops, further policy considerations regarding cross-boundary travel and network integration may emerge
Financial Implications	A grant of £250,000 from the Bus Infrastructure Fund has been secured to support the review and development of the Strategic Business Case, which must be utilised by March 2026. Additional financial requirements will depend on the outcomes of technical work and subsequent programme development as outlined in the Project Initiation Document
Equalities Implications	The project will undergo assessment against equality criteria throughout the appraisal and business case process. The Project Initiation Document methodology ensures that inclusivity and access for all users are considered and that any equality impacts are identified and addressed as the project advances
Climate Change Implications	Climate change impacts will be evaluated as part of the project's appraisal process, in line with the Project Initiation Document. This includes assessing how the proposed mass transit system and related interventions will contribute to climate targets, such as reducing carbon emissions and enhancing sustainability across the region

SESTRANSIT

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 SEStran is working with partner authorities, the Edinburgh and South East Scotland City Region team, Transport Scotland and Network Rail to develop a Programme Strategic Business Case (SBC) for an integrated regional transport network, which has the working title of SEStransit.

1.2 The SBC will take forward elements of the Regional Transport Strategy Delivery Plan (RTSDP) and recommendations from Transport Scotland's 2nd Strategic Transport Projects Review, principally Recommendation 12, for the South East of Scotland Mass Transit System.

1.3 The purpose of this paper is to summarise the key findings from the work completed to date, which is referred to as Stage One of the SBC, and outline plans for completion of the SBC.

2. PROJECT UPDATE (update to end of May) – AGENDA ITEM 3

2.1 Stage One will see the completion of the following foundational elements of the core programme-wide business case:

- Strategic Context – setting out the socio-economic context, establishing patterns of demand, focusing on identifying cross-boundary connectivity gaps across the South East of Scotland.
- Case for Investment – Including connectivity analysis and identification of key problems and opportunities.
- Identification of Transport Planning Objectives (TPOs)
- Agreement on a shared Vision and Governance among the SEStran partners.

2.2 The summary of findings from Stage One are:

Commuting Patterns:

- ~75% of public transport commuting in the region involves an origin or destination in Edinburgh (of which, around 30% are from other 7 SEStran LAs)
- Public transport commuting in SEStran, is underrepresented between the SEStran 7
- Of inter SEStran 7 commuting, 94% is by car, 4% by PT

Growth:

- Population projections suggest that the SEStran region is expected to increase by 10% by 2047 (distribution of this varies widely across the region)

- Skills profile required to feed projected GVA growth within the region of 1.5% per annum (2027-2034)

Enhancing Connectivity:

- Some of the areas poorest served by public transport are also where the job growth is expected to arise (SBC, Forth Valley, West Lothian, Fife)
- Anything with a Public Transport:Car travel time ratio of 1-1.5 has a mode share of between 20-50%
- Beyond 1.5-2.0 the mode share drops sharply!

2.3 Agreement of Transport Planning Objectives (TPOs) is a key output from this stage and will enable any future work to identify the infrastructure options which respond directly to the problems evidenced. The draft TPOs are as follows:

Ref.	SEStransit Objective
TPO1	Provide a step-change in the quality of public transport, so that it positively influences development patterns in the region and drives the long-term spatial strategy
TPO2	Address inequality of opportunity across the region by enabling access to a range of employment education and training opportunities
TPO3	Provide emerging economic growth areas with access to a supply of appropriately skilled labour.
TPO4	Improve cross-boundary public transport connectivity between larger settlements within and beyond our region.
TPO5	Reduce journey times, improve journey time reliability and increase capacity for travel by public transport to, and on, key radial corridors within Edinburgh and the functional urban area[1]
TPO6	Improve the competitiveness of public transport for orbital movements around Edinburgh and the functional urban area.

2.4 STAG is not prescriptive on the need for, or formulation of, a vision. However, there are eight local authority partners within the SEStran region and, as such, the vision stands as a unifying element across a diverse range of transport needs and local priorities. The draft vision for SEStransit has been arrived at following stakeholder discussions thought the development of the scope of this study. The draft Vision for SEStransit is:

"South East Scotland's vision is an integrated, accessible and affordable transformative public transport system that delivers both seamless connectivity and supports inclusive economic growth across the South East Scotland."

2.4 It is anticipated that the Case for Investment report, which will conclude the Stage One work, will be circulated to the Steering Group for comment by mid-June and presented to the Programme Board following review by SEStran partner authorities.

3. NEXT STEPS - AGENDA ITEM 4

3.1 A draft programme for completing the SBC is currently being developed and an update will be presented at the Board Meeting on 11 June. In summary, the key milestones (subject to necessary approval of funding) are outlined below:

- **September 2026** – Initial engagement with Key Stakeholders
- **October to November 2026** – Network Development Workshops with all SEStran Local Authorities
- **November 2026** – SEA Scoping Report and Integrated Impact Assessment Scoping (EqIA, CRWA, FSDA) Report
- **January 2027** – Draft SEStransit Network Options Map
- **February – June 2027** – Modelling and Detailed Appraisal of SEStransit Options
- **June 2027** – Commercial, Financial and Management Cases
- **April – June 2027** – High-level Stakeholder Engagement on SEStransit Programme of interventions
- **June – September 2027 –** Circulation and Approval of Programme-Wide Strategic Business Case
- **Autumn 2027** – Finalisation of Programme-Wide Strategic Business Case for SEStransit

3.2 One of the outstanding tasks in finalising the programme is the need to integrate the three core components of: technical work, stakeholder engagement and the governance/approval process.

3.3 The purpose of the stakeholder engagement plan is to provide a clear, proportionate and auditable approach to engagement for SEStransit as the Strategic Business Case develops. Engagement should help ensure that the programme is shaped by evidence, local knowledge and operational insight rather than being presented as a fixed proposal at too late a stage. It should therefore:

- Provide stakeholders with a clear understanding of the programme scope, the transport problems being addressed and the role of the Strategic Business Case.
- Build trust and alignment between regional partners, local authorities, transport agencies and delivery stakeholders.
- Gather structured evidence on needs, opportunities, constraints, dependencies and likely impacts.
- Support STAG and business case development by capturing stakeholder perspectives on strategic fit, feasibility, accessibility and place-based outcomes.
- Meet consultation and public sector good practice requirements, including transparency, accessibility and equalities considerations.

- Reduce delivery and reputational risk by identifying issues early and maintaining a clear record of engagement, responses and commitments.

3.4 A simple matrix will be developed following the RACI principles, to define who is responsible, accountable, consulted and informed for each major engagement activity. The stakeholder map includes the following core groups:

- National and regional public bodies: SEStran, Transport Scotland, Network Rail, regional transport partnerships where cross-boundary interfaces are relevant (eg Tactran), and other statutory agencies with an interest in transport, climate, planning or equality outcomes.
- Constituent local authorities: City of Edinburgh, Clackmannanshire, East Lothian, Falkirk, Fife, Midlothian, Scottish Borders and West Lothian, including transport, planning, economic development and communications functions.
- Transport operators and infrastructure providers: bus operators, rail operators, asset owners, and other providers with operational or commercial interests in the network.
- Communities and representative groups (if considered appropriate) - community councils, resident associations, passenger groups, accessibility forums, equality organisations, youth representatives and rural interest groups.
- Selected Business, education and anchor institutions: employers, business organisations, colleges, universities, healthcare bodies and major trip generators whose travel patterns and investment plans shape demand.
- Political and civic stakeholders: elected members, board members, MPs, MSPs and other civic leaders with an interest in regional transport outcomes and public accountability.

3.5 On the last bullet point above, our intention is to offer 1-2-1 sessions with each of the respective Transport Convenors, and we would welcome support from the Programme Board in setting these sessions up, and maximimising subsequent attendance.

3.6 Aligned to the stakeholder plan we will develop a timeline to incorporate the necessary approval processes for each of the local authority partners at key decision points. These are likely to be around:

- Confirmation of funding requirements.
- Approval of Interim Report (Autumn 2026)
- Approval of SBC (Spring 2027)

Stuart Turnbull - Consultant
5th June 2026

CONSULTATION RESPONSE

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 The purpose of this report is to update Members on SEStran's response to consultations between March and June 2026. In particular, to summarise the response given to the consultation on Scotland's Infrastructure Strategy 2027 – 2037.

2. SCOTLAND'S INFRASTRUCTURE STRATEGY 2027 – 2037

2.1 SEStran officers responded to the *Scotland's Infrastructure Strategy 2027 – 2037* on 5th May 2026 with a response which focused on strengthening the link between Scotland's long term infrastructure needs and shorter term investment decisions. The full response can be found in Appendix 1.

2.2 The response agreed strongly with the Strategy's intention to translate the 30-year Infrastructure Needs Assessment into a prioritised, place based investment framework, providing greater coherence between strategic ambition, funding decisions and delivery. At a transport level, the focus should be shifted to accessibility, decarbonisation, inclusion and long term value for money.

2.3 The response did highlight the need to stronger emphasis on the functional relationships between different types of infrastructure. For example, better considering interdependencies such as improved digital connectivity, remote access to services and flexible working arrangements. These interdependencies are particularly significant in areas where many people commute to Edinburgh and there is an increasing demand for cross boundary travel.

2.4 There is scope to improve both governance and the early stages of the infrastructure lifecycle. Stronger regional collaboration would help identify opportunities that may not be visible at local or national level and support a more consistent 'infrastructure first' approach. Earlier consideration of demand management and service improvements, alongside better asset management, would help ensure that investment focuses on outcomes rather than outputs. More proportionate appraisal processes and a clearer role for regional partnerships would also help to improve delivery.

2.5 Overall, the consultation response was focused the requirements for continued public sector leadership, closer integration across transport, land use planning and economic development, and a realistic understanding of delivery capacity. Regional partnerships have an important role in coordinating cross boundary investment and aligning national priorities with local delivery. While private investment and placemaking are important, effective delivery will depend on clear governance and sufficient capacity.

Rebecca Smith
Projects Officer
June 2026

Appendix 1: Scotland's Infrastructure Strategy 2027 – 2037 Consultation SEStran Response

Policy Implications	Potentially significant policy implications, although more likely to align closely with RTS and existing policies
Financial Implications	None
Equalities Implications	None
Climate Change Implications	Potentially significant in future dependent on outcome of the consultation

Role of the Infrastructure Strategy

SEStran Response

Submitted: 05/05/2026

Publication link: Infrastructure Strategy 2027-2037: consultation - gov.scot

7¡.Do.you.agree.with.the.scope.and.role.of.the.Infrastructure.Strategy?
SEStran agrees with the proposed scope and role of the Infrastructure Strategy as a 10-year, outcomes-focused framework that provides a clear bridge between Scotland's long-term infrastructure needs and medium-term delivery decisions.

We strongly support the Strategy's intention to translate the 30-year Infrastructure Needs Assessment into a prioritised, place-based investment framework, providing greater coherence between strategic ambition, funding decisions and delivery. The emphasis on making best use of existing assets, outcome-led investment, and alignment with public service reform closely mirrors the principles underpinning the SEStran 2035 Regional Transport Strategy and RTS Delivery Plan and SEStransit programmes of work.

For transport, this approach supports a shift away from mode-specific or asset-led decision making, towards investment that prioritises accessibility, decarbonisation, inclusion and long-term value for money.

However, the Strategy could place stronger emphasis on the functional relationships between different types of infrastructure. For example, improved digital connectivity, remote access to services and flexible working arrangements can reduce pressure on transport networks and support more sustainable patterns of growth. These interdependencies are particularly significant in areas where many people commute to Edinburgh and there is an increasing demand for cross-boundary travel. Additionally, making improvements can decrease the necessity for travel altogether, enhance rural RTPI, and boost access to digital transport services by eliminating connectivity gaps in our region. Such changes positively influence productivity and increase individuals' confidence in the transport system.

The Strategy also needs to address how investment decisions respond not only to growth but to uneven patterns of demand. In some rural and coastal parts of the South East, the challenge is maintaining service viability and accessibility rather than accommodating expansion. A clearer articulation of how infrastructure investment can stabilise and future proof these communities would strengthen the overall approach.

8¡.Do.you.think.the.proposed.framework.linking.long.term.needs?the.76_year. Infrastructure.Strategy?Spending.Reviews.and.annual.Budgets.will.support. improved.strategic.planning.and.delivery?

Aligning long-term needs assessment with short-term funding cycles can improve planning and reduce fragmented investment, especially in the South East of Scotland where transport, housing, and economic pressures cross local boundaries. The framework's success relies on strong regional partnerships and governance that ensures regional priorities are identified, validated through appropriate processes and delivered effectively to maximise opportunities reflected in national spending priorities. Without this, challenges like strategic transport corridors, infrastructure first, public transport resilience, and climate adaptation could be overlooked in annual budgets. Multi-year funding is crucial for infrastructure projects that span several years to maximise outcomes and benefits and minimise inflationary pressures.

Transport serves as a fundamental driver of economic and social wellbeing; therefore, it is recommended that a designated portion of the annual budget be allocated specifically to this sector. Such ring-fencing would safeguard transport funding from being redirected to other public sector priorities and help prevent delays in multi-year programmes, which can ultimately postpone expected benefits and contribute to inflationary pressures, potentially undermining the overall business case of any new project or intervention.

SEStran believes the proposed framework will enhance strategic planning and delivery through a clear line-of-sight from long-term need to short-term funding decisions. Structured links between the 30-year Needs Assessment, 10-year Infrastructure Strategy, and Spending Reviews should mitigate fragmentation caused by annual budgeting. Effectiveness depends on:

- Aligning with robust regional and local delivery frameworks,
- Greater certainty of multi-year funding for ongoing programmes,
- Transparent translation of strategic priorities into budget decisions, including managing trade-offs when demand exceeds resources.
- Consistency of short- & medium-term decision making supporting the efficient use of public funding.

Infrastructure Governance Principles

9¡.Do.any.elements.of.the.infrastructure.lifecycle.need.to.be.strengthened.to.promote.more.effective.infrastructure.planning.and.delivery?

The initial phases of infrastructure lifecycle benefit from the identification of opportunities that may be missed through a local or national lens. Strong regional partnerships and governance to enable the collective thinking and collaboration has and will continue to optimise opportunities in the southeast of Scotland. Regional transport has a role in influencing and promoting an 'infrastructure first' principle in all future regional spatial and economic planning to optimise the use of existing transport infrastructure, services along key corridors.

Establishing the investment hierarchy early on would ensure demand management, service optimisation, and behaviour change interventions are thoroughly evaluated prior to considering capital-intensive alternatives. While this approach already fits well with transport planning in the region, it has potential to be reinforced in other infrastructure sectors.

The Strategy should acknowledge the distinct nature of transport infrastructure compared to other types; notably, transport systems are rarely entirely replaced or reach full obsolescence.

SEStran believes that the early stages of the infrastructure lifecycle need further enhancement, especially concerning defining problems, developing options, and assessing place-based needs. Frequently, infrastructure projects are influenced by predetermined solutions, which reduces prospects for sector integration.

Opportunities also exist to improve:

- Whole-life asset management, prioritising maintenance, adaptation, and optimisation equally with new construction.
- Monitoring, evaluation, and learning, placing greater importance on outcomes such as accessibility, emissions reduction, and social value instead of focusing purely on outputs.

0¡.In.what.areas.could.changes.to.governance.or.planning.processes.improve.the.impact.of.the.investment.hierarchy?

Stronger cross-sector and cross-boundary collaboration is essential to improve the practical application of the investment hierarchy. Many infrastructure challenges in South East Scotland—such as travel-to-work patterns, access to services and development pressures—do not align with administrative boundaries and therefore require regional approaches. Further, the early phases of infrastructure lifecycle benefit from the identification of opportunities that may be missed through a local or national lens. Strong regional partnerships and governance to enable the collective thinking and collaboration has and will continue to optimise opportunities in the southeast of Scotland. Regional transport has a role in influencing and promoting an 'infrastructure first' principle in all future regional spatial and economic planning to optimise the use of existing transport infrastructure, services along key corridors.

A clearer and more formal role for regional prioritisation would help identify where investment hierarchy principles deliver the greatest benefit. This must be supported by appraisal and business case processes that are more proportionate and flexible, particularly to reflect hierarchy-based decisions and non-capital interventions. Experience from the early stages of the Bus Partnership Fund highlighted the current system as overly complex and time-consuming, with inconsistent guidance on appraisal requirements creating delays and uncertainty.

There is also a need for more effective coordination and sustainable governance at regional level. The SEStran/ South East Scotland City Region Deal approach to SEStransit demonstrates how existing regional structures can be used to deliver major infrastructure projects. In this context, the First Minister’s November 2025 commitment to enabling legislation for regional partnerships should be taken forward in the next Parliament. Closer cross-sector working—particularly between transport, land use planning and economic development—is not only sensible but essential.

SEStran believes the impact of the investment hierarchy would be strengthened through:

- Stronger integration of transport, land use planning, housing, health and economic development at national, regional and local levels.
- Clearer recognition of regional partnerships as delivery convenors for cross-boundary and cross-sector infrastructure; and
- Greater flexibility to invest in revenue-led and service-based interventions, particularly where these deliver preventative outcomes and reduce long-term demand on public services, such as improved access to health care and employment.

❶.Do.you.agree.that.enabling.net.zero.and.environmental.sustainability?.driving.economic.growth.and.building.resilient.places.remain.the.right.outcomes?

These outcomes remain appropriate and align with both national and regional priorities. In the South East of Scotland, achieving net zero will require significant changes to travel behaviour, energy use and land-use patterns, supported by coordinated and strategic transport infrastructure and service investment.

Resilience must also be considered more broadly than climate adaptation alone. Transport service continuity, affordability and the consideration of 'unintended consequences' from public sector interventions are critical, particularly for communities that rely on a small number of transport links or assets, where disruption can have disproportionate social and economic impacts.

SEStran agrees that these outcomes provide the right framework to guide infrastructure investment over the next decade. They reflect the increasingly interconnected nature of challenges facing communities, where climate action, access to opportunity and resilience are closely linked. For transport, this reinforces the need for sustained investment in initiatives that reduce car dependency, improve access to employment, healthcare and education, and support healthier, more resilient places.

Reducing poverty should remain a central consideration for both social and physical infrastructure investment. The Regional Transport Strategy (RTS) and National Transport Strategy (NTS) provide objectives that support a balanced approach, embedding social priorities alongside economic and environmental outcomes. Alongside reducing poverty is a wider commitment to inclusivity, be that of physical access, balancing of opportunity across rural and urban communities.

❷.Are.the.proposed.enablers.sufficient.to.deliver.the.Strategy"s.outcomes?

Public assets, placemaking and private investment are all important enablers of infrastructure delivery, but their effectiveness depends on realistic expectations about delivery capacity and the continued role of public-sector leadership. In the South East of Scotland, many strategic transport and infrastructure improvements rely on public intervention to de-risk investment and align outcomes across multiple partners.

SEStran therefore broadly supports the proposed enablers but considers that delivery capability and institutional capacity should be more explicitly recognised as a cross-cutting enabler. This includes:

- Skills and capacity within local and regional bodies.
- Data, digital and analytical capability to support evidence-led decision-making; and
- The ability to design, manage and evaluate complex, programme-based interventions.

Overall, while the proposed enablers provide a strong foundation, they will only be effective if there is clear recognition of the ongoing need for public-sector intervention and a realistic assessment of what can, and cannot, be delivered within existing capacity constraints. Further we consider RTPs like SEStran to be key enabler organisations, providing regional effective and efficient delivery and overcoming these barriers.

❸.What.mechanisms.should.ensure.cross.cutting.priorities.are.embedded.in.decision.making?

Greater integration between regional economic strategies, development plans and transport strategies is essential. In the South East of Scotland, regional transport planning already provides a strong platform for aligning investment with housing growth areas, employment centres and regeneration priorities.

Delivery must, however, remain sensitive to local context. National and regional frameworks should set direction and priorities, while local partners lead implementation to ensure infrastructure investment reflects place-based needs and circumstances.

SEStran recommends that the Infrastructure Strategy:

- Requires explicit alignment with regional strategies, including Regional Transport Strategies and Regional Economic Partnerships.
- Uses shared outcomes and metrics, particularly for accessibility, inequality reduction and emissions; and
- Encourages programme-based approaches that cut across sectors, such as transport to health, inclusive access to employment and nature-based infrastructure.

As noted in our response to Question 4, stronger and more joined-up regional governance will be critical to effective delivery. Transport infrastructure strategy must be seamless across land-use and transport planning. Similarly, without a coordinated regional approach to economic development and housing, there is a continued risk of fragmentation and delays to implementation.

❹.Are.there.findings.from.the.SFT.Needs.Assessment.that.should.be.more.fully.integrated?

The Needs Assessment rightly highlights the importance of coordinated infrastructure and transport planning in supporting wider public-sector objectives. The strategic role of Regional Transport Partnerships (RTPs) in coordinating and delivering activity across local authorities is particularly relevant and could be more clearly recognised within the Infrastructure Strategy.

Across Scotland, RTPs add value by balancing urban growth pressures with rural accessibility needs and by providing a forum for translating national policy into locally deliverable solutions. The Assessment is especially strong in its:

- Emphasis on demographic change and public-service reform.
- Recognition of the role of behavioural change alongside physical infrastructure and transport service investments; and
- Focus on system-wide thinking rather than sector-by-sector planning, with sufficient ring-fenced budget to guarantee ongoing projects.

Taken together, these findings strongly support integrated, place-based and outcome-focused approaches to infrastructure planning, particularly at a regional scale.

Place Based Approach

❺¡.Do.you.support.the.proposal.that.infrastructure.investment.is.more.directly.driven.by.the.priorities.of.places?

A stronger place-based approach to infrastructure investment has clear merit, provided it is supported by appropriate strategic oversight. In regions such as the South East of Scotland, where infrastructure networks serve multiple places simultaneously, decisions driven solely by individual local priorities risk undermining wider system performance.

This is particularly evident in transport, where trade-offs between faster inter-urban services and local accessibility are common across rail and bus networks. Addressing these challenges requires regional and national perspectives to complement local priorities and ensure balanced, system-wide outcomes.

SEStran strongly supports a more place-driven approach to infrastructure investment, as this is essential to reflecting local needs, recognising regional variation and maximising social, economic and environmental benefit. Within this model, regional partnerships play a critical role by addressing cross-boundary issues, coordinating investment and linking national priorities with local delivery.

It is also important to recognise that placemaking is shaped by multiple national policy frameworks. While National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4) is central, land-use planning should give equal consideration to the National Transport Strategy (NTS2) and national economic strategies, all of which contribute to shaping successful places.

76¡.Are.the.proposed.principles.and.place.partnerships.the.right.ones?

Place-based partnerships can be effective in shaping and delivering local improvements. However, in the South East of Scotland, prioritisation of strategic infrastructure must be informed by regional evidence and agreed collectively, rather than relying solely on local partnerships with differing capacity, resources and influence.

While the proposed principles and partnership landscape provide a strong foundation, greater clarity is needed on roles, accountability and resourcing. The effectiveness of partnerships depends on alignment between governance, funding and decision-making processes, alongside sufficient capacity to support delivery.

As noted in our response to Question 9, National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4) should not be viewed as the sole placemaking document. In addition to the Regional Spatial Strategy referenced in the consultation, equal weight should be given to Regional Transport Strategies and the strategies developed by Regional Economic Partnerships, all of which play a critical role in coordinating investment and delivery at regional scale.

77¡.Do.you.agree.with.proposals.to.empower.communities.to.play.a.more.active.role?

Early and meaningful community engagement is essential to building understanding of both opportunities and constraints associated with infrastructure investment. In the South East of Scotland, the prolonged timescales for major infrastructure proposals can, however, lead to consultation fatigue and disengagement if not managed carefully.

SEStran supports greater community involvement in infrastructure decision-making, particularly where engagement takes place early in the process and focuses on defining problems and desired outcomes. Meaningful engagement should be underpinned by capacity-building, inclusive methods and clear feedback that demonstrates how community input has influenced decisions.

Greater transparency around decision-making, phasing and funding can help communities feel confident that engagement will lead to tangible outcomes, even where compromises are required. It is important that major infrastructure projects are not perceived as being imposed on communities. The City of Edinburgh Council's consultation on the proposed tram extension provides a strong example of effective engagement.

To avoid consultation fatigue, place-based proposals should be presented as coherent packages rather than developed in isolation or introduced incrementally by different public bodies.

78¡.Does.the.current.landscape.of.partnerships.provide.an.effective.framework?

Existing partnerships provide a strong foundation for place-based working but would benefit from clearer definition of roles and responsibilities. Community Planning Partnerships, for example, tend to focus on social outcomes and may require additional capacity and expertise to engage fully with complex infrastructure planning and delivery.

There is clear scope to strengthen the role of regional partnerships, including Regional Transport Partnerships, in coordinating place-based infrastructure investment across the South East of Scotland and ensuring alignment with national objectives. A more consistent and systematic use of regional partnerships across sectors would help address cross-boundary challenges and improve coherence in decision-making. Indeed, if the current landscape were designed anew, it is unlikely it would replicate existing arrangements.

The consultation also gives little or no attention to City and Growth Deals, despite their significant role in delivering major infrastructure projects. These programmes should be explicitly factored into discussions on regional governance, alongside Regional Spatial Strategies, Regional Transport Strategies and the work of Regional Economic

Partnerships, to ensure a more joined-up and effective approach to planning and delivery.

Enabling Private Infrastructure

79¡.Are.there.additional.sectors.or.opportunities.for.strategic.investment?

Private investment opportunities are strongest in growth areas, particularly around Edinburgh and along key transport corridors. Different approaches will be required in rural and peripheral areas, where commercial returns are less certain but social value is high. In all cases, public-sector leadership remains critical in setting direction, de-risking investment and unlocking wider economic and social benefits.

However, the mechanisms used to attract private investment into infrastructure require fundamental reform. Previous approaches have often failed to deliver value for the public sector. Infrastructure Levy proposals have been short-lived, while the introduction of appeal mechanisms for Section 75 agreements has significantly weakened their effectiveness. There is a clear need to explore stronger, more reliable ways of securing long-term private investment.

Greater coordination of utility diversions, improved regulation of roadworks and more robust mechanisms for locking in private investment should all be considered. In addition, many infrastructure projects require secure, long-term revenue streams for maintenance as well as upfront capital, to ensure assets remain viable and do not suffer from limited lifespan or early failure.

SEStran considers that investment opportunities linked to public transport reform, active travel, digital connectivity, access to healthcare and nature-based infrastructure should be given equal consideration alongside housing and renewables, particularly where they deliver wider economic, social and environmental benefits.

70¡.What.will.the.economy.need.from.infrastructure.up.to.8693?

The South East of Scotland's economy requires infrastructure that is reliable, resilient and deliverable. This means assets that perform consistently, decision-making processes that are timely, and funding frameworks that provide long-term certainty.

To support growth and prosperity, infrastructure investment must:

- Enable low-carbon, reliable and affordable mobility.
- Connect people to jobs, skills, healthcare and essential services.
- Support housing delivery in locations that reduce the need to travel; and

- Be resilient to the impacts of climate change and demographic pressures.

Integrated transport systems, high-quality public transport, strong data and digital capability, and preventative, people-focused infrastructure will be central to delivering sustainable and inclusive economic growth across the region.

Internal Audit Assurance

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 The City of Edinburgh Council Internal Audit (IA) team performs one review annually for SEStran, to provide assurance over the controls established to mitigate key risks in a specific area.

1.2 The purpose of this paper is to report on the outcomes of the 2025/26 SEStran IA review of Project Management, to provide an update on progress with the completion of actions agreed as part of previous audits, and to request the Committee's input on potential areas for inclusion in the planned 2026/27 audit.

2. BACKGROUND, SCOPE, AND OUTCOMES OF 2025/26 IA REVIEW – PROJECT MANAGEMENT

Audit Background

2.1 The audit reviewed the internal processes and controls surrounding project management at SEStran. 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. This work aligned with SEStran's November 2025 risk register, particularly in relation to Governance, Operational (project management), Financial, Reputational, External (supplier and partnership relationships), and Legal and Regulatory risks.

Audit Scope

2.2 The objective of the review was to assess the adequacy of design and operating effectiveness of the key controls established for the monitoring and oversight arrangements to oversee governance and financial management of SEStran projects.

Audit Outcomes

2.3 The overall assessment of the review was Reasonable Assurance, meaning there is a generally sound system of governance, risk management, and control in place to support project management within SEStran. Several areas for improvement were identified within the project management processes to further strengthen transparency, financial stewardship, and regulatory compliance.

2.4 Areas for improvement identified in the review include:

i) strengthening risk management for the organisation through the consideration and inclusion of fraud and Serious Organised Crime risks within corporate and project level risk registers, use of SMART actions, and introducing risk management training

ii) improving project management arrangements through development of a documented framework, clearer governance structures, a standardised approach

to stakeholder engagement and communication, as well as formal monitoring of project management training

iii) ensuring consistent application of impact assessments and Data Protection Impact Assessments, use of standardised project initiation documentation, and improved document management

iv) improving project governance and monitoring through consistent updating of core project documentation, improved change control documentation, alignment of milestones across planning documentation, and comprehensive RAID logs

v) strengthening project governance and oversight through improved action tracking, enhanced document control, implementation of a lessons-learned log, a benefits realisation plan, and a clearer methodology for financial forecasting

vi) enhancing contract management arrangements through clearer contract documentation, defined hierarchy of contract documents, as well as a structured monitoring framework for contractor performance.

2.5 Full details of each audit finding and the agreed management actions and timescales to address the risks associated with each, is provided in the detailed audit report at Appendix 1.

2.6 Several areas of effective practice were also identified as part of this review and are included in the Executive Summary section of the detailed report.

3. PROGRESS WITH ACTIONS RAISED IN PREVIOUS AUDITS

3.1. Management has also addressed 11 of 12 actions from the People and Place Funding Proposals completed in May 2025.

3.2. The remaining action is not yet due and relates to a review of the Anti-Bribery Procedure and Anti-Fraud and Corruption Policy.

3.3. A status update on this action is provided in Appendix 2.

4. 2026/27 INTERNAL AUDIT REVIEW

4.1. The City of Edinburgh Council's 2026/27 IA annual plan was approved by the Council's Governance, Risk, and Best Value Committee on 26 March 2026. The plan includes one IA review for SEStran, which is consistent with the level of assurance provided in prior years.

4.2. The most significant areas of risk and potential areas for SEStran 2026/27 annual review will be discussed with the management team by November 2026, and the review will be completed between January and April 2027.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1. The Board is requested to:

- note the outcomes of the 2025/26 IA review of Project Management including IA findings and recommendations and agreed management actions and implementation dates

- note the progress with completion of management actions from previous audits
- note that P&A Committee provide input on key risks or any areas of concern that the Committee would like IA to consider including in the 2026/27 IA review.

Appendix 1: Internal Audit Report – Project Management

Appendix 2: Progress with outstanding management actions as at 5 June 2026

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Policy Implications	None
Financial Implications	SEStran is charged an annual fee for provision of the annual IA assurance review. The fee for 2025/26 is £5,000, which remains consistent with the 2024/25 fee applied. Fees will be reviewed in 2026 and where required a revised fee will be agreed.
Equalities Implications	None
Climate Change Implications	None

Appendix 2 – Progress with outstanding management actions as at 5 June 2026

2024/25 Internal Audit OO2402 People and Place Funding Proposals: Implementation Status

No.	Recommendation	Agreed Management Action	Due Date	Status	Management Update
3.3	The Anti-Bribery Procedure and Anti-Fraud and Corruption Policy should be reviewed and updated, at a regular frequency to ensure continued relevance and compliance.	The Anti-Bribery Procedure and Anti-Fraud and Corruption Policy were reviewed in 2023 but required no changes. Unfortunately, this was not included in the report to P&A Committee. These policies will be included in the next policy review cycle.	31/07/2027	In Progress	The policies are currently being reviewed and updated by the partnership's legal adviser and a report will be presented to the September 26 Performance ad Audit Committee.

South East of Scotland Transport Partnership (SEStran)
Internal Audit Report

Project Management

1 May 2026

OO2501

Overall Assessment	**Reasonable Assurance**

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This Internal Audit review is conducted for the SEStran under the auspices of the 2025/26 internal audit plan. The review is designed to help the SEStran assess and refine its internal control environment. It is not designed or intended to be suitable for any other purpose and should not be relied upon for any other purpose. The City of Edinburgh Council accepts no responsibility for any such reliance and disclaims all liability in relation thereto.

The internal audit work and reporting has been performed in line with the requirements of the Global Internal Audit Standards (UK Public Sector) and as a result is not designed or intended to comply with any other auditing standards.

Although there are specific recommendations included in this report to strengthen internal control, it is management's responsibility to design, implement and maintain an effective control framework, and for the prevention and detection of irregularities and fraud. This is an essential part of the efficient management of the SEStran. Communication of the issues and weaknesses arising from this audit does not absolve management of this responsibility. High and Critical risk findings will be raised with senior management as appropriate

Executive Summary

Overall Assessment	Reasonable Assurance

Engagement conclusion and summary of findings

There is a generally sound system of governance, risk management and control in place to support the project management within SEStran. Several areas for improvement were identified within the project management processes to further strengthen transparency, financial stewardship, and regulatory compliance:

- risk management for the organisation as a whole should be strengthened through the consideration and inclusion of fraud and Serious Organised Crime risks within corporate and project level risk registers, use of SMART actions, and introducing risk management training
- project management arrangements should be improved through the development of a documented framework, clearer governance structures, a standardised approach to stakeholder engagement and communication, as well as formal monitoring of project management training
- consistent application of impact assessments and Data Protection Impact Assessments, standardised project initiation documentation, and improved document management is recommended
- project governance and monitoring should be improved through consistent updating of core project documentation, improved change control documentation, alignment of milestones across planning documentation, and comprehensive RAID logs
- project governance and oversight could be strengthened through improved action tracking, enhanced document control, the implementation of a lessons-learned log, a benefits realisation plan, and a clearer methodology for financial forecasting
- contract management arrangements should be strengthened through clearer contract documentation, defined hierarchy of contract documents, as well as a structured monitoring framework for contractor performance.

Areas of effective practice

- project risks are identified, recorded and actively managed through SEStran Corporate and Project risk registers, with regular review to ensure mitigating actions remain appropriate and effective
- clear project plans have been developed that set out key deliverables, timeframes, and ownership to support structured project delivery
- progress reports are regularly provided to governance forums, which include clear RAG status reporting for programme delivery and finance performance
- post-implementation reviews are undertaken to reflect on lessons learned.

Audit Assessment

Audit Area	Control Design	Control Operation	Findings	Priority Rating
1. Risk management			Finding 1 – Risk Management	Medium Priority
2. Information Governance			Finding 3 – Project Initiation	Medium Priority
3. Project Governance			Finding 2 – Procedures and Training	Medium Priority
			Finding 4 – Change Control	Medium Priority

Audit Area	Control Design	Control Operation	Findings	Priority Rating
			Finding 5 – Governance and Oversight	Medium Priority
4. Project Skills and Experience			See Finding 2	N/A
5. Contract and Supplier Management			Finding 6 – Contract and Supplier Management	Medium Priority

See Appendix 1 for Control Assessment and Assurance Definitions

Background and Scope

Effective project management is essential to ensure that SEStran can deliver on its pledges and strategic objectives whilst maintaining and improving the service it delivers at a lower cost and with fewer resources. There are currently 14 projects underway with a total budget of £470k, with projects ranging in budget between £10k and £71k.

At the beginning of each financial year, SEStran's Annual Business Plan is approved by the Partnership Board. This plan sets out the projects to be delivered during the year together with associated budgets, project scope, objectives and key milestones. The Partnership's Core and Projects budgets for 2025/26 were approved by the Partnership Board on 14 March 2025.

The key stages in the project management process include:

- the Annual Business Plan, which outlines the projects to be delivered during the financial year and the associated budgets, is approved by the Partnership Board
- a Project Outline Document (POD) is prepared to provide high-level summary of the project, and is submitted for approval by the Partnership Director
- a Project Initiation Document (PID) is developed, setting out the detailed project scope, objectives, and resource requirements. The PID is also approved by the Partnership Director
- during the implementation phase, project status reports are provided to the Project and Strategy Delivery Oversight Subgroup (PaSDOS), the Performance and Audit Committee (P&A), and the Partnership Board
- following project completion, a lessons learned exercise is performed, with the results provided to the PaSDOS, P&A, and the Partnership Board.

Oversight and governance

Project governance within SEStran is supported through a number of oversight arrangements and reporting mechanisms. The Project Teams team meets fortnightly to review progress, risks, and budget matters, with the Partnership Director attending monthly. PaSDOS meets quarterly to review to review project progress and performance through Project and Strategy performance reports. The minutes of PaSDOS meetings and performance reports are reported to the P&A for noting, with the Partnership Board receiving P&A committee minutes and associated reports to provide strategic oversight.

Scope

The objective of this review was to assess the adequacy of design and operating effectiveness of the key controls established for the monitoring and oversight arrangements to oversee governance and financial management of SEStran projects.

Alignment to SEStran Risks

- Project Management
- Financial
- Reputation
- Third Party Service Level Agreements
- Contract Management
- Statutory Duties.

Reporting Date

Testing was undertaken between 19 January 2026 and 23 February 2026.

Audit work concluded on 6 March 2026, and the findings and opinion are based on the conclusion of work as at that date.

Findings and Management Actions

Finding 1 – Risk Management

Finding Rating	Medium Priority

Fraud and Serious Organisation Crime (SOC) risks in risk registers

Fraud and SOC risks should be formally identified, assessed, and recorded within the Corporate risk register and the Project risk register to ensure they are systematically monitored and mitigated, and to support compliance with relevant legislative requirements. However, fraud and SOC risks are not included within either risk register, and there is limited evidence that these risks are being effectively considered and managed as required.

Inclusion of fraud and SOC risks within risk registers would support SEStran's ability to evidence preparedness and effective oversight in relation to the corporate offence of 'failure to prevent fraud' under the Economic Crime and Corporate Transparency Act (ECCTA) 2023.

Risk management actions

Risk management actions should be defined in line with SMART principles (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound), enabling effective monitoring, accountability, and timely risk mitigation. The SEStran project risk register is well-designed and supports effective risk management, with appropriate use of gross and net risk scoring, clear ownership, and structured reporting of inherent and residual risk exposure. However, while mitigating actions are recorded, several risk actions were not consistently SMART, as they lacked clear deliverables, measurable outcomes, defined timescales, and recorded completion dates.

Risk management training programme

A formal risk management training programme supports officers to have a consistent understanding and application of risk management principles. There is no formal risk management training programme in place, but instead officers risk awareness and capabilities are supported through informal on-the-job coaching and management guidance.

Risks, Assumptions, Issues, and Dependencies (RAID) log

A RAID log helps ensures that project risks, assumptions, issues, and dependencies are consistently captured, monitored, and reported. While project risks and issues are documented and reported through established governance arrangements, project assumptions and dependencies are not. Although assumptions and dependencies are identified during the preparation of Project Initiation Documents, there is limited evidence to demonstrate that they are being effectively monitored and managed, as they are not formally recorded or tracked within RAID logs.

Risks

- **Project Management –** incomplete identification and monitoring of key risks, together with unclear mitigation actions reduce management's ability to proactively oversee and manage project risks
- **Reputation –** absence of formal capture of fraud and serious organised crime threats within risk registers reduces visibility of these issues and weakens organisational assurance and stakeholder confidence
- **Financial** - inadequate fraud risk identification and inconsistent risk management practises increase the exposure to financial loss and ineffective control over project resources.

Recommendations and Management Actions: Risk Management

Ref.	Recommendation	Agreed Management Action	Action Owner	Lead Officers	Timeframe
1.1	Fraud and Serious Organised Crime (SOC) risks should be formally identified and documented within the risk registers to ensure these risks are appropriately assessed, monitored, and managed. In addition, the failure to prevent fraud requirements of the Economic Crime and Corporate Transparency Act (ECCTA) 2023, should be reviewed to ensure there is full compliance.	Recommendation accepted. Risks relating to fraud and organised crime will be reviewed and added to the Risk Log. As part of this we will ensure that there is full compliance with ECCTA and will include any relevant risks in the log.	Partnership Director, SEStran	Senior Partnership Manager, SEStran	30/06/2026
1.2	Risk mitigation actions recorded in the risk registers should be consistently defined using SMART principles, including clear deliverables, measurable outcomes, and target completion dates.	Recommendation accepted. The project risk register will be revised for 2026/27 to reflect the move to a programmatic Business Plan. As part of this all risks actions will be reviewed and updated to ensure they are SMART.	Partnership Director, SEStran	Senior Partnership Manager, SEStran	30/06/2026
1.3	A structured risk management training programme should be developed and delivered to relevant officers to support consistent understanding and application of risk management within project management processes, including project-specific risk identification, assessment, monitoring and other key risk management considerations.	Recommendation accepted. We will formalise programme and project management methodologies in 2026. Training in the identification and management of risks will be included, and staff will be trained on all aspects of the methodology.	Partnership Director, SEStran	Senior Partnership Manager, SEStran	31/01/2027
1.4	Risks, Assumptions, Issues, Dependencies (RAID) logs should be enhanced by including project assumptions and dependencies.	Recommendation accepted. We will formalise programme and project management methodologies in 2026. This will include creation and maintenance of a RAID log.	Partnership Director, SEStran	Senior Partnership Manager, SEStran	31/01/2027

Finding 2 – Project Management Procedures and Training

Finding Rating	Medium Priority

Project management and governance framework

A documented project management framework allows for a consistent and effective approach to project delivery across the full project lifecycle. It should clearly set out roles and responsibilities, decision-making authority, approval hierarchies, and escalation routes, and include proportionate governance arrangements aligned to project size, complexity, and risk.

There is no documented project management framework in place. While project management work is generally effective, the arrangements are largely informal.

Stakeholder engagement

A standardised approach to stakeholder engagement supports determining when project-specific stakeholder engagement and communication plans are required, including formal assessment of communication risk, and clear documentation of rationale for the approach adopted.

SEStran primarily relies on an annual corporate communication plan to guide engagement activity, which includes the objectives, strategy, and methods of communication for the organisation as a whole. However, there is no standardised methodology to determine when a project-specific stakeholder engagement and communication plan is required, and what it should include. This creates an officer-driven approach that lacks transparency and consistency.

Training records and monitoring arrangements

A formal training records and monitoring process helps to ensure that training activities are consistently recorded, tracked, and reviewed to support compliance and workforce capability. Currently, there are no centrally-held training records or attendance logs to evidence completion of project management training by relevant officers.

Risks

- **Project Management –** the absence of a documented project management framework and clearly-defined governance arrangements could lead to inconsistent project oversight, decision making, and accountability
- **Reputation –** non-standardised stakeholder engagement and communication planning reduces transparency, and potentially undermines stakeholder confidence in project management and delivery
- **Financial** – a lack of structured project governance processes and training oversight could weaken control over project delivery and increase the risk of inefficiencies.

Recommendations and Management Actions: Project Management Procedures and Training

Ref.	Recommendation	Agreed Management Action	Action Owner	Lead Officers	Timeframe
2.1	A project management framework should be developed and formally approved by senior management to provide a consistent approach. In particular, it should include details of: • oversight arrangements, including key committees and their responsibilities • roles and responsibilities of officers • approval hierarchies, and decision-making authorities	Recommendation accepted. We will formalise programme and project management methodologies in 2026. This will cover all aspects of the recommendation.	Partnership Director, SEStran	Senior Partnership Manager, SEStran	31/01/2027

Ref.	Recommendation	Agreed Management Action	Action Owner	Lead Officers	Timeframe
	• escalation routes • stage-gate review arrangements • project change control and change log • rolling action log for PaSDOS meeting • minutes of PMO meeting • centralised lessons learned log • benefit realisation plan • financial forecasting methodology a statement on proportionate governance arrangements aligned to project size, complexity, and risk.				
2.2	A standard documented methodology and guidance should be introduced to determine when project-specific stakeholder engagement and communication plans are required, supported by clear guidance and criteria for assessing stakeholder impact and communication risks.	Recommendation accepted. We will formalise programme and project management methodologies in 2026. There will be an overarching comms strategy, with a corporate comms plan and individual comms plans for every programme where these are needed.	Partnership Director, SEStran	Senior Partnership Manager, SEStran	31/08/2026
2.3	A formal process for recording and monitoring training should be implemented, including the maintenance of centralised training records and attendance logs, to evidence completion, and support oversight of training compliance.	Recommendation accepted. A matrix displaying required training, and training received, will be developed for every member of the team as part of their induction. This will be reviewed annually as part of a PDP process.	Partnership Director, SEStran	Senior Partnership Manager, SEStran	31/08/2026

Finding 3 – Project Initiation and Impact Assessments

Finding Rating	Medium Priority

Impact assessments

Under the Public Sector Equality Duty (Section 149) of the Equality Act 2010, organisations should undertake appropriate impact assessments to identify and consider the effects of their decisions on protected groups, and to ensure compliance with equality obligations. SEStran undertake three types of impact assessments, depending on the nature of the individual project: Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA), Children's Rights and Wellbeing Impact Assessment (CRWIA), and Fairer Scotland Duty Assessment (FSDA). For a sample of five projects:

- two had completed the relevant assessments
- two projects had not progressed to a stage where an assessment was required
- for the remaining project (Thistle Assistance), the nature of the activity indicated that consideration of an assessment would have been appropriate, but no assessment had been undertaken.

Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA)

Under Article 35 of the UK General Data Protection Regulation, organisations are required to undertake a DPIA where processing activities are likely to pose a high risk to individuals' rights or freedoms. A sample of five projects identified two projects (the Thistle Assistance project, and the Regional Bus Strategy project) that processed demographic and equality information as part of public engagement activities. Thistle Assistance project processed personal data, including demographic and equality information, whereas Regional Bus Strategy project processed such information on an anonymous basis. A DPIA had not been undertaken for either project.

Management advised that this was based on guidance received from an external Information Governance consultant, who considered that data collection was minimal, data was either not linked to identifiable individuals or was held separately, and the processing was considered unlikely to result in a high risk to their rights.

However, there was no documented DPIA screening assessment or formal decision-making records demonstrating that the decision not to undertake a DPIA has been appropriately considered, evaluated, and approved.

Project initiation documents

Project Initiation Documents (PIDs) and Project Outline Documents (PODs) were not consistently prepared, finalised, version controlled or formally approved across the projects reviewed. For a sample of five projects:

- one project's PID remained in draft form (Regional Bus Strategy)
- for four projects, documented approval was not evidenced
- for all five sampled projects, no version control was included to evidence subsequent changes.

In addition, there is no standardised approach or defined criteria to determine when a project requires a PID or a POD.

Budget statements

The PID should be updated throughout each project to reflect any changes, such as revised budgets, project deadlines, or project milestones.

For a sample of five projects, three projects (Regional Bus Strategy, RTS Delivery Plan, and Regional Bike Share) the PID did not reflect revised budgets approved by the Partnership Board.

Risks

- **Project Management –** inconsistent application of project initiation requirements and documentation standards reduce assurance over project governance and decision making
- **Statutory Duties –** failure to consistently undertake or evidence impact assessments limits assurance that statutory obligations under the Equality Act 2010 and UK GDPR have been appropriately considered
- **Financial –** inconsistent recording and updating of approved project budget information across key documentation weakens financial oversight and reliability of project financial information.

Recommendations and Management Actions: Project Initiation and Impact Assessments

Ref.	Recommendation	Agreed Management Action	Action Owner	Lead Officers	Timeframe
3.1	A clear process should be developed to ensure that impact assessments are consistently considered and documented at project initiation, including maintaining an audit trial that evidences the assessment and decision making and, where an impact assessment is not undertaken, the rationale for the decision is appropriately documented.	Recommendation accepted. A revised Integrated Impact Assessment screening process and form has been developed over the latter part of 2025/26 and is now in use. This will be used to backfill gaps in existing projects that have been identified by this Audit and the projects team. Going forward, this process will be clearly incorporated into the PID process to ensure it is picked up at project inception and whenever the PID is revised (noting that at initiation it may not yet be clear if an IIA is required or not).	Partnership Director, SEStran	Senior Partnership Manager, SEStran	31/01/2027
3.2	A formal Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA) screening and assessment process should be implemented to ensure data protection risks are systematically evaluated and documented at project initiation in line with UK GDPR requirements. There should be a clear audit trail evidencing the assessment and decision making, including appropriate documentation of the rationale where it is determined that a DPIA is not required.	We recognise the risks associated with the finding, to address these we will formalise programme and project management methodologies in 2026. As part of this, the standard PID template will be redesigned. We will discuss further with our expert data protection consultant a proportionate solution for DPIA screening, noting their feedback that SEStran's work to date has always been of low risk and therefore DPIAs have not been required. Any updates to processes as a result of this will be built into the above processes.	Partnership Director, SEStran	Senior Partnership Manager, SEStran	31/01/2027
3.3	A standardised process should be developed to ensure Project Initiation Documents (PID) and Project Outlet Documents (POD) are consistently prepared, version-controlled, and formally approved, including defined criteria to determine when a project requires a PID, POD, or both.	Recommendation accepted. We will formalise programme and project management methodologies in 2026. As part of this, the standard POD and PID templates will be redesigned. Guidance will be produced for the new process.	Partnership Director, SEStran	Senior Partnership Manager, SEStran	31/01/2027
3.4	Revised budget figures should be consistently recorded and updated across all key project documentation.	Recommendation accepted. We will formalise programme and project management methodologies in 2026. Guidance on when and how to update changes to budget will be included in the guidance for the new process.	Partnership Director, SEStran	Senior Partnership Manager, SEStran	31/01/2027

Finding 4 – Change Control

Finding Rating	Medium Priority

SEStran has recently introduced a change control process to manage amendments to projects that have already been approved through the Annual Business Plan process. This represents an improvement in control design, with the process setting out approval hierarchies, based on the type and nature of project changes.

Core project baseline documents

Changes to project milestones and delivery completion dates were not consistently updated within project documentation. In three of the five projects sampled (Transport to Health, Regional Bus Strategy, RTS Delivery Plan), milestone and delivery dates have been changed in the Project and Strategy tracker, which is provided to PaSDOS, but were not consistently updated within relevant project documents.

Budget adjustments and inter-project transfers

The Project and Strategy tracker and the quarterly progress reports do not consistently show budget adjustments and budget transfers between projects. For example, inter-project budget transfer to Thistle Assistance (TA) project amounting to £18,941 (from Regional Bus Strategy and Transport to Health) was not consistently and adequately evidenced within the Project and Strategy Tracker and quarterly progress report.

Alignment between Annual Business Plan, and the Project and Strategy Tracker

The Annual Business Plan is created at the start of each financial year and includes project milestones and deliverables. These milestones should then be stated in the Project and Strategy tracker document, which is part of the reporting to PaSDOS.

However, for five sampled projects:

- the Regional Bike Share milestones for Q1 and Q3 recorded in the Annual Business Plan were not reflected in the project tracker, while Q2 and Q4 milestones recorded in the tracker could not be matched to those in the Annual Business Plan
- for the RTS delivery plan, milestones and delivery dates recorded in the Project Tracker did not align with those in the Annual Business Plan.

Change log

A centralised project change control log helps to ensure all changes to project scope, budget, milestones, and objectives are consistently recorded, tracked, and subject to appropriate oversight. While a change control process has recently been introduced, there is no change log in place.

Risks

- **Project Management –** inconsistent application of change control processes, and incomplete project monitoring arrangements reduce clarity over approved project baselines, delivery milestones, and overall project oversight
- **Financial –** insufficient documentation and reporting of budget adjustments and inter-project budget transfers diminish financial transparency, and the reliability of project financial reporting
- **Reputation –** inconsistent reporting and incomplete monitoring arrangements reduces assurance provided to governance forums, and potentially undermines confidence in project oversight.

Recommendations and Management Actions: Change Control

Ref.	Recommendation	Agreed Management Action	Action Owner	Lead Officers	Timeframe
4.1	Key project documentation should be updated, where relevant, in response to changes agreed at committee.	Recommendation accepted. A change control process and guidance has been developed in Q4 2025/26 which will resolve this recommendation once fully implemented from April 2026. This will be built into formalised programme and project management methodologies in 2026.	Partnership Director, SEStran	Senior Partnership Manager, SEStran	30/06/2026
4.2	All project changes made subsequent to committee approval should be consistently reflected across relevant project documentation and governance records (including the Project and Strategy Tracker and quarterly progress reports).	Recommendation accepted. A change control process and guidance has been developed in Q4 2025/26 which will resolve this recommendation once fully implemented from April 2026. This will be built into formalised programme and project management methodologies in 2026.	Partnership Director, SEStran	Senior Partnership Manager, SEStran	30/06/2026
4.3	A change log should be introduced to ensure any subsequent project changes (such as to milestones and delivery completion dates, budgets, and inter-project transfers) are consistently recorded tracked and monitored (see Recommendation 2.1).	Recommendation accepted. A change log will be introduced to support the new change control process. This will be built into formalised programme and project management methodologies in 2026.	Partnership Director, SEStran	Senior Partnership Manager, SEStran	30/06/2026

Finding 5 – Governance and Oversight

Finding Rating	Medium Priority

Action tracker for PaSDOS meetings

An action tracker to record, track, and monitor agreed actions from governance meetings, including defined ownership, target completion dates, and progress updates supports effective oversight and accountability. Actions agreed during Project and Strategy Delivery Oversight Subgroup (PaSDOS) meetings are recorded within meeting minutes, but there is no dedicated action tracker in place. Actions recorded do not include defined target completion dates, and follow-up of previously agreed actions is not routinely documented.

In addition, the PaSDOS Terms of Reference does not include formal document control information such as ownership, version control, approval records, or review frequency.

Project meetings

While project meetings are held fortnightly, they are not minuted, and the project meeting action tracker does not document explanations for delays or revised completion dates.

Lessons learned and benefits realisation

The review identified that lessons learned are generally captured as part of project closure reporting, including a narrative summary of lessons identified across several areas, together with key takeaways and actions intended to improve the management of future projects.

However, there is no central lessons learned log to support the identification of thematic issues and the consistent sharing of learning across projects to enable continuous improvement. In addition, there is no structured mechanism in place to track, monitor, or report on the achievement of expected project benefits over time. Development of a formal benefit realisation plan or log would allow oversight of benefits achieved.

Assumptions underpinning financial forecasting

For a sample of five projects, the assumptions used to determine budget forecasts were unclear and not clearly documented. In addition, there was no evidence that these assumptions had been subject to independent review or verification by Finance.

Risks

- **Project Management –** incomplete action monitoring arrangements reduce assurance that agreed actions, project decisions, and lessons learned are systematically tracked, implemented, and embedded in project management practise
- **Financial –** the absence of financial forecasting methodology and undocumented assumptions reduces the reliability and transparency of projected budget performance reported to governance forums
- **Governance and Decision Making –** inconsistent governance documentation, oversight arrangements, and financial reporting may weaken management oversight, and limit the availability of reliable information to support effective governance and informed decision making.

Recommendations and Management Actions: Governance and Oversight

Ref.	Recommendation	Agreed Management Action	Action Owner	Lead Officers	Timeframe
5.1	An action tracker should be implemented to record, monitor, and report progress against agreed actions from PaSDOS subgroup meetings, including defined owners, target completion dates, and status updates. (see Recommendation 2.1).	Recommendation accepted. An action tracker exists for team and project meetings. This will be adapted to include actions from PaSDOS meetings.	Partnership Director, SEStran	Senior Partnership Manager, SEStran	31/05/2026
5.2	Project meetings should be consistently minuted. In addition, the action tracker should include clear evidence of progress, overdue actions, and revised completion dates (see Recommendation 2.1).	We recognise the risks associated with the finding. The action tracker will remain the key tool used to record important outputs of project meetings. There are no current plans to take minutes of these meetings. The tracker will be amended to ensure that it meets the other requirements of recommendation 5.2	Partnership Director, SEStran	Senior Partnership Manager, SEStran	31/05/2026
5.3	A document control section should be included within the PaSDOS subgroup's Terms of Reference, detailing document ownership, version control, approval records, and a defined review frequency.	Recommendation accepted. This recommendation has been actioned, and a document control section will be added to other Terms of Reference etc.	Partnership Director, SEStran	Senior Partnership Manager, SEStran	31/08/2026
5.4	A centralised lessons learned log should be implemented to capture lessons identified from projects and track how these are translated into improvement actions (see Recommendation 2.1).	Recommendation accepted. We will formalise programme and project management methodologies in 2026. This will include creation, maintenance of a Lessons Learned log, and guidance on how the log should be used during the inception of new programmes or projects.	Partnership Director, SEStran	Senior Partnership Manager, SEStran	31/01/2027
5.5	A benefits realisation plan and log should be introduced to allow for a structured approach to track, monitor, and report on the achievement of expected project benefits over time (see Recommendation 2.1).	Recommendation accepted. We will formalise programme and project management methodologies in 2026. This will include creation and maintenance of a Benefits Realisation Strategy, and an individual Benefits Realisation plan for each programme or project.	Partnership Director, SEStran	Senior Partnership Manager, SEStran	31/01/2027

Ref.	Recommendation	Agreed Management Action	Action Owner	Lead Officers	Timeframe
5.6	A financial forecasting methodology should be established to ensure forecasts are based on clear assumptions, include documented and verified assumptions, and are subject to appropriate financial review (see Recommendation 2.1).	We recognise the risks associated with the finding, to address these we will formalise programme and project management methodologies in 2026. This will include guidance on documenting assumptions and managing them in the same way that risks are managed.	Partnership Director, SEStran	Senior Partnership Manager, SEStran	31/01/2027

Finding 6 – Contract and Supplier Management

Finding Rating	Medium Priority

Contract award letters and supporting documentation

SEStran engages suppliers to support the delivery of key aspects of projects and issues contract award letters to confirm engagement with contractors, which are treated as contractual agreements between the organisation and the contractor. In this context, contract award letters should include all necessary information including deliverables, milestones, pricing structure, performance measures, and progress reporting requirements to support effective supplier and contract management.

However, aside from the total contract value and the contract period, these letters do not clearly define any of the key elements noted above, with reliance instead being placed on references to the contractor's original tender submission as the basis for pricing and other contractual obligations. Review of documentation for a sample of six contracts identified that:

- while the Contract Award Letter refers to the contract proposal and quotations, in no instances were these documents attached to the Contract Award Letter or clearly incorporated as formal contract documents
- supporting proposal and quotation documents were not standardised and varied significantly in format, clarity, content, and level of detail.

Documentation for contract monitoring and performance oversight

Effective contract monitoring and performance oversight arrangements should be in place and documented, to evidence regular review of supplier performance, including progress meetings, and performance reporting.

However, there was no evidence of meetings with suppliers or receipt of performance monitoring reports. Management confirmed that such records are not generally maintained, and limited evidence was available to demonstrate active oversight, particularly for significant multi-year contracts.

Risks

- **Contract Management –** weaknesses in contract documentation, award arrangements, and contract monitoring processes reduce clarity over contractual obligations, reduce oversight of supplier performance, and may undermine the reliability and legal enforceability of contract award documentation in the event of contractual disputes or litigation
- **Financial –** inconsistent contract documentation and unclear pricing structures reduce assurance over the accuracy, transparency, and control of contractual expenditure
- **Reputational –** insufficient contract governance and monitoring arrangements may undermine confidence in the organisation's ability to effectively manage supplier relationships and contracts.

Recommendations and Management Actions: Contract and Supplier Management

Ref.	Recommendation	Agreed Management Action	Action Owner	Lead Officers	Timeframe
6.1	Contract Award Letters should be strengthened to clearly define key contractual elements, including deliverables, milestones, pricing structures, performance measures, and reporting requirements.	Risk accepted. Contracts issued all have deliverables, milestones, costing, performance and/or reporting requirements that are proportionate to contract size and type. Following legal advice, we will maintain the current approach to issuing contracts and award	Partnership Director, SEStran	Senior Partnership Manager, SEStran	N/A

Ref.	Recommendation	Agreed Management Action	Action Owner	Lead Officers	Timeframe
	Where reliance is placed on supporting proposals or quotations, these should be incorporated into Contract Award Letters or attached as schedules.	letters, and this will be the process followed when revised contracts are developed in Q1 2026/27. This process, including how documents should be stored, will be clarified within the procurement manual which is also under development.			
6.2	A formal contract monitoring and performance management framework should be implemented, which should include the requirement to document evidence of progress, have minuted meetings, and receive and review performance reporting.	Recommendation accepted. Guidance will be produced to clarify when performance management is required, and how it should be implemented and documented.	Partnership Director, SEStran	Senior Partnership Manager, SEStran	31/08/2026

Appendix 1 – Control Assessment and Assurance Definitions

Control Assessment Rating		Control Design Adequacy	Control Operation Effectiveness
Well managed		Well-structured design efficiently achieves fit-for purpose control objectives	Controls consistently applied and operating at optimum level of effectiveness.
Generally Satisfactory		Sound design achieves control objectives	Controls consistently applied
Some Improvement Opportunity		Design is generally sound, with some opportunity to introduce control improvements	Conformance generally sound, with some opportunity to enhance level of conformance
Major Improvement Opportunity		Design is not optimum and may put control objectives at risk	Non-conformance may put control objectives at risk
Control Not Tested	**N/A**	Not applicable for control design assessments	Control not tested, either due to ineffective design or due to design only audit

Overall Assurance Ratings	
Substantial Assurance	A sound system of governance, risk management and control exists, with internal controls operating effectively and being consistently applied to support the achievement of objectives in the area audited.
Reasonable Assurance	There is a generally sound system of governance, risk management and control in place. Some issues, non-compliance or scope for improvement were identified which may put at risk the achievement of objectives in the area audited.
Limited Assurance	Significant gaps, weaknesses or non-compliance were identified. Improvement is required to the system of governance, risk management and control to effectively manage risks to the achievement of objectives in the area audited.
No Assurance	Immediate action is required to address fundamental gaps, weaknesses or non-compliance identified. The system of governance, risk management and control is inadequate to effectively manage risks to the achievement of objectives in the area audited.

Finding Priority Ratings	
Advisory	A finding that does not have a risk impact but has been raised to highlight areas of inefficiencies or good practice.
Low Priority	An issue that results in a small impact to the achievement of objectives in the area audited.
Medium Priority	An issue that results in a moderate impact to the achievement of objectives in the area audited.
High Priority	An issue that results in a severe impact to the achievement of objectives in the area audited.
Critical Priority	An issue that results in a critical impact to the achievement of objectives in the area audited. The issue needs to be resolved as a matter of urgency.

Appendix 2 – Areas of Audit Focus and Control Objectives

Audit Areas	Control Objectives
Risk Management	• risks related to project management are identified, recorded, and managed within a relevant SEStran risk register, and regularly reviewed to ensure appropriate mitigating actions are in place and remain effective.
Information Governance	• information governance risks for project management are clearly understood, and effective controls have been established to ensure adherence to relevant SEStran policies and procedures.
Project Governance	• an appropriate project governance structure and forums (for example, a project board) have been established with clearly defined remits • business cases, or equivalent, have been prepared for projects and approved by the relevant project board, and oversight committee • business cases, or equivalent, contain full and accurate financial information • the business cases, or equivalent, are updated to reflect any significant project changes • clear project plans which detail timeframes, ownership, dependencies, and progress for all key project deliverables have been developed • complete and up-to-date highlight/progress reports are provided to relevant governance forums, which include benefits tracking; risks, issues and dependencies reporting; and budgetary information • governance meetings provide effective scrutiny, and actions are documented, appropriately delegated, and tracked through to completion • clear stakeholder engagement and communication plans have been developed and approved by the relevant governance forums • Integrated Impact Assessments are performed for all relevant projects, and there is confirmation of compliance with the Equality Act 2010's Public Sector Equality Duty • post-implementation reviews are scheduled / have been held to reflect on lessons learned and confirm that all anticipated benefits have been realised.
Project Skills and Experience	• projects are overseen by project managers who are appropriately skilled with relevant project delivery experience • the projects follow SEStran's project management methodology, and guidance from the Scottish Government and HM Treasury where relevant • where required, project management training has been delivered to ensure consistent application of project management methodology and project tools.
Contract and Supplier Management	• effective supplier management arrangements (including sub-contractor) are in place to monitor delivery progress against project timelines, terms and costs are in line with contract terms and conditions.

Risk Register

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide the Partnership with a quarterly update on SEStran's corporate risk register.

1.2 This report was presented to the Performance and Audit Committee on 5 June 2026.

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. KEY NET RISKS

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.

3.2 The Partnership continues to operate within a context of external uncertainty, and the highest-rated risks within the current register reflect this position.

3.3 R001 1.1 Transport Governance

3.3.1 The principal net risk (R001 1.1) relates to the ongoing Transport Scotland review of regional transport governance, which has the potential to lead to changes in the roles, responsibilities and future structure of Regional Transport Partnerships. While this presents a level of uncertainty, it is also recognised as a potential opportunity to strengthen regional delivery arrangements and the Partnership's influence over the implementation of the Regional Transport Strategy. This aligns with recent reports to the Board and Committee on the governance review, and ongoing engagement with Transport Scotland and partner authorities.

3.4 R001 1.3 Political/Government Change

3.4.1 R001 1.3 recognises the continued risk associated with political and policy change, including the implications of recent and forthcoming

electoral cycles and the potential for shifts in national and local transport priorities. This risk is being actively managed through sustained engagement with political stakeholders, the development and promotion of the SEStran Manifesto, and wider communications activity to ensure the Partnership is well positioned to influence emerging policy direction. The linkage between this risk and the governance review is significant, as the direction of national policy will directly inform the outcomes of structural reform.

3.5 R002 2.5 Funding Reductions

3.5.1 In addition, R002 2.5 highlights the ongoing risk of reductions in core funding from the Scottish Government and constituent councils. This reflects the broader financial environment and continued pressure on public sector budgets, with implications for the Partnership's capacity to deliver its statutory duties and strategic objectives. This risk is closely aligned with recent financial planning reports and budget discussions, which emphasise the need for prudent financial management, continued engagement with funding partners, and active pursuit of alternative and external funding streams. The risk also links to wider programme delivery considerations, including reliance on time-limited or restricted funding sources, and the need to ensure that core activities remain sustainable over the medium term.

3.6 Summary

3.6.1 Taken together, these risks highlight a consistent theme across the current register: the Partnership's exposure to external factors, including national policy development, political change, and funding pressures. Current mitigation activity is focused on maintaining strong relationships with key stakeholders, ensuring visibility within national discussions, and aligning financial and organisational planning with a range of potential future scenarios.

3.6.2 Alongside this, the Partnership is exploring more efficient ways to deliver services, both internally and with partners. This supports Transport Scotland's focus on shared services and aims to minimise cost increases, rather than relying on additional funding to maintain existing approaches. Overall, this approach strengthens organisational resilience while positioning SEStran to respond proactively to emerging opportunities as the external environment evolves.

4. RISK REVIEW

4.1 The Board is advised that the Risk Register will be subject to a comprehensive review in response to the Internal Audit findings. As part of this process, the register will be refreshed and rebuilt from first principles to ensure it remains robust, transparent and aligned with current organisational priorities. While the overarching risk management framework will remain unchanged, this review will focus on re-identifying and refining the risks themselves. This approach recognises that the existing register may have become too internally focused over time, and provides an opportunity to strengthen its strategic relevance, improve clarity of risk articulation, and ensure appropriate external context and

challenge are incorporated. This will support more effective identification and management of risks associated with key areas of work, including the delivery of programmes and projects. Next steps will include engaging with senior officers and partners to re-identify key risks and presenting a refreshed register to a future Committee for review and approval.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 The Board is asked to note the contents of the report; and

5.2 Note that a revised and updated risk register will be presented to a future meeting, and

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

APPENDIX 1

Risk Number	Risk Category	Risk Detail	Gross Risk Assessment						Planned Response/Mitigation						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	A new Directorate within TS has been created and an officer has been appointed to lead the transport governance review, which should begin around May 2026. This presents a real opportunity for SEStran, the other RTPs, and local authorities to gain more direct control over delivery of the RTS. The TS review will have a high depndency on the separate SG work on giving regional economic partnerships legal status	4	Probable	4	Major	16	High	**High** **Treat**	Review at end of Sept 2026 Partnership Director	Low	Med	⬇
RO01 1.2	**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. Hybrid Working Policy in place.	3	Possible	3	Moderate	9	Medium	**Medium** **Tolerate**	Review at end of Sept 2026 Partnership Director	Low	Med	⬌
RO01 1.3	**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. A SEStran Manifesto was launched at the SEStran Summit on 4 December. A comms plan targetting MSPs before and after the election is being prepared in conjunction with our public affairs advisers. Officers will outreach to local government politicians in advance of the local government elections in May 2027	3	Possible	4	Major	12	Medium	**Medium** **Tolerate**	Review at end of Sept 2026 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**	June 2026 Partnership Director	Low	Low	⟷
R002 2.1	**Financial**	Staff recharges - externally funded projects: The approved budget assumes 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. 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.	**3**	**Possible**	**3**	**Moderate**	**9**	**Medium**	**Medium** **Tolerate**	June 2026 Partnership Director	Low	Med	⟷
R002 2.2	**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, allowances are made for specific known price inflation. Budgets adjusted in line with current cost forecasts. Ongoing monitoring and review of all costs and forecasts. In preparing estimates for future financial years, 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**	June 2026 Partnership Director	Low	Med	⟷
R002 2.3	**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**	June 2026 Partnership Director	Low	Med	⟷
R002 2.4	**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-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**	June 2026 Partnership Director	Low	Med	↓

R002 2.5	**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**	June 2026 Partnership Director	Low	Med	⟷
R002 2.6	**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-approved by the Partnership Board.	**4**	**Probable**	**3**	**Moderate**	**12**	**Medium**	**Medium** **Tolerate**	June 2026 Partnership Director	Low	Med	⟷
R002 2.7	**Financial**	The Partnership may incur additional staff release costs if current staffing levels cannot be maintained due to funding constraints.	**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**	June 2026 Partnership Director	Low	Med	⟷
R002 2.8	**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. Continue to press case through available channels for multi year funding	**3**	**Possible**	**3**	**Moderate**	**9**	**Medium**	**Medium** **Treat**	June 2026 Partnership Director	Low	Med	↓

R002 2.9	**Financial**	**Increase in employers on-costs:** Changes to UK Government policy (for example increases in employer National Insurance contributions or other statutory on costs) could lead to higher staffing costs than budgeted, placing pressure on revenue budgets and limiting the Partnership's ability to deliver planned activities.	**3**	**Possible**	**3**	**Moderate**	**9**	**Medium**	Monitor UK Government fiscal announcements and emerging policy changes. Reflect known or anticipated changes in medium term financial planning where possible. Maintain dialogue with constituent councils and finance partners on cost pressures and assumptions. Consider mitigation through budget re profiling or prioritisation if increases materialise.	**2**	**Unlikely**	**3**	**Moderate**	**6**	**Low**	**Low** Review annually or following significant fiscal announcements. **Tolerate**	June 2026 Partnership Director	Low	Med	⟷
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 Dec 2026 Programme Manager	Low	Med	⟷
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 at end Dec 2026 Partnership Director	Low	Med	⟷
R003 **3.2**	**Reputational**	**Project Management:** Potential insolvency of 3rd party supplier	**3**	**Possible**	**3**	**Major**	**9**	**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 is nearing completion by Legal Advisers. Staff training on new procedures to be developed.	**2**	**Unlikely**	**3**	**Moderate**	**6**	**Low**	**Medium** **Treat**	Review at end Dec 2026 Programme Manager	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 Dec 2026 Business Manager	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 Dec 2026 Programme Manager	Low	Med	⟷
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 Dec 2026 Programme Manager	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. Create Register of Statutory Duties, to be kept updated, ensure smooth succession planning	2	**Unlikely**	4	**Major**	8	**Medium**	**Treat**	Review at end Dec 2026 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**	Review at end Apr 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 / review Dec 2026 Business Manager	Low	Med	⇔
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.	2	**Unlikely**	4	**Major**	8	**Medium**	**Medium** **Treat**	Ongoing / review Dec 2026 Business Manager	Low	Low	⇓
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 2027 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 Dec 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 Dec 2026 Partnership Director	Low	Low	⇔

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**	~~A~~ppropriate 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 Dec 2026 Partnership Director	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**	2	**Minor**	6	**Low**	**Low** **Tolerate**	Review at end Dec 2026 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 Dec 2026 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 uncertaintity 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**	
	Regional Governance Lack of clarity on role of non statutory REP/ESES City Region Deal groupings	Strategic	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**	**CLOSED** Partnership Director	**Low**	**Med**	
	The approved budget for 2025/26 makes provision for a pay award of up to 3%.	Financial	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**	**CLOSED** ~~December 2025~~ Partnership Director	**Low**	**Med**	

Close 12

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

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.

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

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 The target appetite score for any significant budget overspend will be low. 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, however any specific cyber risks will have a target score of low.
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.

PROJECTS AND STRATEGY PERFORMANCE REPORT

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 This report updates the Board on the performance of the Partnership's strategy and project workstreams in Quarter 4 of 2025/26. An earlier version of this report was presented to the Project and Strategy Delivery Oversight Subgroup and the Performance and Audit Committee.

2 PROJECTS AND STRATEGY QUARTER 4 REPORT

2.1 Appendix 1 gives a breakdown of progress of each project within quarter 4, including against budget and milestones. A project risk register and issues log is also kept and reported to the Project and Strategy Delivery Oversight Subgroup.

2.2 Most projects are on course to utilise the full budget by the end of 2025/26. In addition to previously reported underspend, it is anticipated that final outturns will see a further underspend on around £35,000. The majority of this is in the Transport to Healthcare and Regional Bus Strategy projects, as well as smaller values across several other projects. The reasons for these underspends are consultancy and design costs coming in at less than budgeted for.

2.3 Some key project and strategy updates over the quarter include:

2.3.1 Officers have worked with consultancy Systra to develop an action plan for the Regional Bus Strategy, to be shared with authorities, operators and Transport Scotland, to confirm prioritisation and first actions to progress. More recently, the first SEStran Regional Bus Board was held to review this and agree which actions should be taken forward in 2026/27.

2.3.2 For Transport to Health (TtH), the draft Case for Change report has been completed and reviewed. This has involved gathering and incorporating feedback internally and from Health Boards. The findings from the Case for Change were presented to the Learning Network in March. The Case for Change provides a strong overview on current challenges and opportunities in the region to help us develop an associated Strategy.

2.3.3 The consultants working on SEStransit project have largely completed all the technical analysis work associated with Stage One of the Strategic Business Case. This has included an in-depth analysis of the 2021 census data, and a review of future demand associated with economic growth developments. The Strategic Context Final Report was also completed, which will form a significant element of the Case for Investment report that will be completed at the end of Stage One. In additional to the technical work, the following tasks have been completed:

- The Project Board has been established and the first meeting was held on 29th April.

- An application has been submitted to Transport Scotland for funding in 2026/27 towards the completion of the Strategic Business Case.

2.3.4 For work on freight, the SCOT-ZED project team has carried out 21 interviews with stakeholders in the region which will support second work package focusing on understanding the current system. Following on from these interviews, the project team ran three workshops focused on co-designing future pathways. The workshops had a range of local authority contacts, operators, and other stakeholders with an awareness of the industry's requirements. The latter part of the workshop looked to map out solutions to support a more sustainable and diverse workforce for the HDV sector going forward. These findings, alongside the other work packages, will be analysed and disseminated by the researchers to develop recommendations for SEStran and other stakeholders to take forward. The project team presented the project at the All Energy Conference on 13th May in Glasgow alongside other SCOT-ZED projects. The project team also visited Edinburgh in May to finalise results and meet with industry stakeholders. Next steps for this project are currently being assessed, with the potential for further funding in 2026/27.

2.4 People and Place

2.4.1 The 2025/26 People and Place programme was delivered on time and on budget, with the full grant award drawn down from Transport Scotland and spent delivering impactful projects across the region. As in 2024/25, some limited carryover has been allowed for projects that align with the school term, allowing uninterrupted delivery for them until 30tjh June 2026. The full year evaluation report will be presented to the Board at its next meeting.

2.4.2 Several case studies have been prepared in the past few months, including written examples as well as three videos to showcase a small selectin of the projects we have funded – these can be seen here: https://sestran.gov.uk/casestudies/. The key project progress under the 5 themes in quarter 4 (plus access to cycles and the community grant fund) has been as follows:

2.4.3 As part of our **access to cycles** programme, cycle storage schemes across most LAs are largely completed for workplaces, residential and school sites. Midlothian Council have cycle storage now installed in 4 community locations. The Cycle Access Fund run by Cycling UK continued, working with 11 new organisations to support repair and recycling organisations in Q4 and distributing the full allocation of grant awards across the region. Transition St Andrews community project delivery has enabled 381 bikes to be repaired, 141 bikes loaned at low cost, and clear increases in confidence and likelihood to cycle. Cargo bikes are now in practical use by University Estates teams and students, reducing reliance on vans, while joint work with Police Scotland has improved cycle safety awareness. In Clackmannanshire, 2 new adaptive bikes were purchased for use in community settings and 6 new bikes and accessories were purchased for employability client referrals.

2.4.4 With **schools and young people**, FEL and Linlithgow Community Development Trust delivered 6 bike maintenance sessions, a newly-established after-school bike

club (Bridgend), 7 Healthy Minds sessions, 6 independent travel skills sessions, 15 led rides and walks and 5 route planning sessions. The Bike Buddies programme continues to support young people; 10 bikes are out on loan within the community. FEL supported the delivery of over 300 sessions in Falkirk and Clackmannanshire school hubs, with over 2,500 pupils engaged with. Following the successful completion of delivery in Falkirk, the Bike Buddies programme has now begun in Clackmannanshire. Significant progress has also been made on practical skills and employability development. The Clackmannanshire Bike Repair Shop, hosted at Forth Valley College, is nearing launch, with pupils identified to run the service under FEL supervision. The I Bike project continues, with a total of 232 active travel activities delivered recording 3646 pupil engagements. In Edinburgh, Bike4ever training reached three secondary schools and additional support needs schools, supported by new bikes and helmets and a schools bike maintenance project supported the servicing of 900 bikes. In East Lothian, the Outdoor Education team have delivered the majority of the learn to ride sessions in primary schools, with an extension to continue this delivery to the end of the academic year. In the Scottish Borders, the RIDONKULOUS Behaviour Change Campaign in Hawick has expanded through community and school engagement, new events, and promotion of the Active Travel Network, including successful mass participation and parkrun-linked activity.

2.4.5 Under the **accessibility and inclusion** theme a wide range of projects have been progressed in Q4. In East Lothian, a package of dropped kerb improvements was completed, focused on wheelchair users around two key areas. Quote from a resident: “Thank you so much for these being done, it has made a huge difference to me, and now allows me to get to school, Tesco and the doctors in my wheelchair.” City of Edinburgh Council continues to support social prescribing walks and these have been well attended. Midlothian Council delivered 3 x community active travel engagement sessions. In West Lothian, a 'Steps Together' Health Walk for the residents of Boghall took place, over 15 people attended with an age range of 5-70. These are now run monthly and attendance continues to grow. FEL has continued the delivery of a community e-bike library with growth across Q4. FEL have seen an increase in referrals from NHS rheumatology with interest in developing and continuing the project. Transition St Andrews supported community based bike repair and continued low cost community bike loans. They also delivered an active travel event attracting 450 attendees and updated and distributed 5000 smarter travel maps.

2.4.6 Under the **workplaces** theme, Clackmannanshire Council purchased 6 new bikes and accessories for employability client referrals. This cross-department initiative is in its 2nd year and is pivotal in allowing people to access interviews or accept employment. At the Bioquarter, support has continued for monthly Bike Doctor sessions, regular seasonal nature walks, and a car sharing review enabling staff to trial MobilityWays, resulting in new groups and members. Activity also included travel information drop ins, liaison with bus operators, attendance at site meetings on parking, completion of the 2026 Travel Plan, cycle skills and 1-2-1 training, a StoryMap hub, and a cycle hire feasibility study informing 2026/27 delivery. Forth Valley College achieved the Walking Scotland Walk at Work Award, recognising the College’s ongoing commitment to promoting walking within the workplace.

Midlothian Council have continued to offer staff walks, have expanded the e-bike offer for staff, with e-bike lockers installed for travel between council sites.

2.4.7 Work around **capacity and capability** building has included the delivery of a Local Authority shared learning event in January. The events brought together local authorities to discuss potential areas of collaboration and forward planning for the 2026/27 programme. The behaviour change strategy officer has progressed work with West Lothian Council with a final report due by end of June. Additional meetings were carried out with Local Authorities to support them with the development of their 2026/27 project proposals, which were also reviewed internally. Recruitment process to increase internal capacity was started and will be finalised in April 2026. The team also attended and contributed to Local Authority active travel forums. Urban Foresight successfully carried out 1-1 meetings with a number of funded organisations to collect stories of change capturing lived experience of impact. This will be fully analysed and integrated into the Programme Evaluation report.

2.4.8 On **sustainable transport** projects, as part of Travel Know How NHS Fife and NHS Borders have set up a CalCommmuter platform to support the collection of travel planning data and166 personalised commute plans have been issued at Fife College. ComoUK installed the pop-up hub in Haddington from January through to March. The hub provided the opportunity for engagement, surveys and community outreach alongside active travel activities with local partners such as CyclingUK, Ageing Well East Lothian and Haddington Bikes. Also in East Lothian, Journey Hub placemaking improvements have been agreed and delivered covering multiple sites. CEC continued their promotional work with Enterprise Car Club with membership expected to grow. In Fife, promotion has continued of DRT bus services, including two bus wraps in west Fife. Penicuik Precinct and Glencorse Centre modal hubs were installed throughout March. Also in Midlothian, new home packs with bus day passes, maps and active travel information have been prepared for distribution.

2.4.9 The 15 funded **community projects** are delivering a range of activities across the region, with a good mix of support for walking and cycling initiatives. LCDT continued community engagement through school partnerships and off site cycling activities. Cycle Kitchen sessions were delivered, alongside targeted maintenance training for young people. At Bikes for Refugees 69 bikes were refurbished and distributed and 34 bike fixing sessions were delivered. North Edinburgh Arts increased their delivery of led rides and have delivered a range of training courses for walking and cycling activities to increase capacity and widen their offer. CLEAR Buckhaven has delivered ‘Work-It’ placements, providing training opportunities for Levenmouth Academy pupils who are struggling in a mainstream educational environment. The bike workshop proved a good learning environment for them to develop skills and confidence. Shrub delivered bike diy workshops, sessions for underrepresented groups and supported wheelchair repairs. At Porty Community Energy, the bike library had a strong year of delivery, with 440 hires and 1100 user days. Equal Footing continued access audits and drop kerb mapping, and new adapted cycles were commissioned. Parents for Future Scotland had educational packs completed by seven schools and supported the trial of several walking and

cycling buses. Bridgend Farmhouse have strengthened their skills development programme by introducing a four level structured placement model for young people in the Bike Barn, improving learning outcomes and progression.

2.4.10 Planning to 2026/27 People and Place has been complicated by a late reduction in the revenue funding element of the programme by 60%, or about £1.3million. As this is still be worked through at the time of writing this paper, a verbal update on progress will be provided later on this agenda.

3 COMMUNICATIONS AND MARKETING UPDATE

3.1 Communications and marketing achievements include:

- A four-week digital ad campaign promoting Thistle Assistance cards – leading to almost 600 new app downloads.
- Completing the print and distribution procurement process for Thistle Assistance for the next three years.
- Following procurement, working with a film company to produce three more video case studies of projects we have funded through our People and Place programme.
- Entering and being shortlisted in two categories for the Scottish Transport Awards – Best Practice in Transport Planning and Transport Planning Authority of the Year.
- Three monthly newsletters published
- Various blog posts and factsheets produced
- People and Place newsletter published
- Regular posts on LinkedIn, leading to increased engagement and followers.

4 RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 The Board is asked to note the contents of this report

Michael Melton
Programme Manager
19th June 2026

Appendix 1: 2025/26 Q4 Projects and Strategy Report

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.

Budget	Income	Expenditure	SEStran Spend
Original Budget	£70,500.00	£534,500.00	£464,000.00
Current Budget	£33,500.00	£307,483.43	£273,983.43
Current Actual	£0.00	£232,068.59	
Current Remaining	£33,500.00	£77,894.84	
Predicted Future Spend	£33,500.00	£40,379.47	
Predicted total spend	£33,500.00	£272,448.06	£238,948.06
Predicted Variance	£0.00	£35,035.37	£35,035.37

	Count	Current Exp Budget	% Exp Budget
Major Delay	0	£0	0.0%
Minor Delay	1	£56,921	18.5%
On Target	9	£215,063	69.9%
Underspend >£5k	2	£107,443	34.9%
Underspend <£5k	4	£125,040	40.7%
On Budget	8	£75,000	24.4%
Overspend <£5k	0	£0	0.0%
Overspend >£5k	0	£0	0.0%
Total	**14**	**£307,483**	

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 Remaining	Current Exp Variance
Multi Modal Interchanges	On Budget	↔	On Hold	↔	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0
Freight Strategy Delivery	On Budget	↔	On Target	↔	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0
Regional Cycle Network	On Budget	↔	On Target	↔	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0
RTPI & Ticketing	On Budget	↔	On Target	↔	£9,500	£9,500	£0	£19,500	£19,604	-£104	-£104
Regional Bus Strategy	Underspend >£5k	↓	Minor Delay	↔	£0	£0	£0	£56,921	£53,575	£25,252	£3,345
RTS Delivery Plan	On Budget	↔	On Hold	↔	£0	£0	£0	£22,000	£18,775	£6,225	£3,225
SEStran at Twenty	Underspend <£5k	↔	On Target	↔	£0	£0	£0	£40,000	£35,746	£4,254	£4,254
Rail Strategy	On Budget	↔	On Hold	↔	£0	£0	£0	£13,500	£13,500	£13,500	£0
Data Strategy	On Budget	↔	On Hold	↔	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0
Thistle Assistance	Underspend <£5k	↓	On Target	↔	£24,000	£24,000	£0	£62,531	£59,105	£3,588	£3,426
Transport to Health Strategy	Underspend >£5k	↓	On Target	↔	£0	£0	£0	£50,523	£36,240	£16,762	£14,282
Regional Bike Share	Underspend <£5k	↔	On Target	↔	£0	£0	£0	£12,509	£10,032	£4,288	£2,477
Sustainable Travel Awareness	Underspend <£5k	↔	On Target	↔	£0	£0	£0	£10,000	£6,599	£3,401	£3,401
Project Consultancy Support	On Budget	↔	On Target	↔	£0	£0	£0	£20,000	£19,272	£728	£728
Total					**£33,500**	**£33,500**	**£0**	**£307,483**	**£272,448**	**£77,895**	**£35,035**

Project Name	**Multi Modal Interchanges**
Current Exp Budget	£0
Project Code	92096
SEStran Lead	Rachael Murphy
SEStran Manager	Keith Fisken
Project Partners	All 8 Local Authorities
Lead Partner	SEStran
Last Updated	15/10/2025

Finance Status
On Budget
Programme Status
On Hold

Budget	Income	Expenditure	SEStran Spend
Original Budget	£35,000.00	£100,000.00	£65,000.00
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	0	0%
Delayed	0	0%
Overdue	0	0%
Complete	1	100%

Source of Any Income: n/a

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

Q1 Project Progress and RAG status update	Q1 Objectives & RTS Actions Progress
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.	
Q2 Project Progress and RAG status update	**Q2 Objectives & RTS Actions Progress**
As Project SEStransit progresses, we are looking at project overlap. As part of this, the interchange work will be incorporated into the wider SEStranit project which is being financially managed by City of Edinburgh Council as part of BIF. Any gaps remaining can be addressed in 26/27 which will ensure there is no delivery overlap. The funding allocated to this project, £65k, could reallocated in several ways: Option 1: Shift money into 2526 Stantec work Option 2: Earmark money for SEStran's portion of 2627 RTSDP work or RBS 2627 work Option 3: Spend differently in 2526	
Q3 Project Progress and RAG status update	**Q3 Objectives & RTS Actions Progress**
Due to work on SEStransit, Board agreed to place project on hold and look to carry forward budget to support delvery in 26/27 Updates provided as part of SEStransit	
Q4 Project Progress and RAG status update	**Q4 Objectives & RTS Actions Progress**
N/a - updates provided as part of SEStransit Project on hold so status changed to be on track	

Milestones

Name	Due Date	Revised Date	Completed Date	Status	Last Updated
Confirm funding route for remaining funding based on SEStransit	31/10/25			Cancelled	
Review authorities' preferred sites from RTSDP or LDPs	27/06/25		27/06/25	**Complete**	31/07/25

Project Name	**Freight Strategy Delivery**
Current Exp Budget	£0
Project Code	92090
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	£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	0	0%
Delayed	0	0%
Overdue	0	0%
Complete	2	100%

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

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
Funding bid to the Transport Scotland ZE HDV Skills Challenge Fund 2025-26 was succesful - project called SCOT-ZED: Supporting Careers and Opportunity in Transport – for Zero Emission Diversity in the ZE HDV Sector. SEStran will be working with partners Glasgow University and University of West of England to deliver this by March 2026. Presented Project SEStransit to Green Free port Infrastucture Sub committee - group will explore how to develop plan for GFP to integrate freight	

Q3 Project Progress and RAG status update	Q3 Objectives & RTS Actions Progress
SCOT-ZED - project team in place and meeting. Survey design for questionnaires and workshop format complete and being circulated SEStran officers attanded SCOTFLAG meeting and presented SCOT-ZED project SEStran participating in a bid via ESESCRD to the UKRI Local Innovation Partnerships Fund to focus on freight tram innovation pilot Napier University are reviewing internal proposal for research into regional freight	

Q4 Project Progress and RAG status update	Q4 Objectives & RTS Actions Progress
The SCOT-ZED project team has carried out 21 interviews with stakeholders to support second work package focusing on understanding the current system. Following on from these interviews, the project team ran 3 workshops to co-design future pathways. The workshops had a range of local authority contacts, operators, and other stakeholders. The latter part of the workshop looked to map out solutions to support a more sustainable and diverse workforce for the HDV sector. These findings will be analysed and disseminated by the researchers to develop recommendations for SEStran and other stakeholders. The project team will be presenting the project at the All Energy Conference on 13th May in Glasgow. The project team will also be visiting Edinburgh in May to finalise results and meet with industry stakeholders.	

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			Cancelled	
Create timeline and route-map	31/12/25			Cancelled	
Test pilots identified	31/12/25			Cancelled	
Funding exploration	31/03/26			Cancelled	
Develop business cases where appropriate	31/03/26			Cancelled	
Finalise strategy and publish	31/03/26			Cancelled	

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
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	0	0%
Delayed	5	83%
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. Met with Fife Council active travel and networks to agree approach. Engaged with Ewan Doyle about discussing as part of mass transit work. Met with Marked and scheduled meeting with Hitrans to explore potential of tool/data gathering to support this work.	
Q3 Project Progress and RAG status update	**Q3 Objectives & RTS Actions Progress**
Given other proejct pressures work has not progressed on this as planned to date. Options being considerd for funding for 26/27 to deliver on initial proposals. Follow up meeting held with Marked. Draft business case developed for delivery. Begun work on funding bid for 26/27 to support external resource to progress	
Q4 Project Progress and RAG status update	**Q4 Objectives & RTS Actions Progress**
Submitted application to ATIF Tier 2 funding in January. Set up meeting with Marked to demonstrate work they have been doing for Hitrans to project team. Proejct reprofiled to delivery in 26/27, so reset to be programme on target	

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	18/05/26		Delayed	05/08/25
Complete data collection	31/08/25	03/08/26		Delayed	05/08/25
Complete regional network map	02/01/26	28/09/26		Delayed	05/01/26
Share outcomes with LAs and agree next steps	28/02/26	12/10/26		Delayed	05/01/26
Complete public facing version of map	31/03/26	18/01/27		Delayed	05/01/26

Project Name	**RTPI & Ticketing**
Current Exp Budget	£19,500
Project Code	92019
SEStran Lead	Rebecca Smith
SEStran Manager	Michael Melton
Project Partners	7 Local Authorities plus Stirling Council (ELC partial)
Lead Partner	SEStran
Last Updated	01/05/2026

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	£9,500.00	£19,500.00	£10,000.00
Current Actual	£0.00	£19,603.81	
Current Remaining	£9,500.00	-£103.81	
Predicted Future Spend	£9,500.00	£0.00	
Predicted total spend	£9,500.00	£19,603.81	£10,103.81
Predicted Variance	£0.00	-£103.81	-£103.81

Milestone Status	Count	Percentage
On Track	0	0%
Delayed	0	0%
Overdue	0	0%
Complete	6	100%

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

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. 70% of locations now have site asset tagged, tags sent to the organisation, or have been flagged as inaccessible.	Increasing engagement with new and existing locations has allowed us to raise the profile of the work. Discussions around creating information 'widgets' which can be installed into the organisation's own equipment offers the opportunity to provide high quality information without the infrastructure. The widget is being developed by the provider and will be tested in Q3.
Q3 Project Progress and RAG status update	**Q3 Objectives & RTS Actions Progress**
RTPI contract review taking place ahead of March 2026 contract expiry. Identifying routes to procurement including direct award. Working with NHS Lothian to improve screen displays and looking at expansion of the network at all sites.	Continuing to progress 'widget' options to enable easier infomration sharing.
Q4 Project Progress and RAG status update	**Q4 Objectives & RTS Actions Progress**
Over the last three months, progress on real time passenger information has focused on contract continuity, asset management and screen delivery. Approval was secured to extend the Novus FX RTPI contract to March 2027, ensuring continuity of the regional platform. Capital funding was progressed to support new RTPI screens, including grant variations with partners. Multiple indoor and outdoor screens were brought online, with data issues resolved at education sites and libraries. Asset tagging and audits were advanced to confirm screen status and locations. Engagement with local authorities and suppliers addressed faults, data quality issues and upcoming installations across the region.	

Milestones

Name	Due Date	Revised Date	Completed Date	Status	Last Updated
Contact all organisations with screens offline	30/09/2025		16/09/2025	Complete	16/06/2025
Complete 25/26 audit review of screens	31/03/2026		31/03/2026	Complete	16/06/2025
RTPI SEStran Area Meetings with supplier (Quarterly)	31/03/2026		31/03/2026	Complete	16/06/2025
Complete asset tagging of screens	31/08/2025	20/03/2026	04/04/26	Complete	05/01/26
Decide regional software procurement route	30/11/2025	30/01/2026	02/01/26	Complete	05/01/26
Carry out procurement process for software	30/02/2026		31/03/2026	Complete	16/09/2025

Project Name	**Regional Bus Strategy**
Current Exp Budget	£56,921
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
Underspend >£5k
Programme Status
Minor Delay

Budget	Income	Expenditure	SEStran Spend
Original Budget	£0.00	£71,000.00	£71,000.00
Current Budget	£0.00	£56,920.84	£56,920.84
Current Actual	£0.00	£31,668.54	
Current Remaining	£0.00	£25,252.30	
Predicted Future Spend	£0.00	£21,906.95	
Predicted total spend	£0.00	£53,575.49	£53,575.49
Predicted Variance	£0.00	£3,345.35	£3,345.35

Milestone Status	Count	Percentage
On Track	0	0%
Delayed	0	0%
Overdue	0	0%
Complete	4	100%

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 on the bus strategy received strong response rate of over 5000 replies, including 1600 open text responses.	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**
Public consultation reporting produced and fedback to by SEStran team Timings for final few months shared with LAs ahead of SE Summit Meetings with LAs and operators ahead of sharing final draft Final draft shared with ops/ LAs/ Bus Users UK Preparing presentation script/ slides/ questions for summit Strategy approved by board Strategy launched at Summit Unspent advertsing budget moved to Thistle Assistance. Likely underspend on budget set aside for Work Package 5 (£25k) as some of this work may be completed internally - discussions ongoing	
Q4 Project Progress and RAG status update	**Q4 Objectives & RTS Actions Progress**
Work has been focussed on the level of service review and the wider action plan for the strategy. Both of these projects have been added to our contract with Systra, and will be delivered in Q1 of the next year. Further, we have responded to TS's guidance on franchising for local authorities.	

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		25/08/25	**Complete**	09/09/25
Publication of final strategy	30/09/25	04/12/25	04/12/25	**Complete**	05/01/26

Project Name	**RTS Delivery Plan**
Current Exp Budget	£22,000
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
On Hold

Budget	Income	Expenditure	SEStran Spend
Original Budget	£0.00	£55,000.00	£55,000.00
Current Budget	£0.00	£22,000.00	£22,000.00
Current Actual	£0.00	£15,774.67	
Current Remaining	£0.00	£6,225.33	
Predicted Future Spend	£0.00	£3,000.00	
Predicted total spend	£0.00	£18,774.67	£18,774.67
Predicted Variance	£0.00	£3,225.33	£3,225.33

Milestone Status	Count	Percentage
On Track	0	0%
Delayed	0	0%
Overdue	0	0%
Complete	1	100%

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

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**
Successful BIF funding has progressed MT theme to develop Project SEStransit Data theme progressing with our work with Arup. Freight progressing via strategy work Decarb unprogressed RCN progressing AT theme Interchanges options need to be agreed	
Q3 Project Progress and RAG status update	**Q3 Objectives & RTS Actions Progress**
Arup and Stuart Turnbull brought on as consultants to progress the work Next LA workshop planned for 22/11 PID and wider governance challenges under consideration in conjunction with TS Keith Fisken taking lead role from SEStran team Project SEStransit presented to ESESCRD Directors group and Forth Green Free Port infrastructure committee for information and engagement Budget reduced to £10k (from £55k) as reported to PaSDOS and Board due to costs being met from Bus Infrastructure Fund	
Q4 Project Progress and RAG status update	**Q4 Objectives & RTS Actions Progress**
Continued weekly programme coordination via the Working Group. Active development of the Programme SBC, including task orders and engagement methodology. Direct engagement with Transport Scotland to manage expectations around SBC completion, governance, and funding discussions. Early signals around risk, milestones and delivery management. Project programme to be fully reviewing in 26/27 with new Senior Partnership Manager in post	

Milestones

Name	Due Date	Revised Date	Completed Date	Status	Last Updated
Complete assessment projects that were not included in STPR2	30/08/25			On hold pending review in 26/27	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		On hold pending review in 26/27	05/08/25
Complete review of Matrix Analysis and sense check outputs	30/11/25			On hold pending review in 26/28	05/08/25
Complete assessments and recommend appropriate development route for each projects	31/03/26			On hold pending review in 26/29	05/08/25
Complete assessment of the cost of project development and provide overall estimate	31/03/26			On hold pending review in 26/30	05/08/25
Finalise Monitoring & Evaluation Criteria	31/03/26			On hold pending review in 26/31	05/08/25
Finalise Funding Strategy	31/03/26			On hold pending review in 26/32	05/08/25
Finalise delivery programme	31/03/26			On hold pending review in 26/33	05/08/25
Steering Group Gateway Review	31/03/26			On hold pending review in 26/34	05/08/25

Project Name	**SEStran at Twenty**
Current Exp Budget	£40,000
Project Code	92095
SEStran Lead	Rachael Murphy
SEStran Manager	Keith Fisken
Project Partners	LAs, TS,
Lead Partner	SEStran
Last Updated	05/08/2025

Finance Status
Underspend <£5k
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	£35,745.55	
Current Remaining	£0.00	£4,254.45	
Predicted Future Spend	£0.00	£0.00	
Predicted total spend	£0.00	£35,745.55	£35,745.55
Predicted Variance	£0.00	£4,254.45	£4,254.45

Milestone Status	Count	Percentage
On Track	0	0%
Delayed	0	0%
Overdue	0	0%
Complete	10	100%

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	Event series, perhaps linked to board meetings
	To engage stakeholders and make new connections	Final, major event
	Display the vision that guides our RTS in a more engaging way	Rich picture version of RTS vision

Q1 Project Progress and RAG status update	Q1 Objectives & RTS Actions Progress
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	

Q2 Project Progress and RAG status update	Q2 Objectives & RTS Actions Progress
TBP brought on Cab sec agreeing to speak Manifesto development diaried in - first draft complete Vision work procured and progressing Event booked and invites sent out. Agenda almost finalised.	

Q3 Project Progress and RAG status update	Q3 Objectives & RTS Actions Progress
The Vision tender evaluation marked and awarded Meetings with successful bid to work through RTS objectives and manifesto asks Work progressing well against this to meet deadline ahead of summit Invites sent across all tiers and responses positive Working through confirming agenda	

Q4 Project Progress and RAG status update	Q4 Objectives & RTS Actions Progress
Project compelte in Q3	

Milestones

Name	Due Date	Revised Date	Completed Date	Status	Last Updated
Three factsheets on specific topics.	31/03/26		31/03/26	Complete	13/10/25
Publish 2024/25 Annual Report.	27/06/25		22/07/25	Complete	05/08/25
Complete vision brief	30/08/25		30/08/25	Complete	05/08/25
Send the Save the Date to key invitees	27/06/25	13/08/25	13/08/25	Complete	05/08/25
Procure designers for vision work	30/08/25		30/08/25	Complete	05/08/25
Book event space for celebration	27/06/25		01/08/25	Complete	05/08/25
Produce manifesto	28/11/25		03/12/25	Complete	19/12/25
Set event agenda	31/10/25		30/10/25	Complete	30/10/25
Send event invites	31/10/25		30/10/25	Complete	11/11/25
Vision and associated collateral complete	07/11/25	14/11/25	14/11/25	Complete	30/10/25

Project Name	**Rail Strategy**
Current Exp Budget	£13,500
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 Hold

Budget	Income	Expenditure	SEStran Spend
Original Budget	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00
Current Budget	£0.00	£13,500.00	£13,500.00
Current Actual	£0.00	£0.00	
Current Remaining	£0.00	£13,500.00	
Predicted Future Spend	£0.00	£13,500.00	
Predicted total spend	£0.00	£13,500.00	£13,500.00
Predicted Variance	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00

Milestone Status	Count	Percentage
On Track	0	0%
Delayed	0	0%
Overdue	2	33%
Complete	4	67%

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.

More of the region's towns and settlements could be connected to the existing rail network by the provision of new stations. This is particularly important where significant new

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	Q1 Objectives & RTS Actions Progress
Review of RTS rail chapters completed with rail operators/ NR Conversations underway with NR about better data sharing	

Q2 Project Progress and RAG status update	Q2 Objectives & RTS Actions Progress
Regional Rail Group met in September Winchburgh Steering group meet - business case being finalised for submission to TS & ESESCRD Newburgh rail apprasail with TS for review	

Q3 Project Progress and RAG status update	Q3 Objectives & RTS Actions Progress
Project SEStransit presented to ScotRail as an introduction	

Q4 Project Progress and RAG status update	Q4 Objectives & RTS Actions Progress
Project on hold - elements to be incorproated into SEStransit for 26/27	

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	01/09/25	Complete	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		17/9/25	Complete	17/09/25
Strategy development (draft) - objectives and goals Stakeholder engagement	31/12/25			Overdue	11/10/25
Deliver 3rd meeting of Regioanl Rail Group	31/12/25		10/12/26	Complete	15/01/26
Deliver 4th meeting of Regioanl Rail Group	31/03/26			Overdue	

Project Name	**Data Paper**
Current Exp Budget	£0
Project Code	92094
SEStran Lead	Rachael Murphy
SEStran Manager	Keith Fisken
Project Partners	WFM
Lead Partner	SEStran
Last Updated	30/09/2025

Finance Status
On Budget
Programme Status
On Hold

Budget	Income	Expenditure	SEStran Spend
Original Budget	£0.00	£50,000.00	£50,000.00
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	0	0%
Delayed	0	0%
Overdue	0	0%
Complete	5	100%

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**
Outline meeting with Arup and proposal shared with us Comments returned Waiting for second draft proposal	
Q3 Project Progress and RAG status update	**Q3 Objectives & RTS Actions Progress**
Second draft through from Arup Discussions with Podaris about their tool and how it might be useful to us/ consultants/ partners Spoken to consultants about how they find using Podaris to get wider understanding. All positive. Next step - consider how we bake any such tool into future consultant projects and data conversations with LAs Review Innovate Norway project documents for Assistobe, project group to be formed after internal SEStran approval.	
Q4 Project Progress and RAG status update	**Q4 Objectives & RTS Actions Progress**
Project on hold as reported to Board - to be reassessed in 26/27. Budget reduced to 0 and future milestones cancelled	

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	27/02/26		Cancelled	05/08/25
Establish data and mapping gaps list	30/09/25	13/03/26		Cancelled	05/08/25
Begin discovery plan drafting	19/12/25	13/03/26		Cancelled	05/08/25
Present recommendations paper to board	31/03/26			Cancelled	05/08/25

Project Name	**Thistle Assistance**
Current Exp Budget	£62,531
Project Code	92077
SEStran Lead	Sandra Lavergne
SEStran Manager	Michael Melton
Project Partners	All RTPs
Lead Partner	SEStran
Last Updated	31/03/2026

Finance Status
Underspend <£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	£62,531.00	£38,531.00
Current Actual	£0.00	£58,943.49	
Current Remaining	£24,000.00	£3,587.51	
Predicted Future Spend	£24,000.00	£161.60	
Predicted total spend	£24,000.00	£59,105.09	£35,105.09
Predicted Variance	£0.00	£3,425.91	£3,425.91

	Milestone Status	Count	Percentage
37050			
42050	On Track	0	0%
£43,590.00	Delayed	2	10%
	Overdue	0	0%
42815	Complete	18	90%
61756			
-£775.00	**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	Q1 Objectives & RTS Actions Progress
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.	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	**Q2 Objectives & RTS Actions Progress**
Minor amendments have been made on the card request form based on Lessons learnt. Further development work is currently being undetaken to collect personal information from card requests and app. This will be finalised by the end of October, after which the next campaign will be taking place (from November). Privacy notice being updated. Procurement exercise started to appoint a media agency for future promotional campaigns. Progress on stakeholder engagement: met with TS and all the RTPs for progress update. Transport operators survey distributed.	Update of the privacy policy and amendment on the types of personal data collected in line with data policies will enable: - distribution of future surveys directed at existing users - collection of additional user data Collection and analysis of this information from both card and app usage, will lead to a better understanding of the current audience of the scheme, and potential gaps, as well as use and impact of the scheme in the overall passenger experience. Transport operators survey will provide a more robust baseline on current awareness and engagement with the scheme by the operators.
Q3 Project Progress and RAG status update	**Q3 Objectives & RTS Actions Progress**
The Thistle Assistance digital campaign was Highly Commended as part of the National Transport Awards 2025. New dashboard and development works on the request a card / app to capture personal data of users were finalised early November. Procurement exercise has been carried out for a media agency (work will include TA campaigns). New digital campaign has been carried out for 4 weeks replicating previous successful campaign. A total of 1,171 cards have been requested. Uptake on transport operator survey remains low; identified opportunities to work with CPT to increase uptake, which will take place in Jan. Initial chat on card printing and distriburion procurement done.	With the new 'Request a card' / App format allowing for collection of personal information, we will aim to distribute a follow-up survey in Q4, targeting existing users, to better understand usage of the scheme and potential impact on journey experience. This milestone has been pushed to Q4 to allow enough time for people to reflect on usage of the card/app. Results from the transport operator survey will help shape future engagement initiatives to ensure that the scheme is widely known and understood by operators. This is delayed due to a low uptake.
Q4 Project Progress and RAG status update	**Q4 Objectives & RTS Actions Progress**
Presentation delivered at a CPT Bus Executive meeting in January which has resulted in positive engagement with both Lothian Buses and First Bus. A significant issue related to the app not being available on Google store has now been resolved. Additional budget available to deliver another digital campaign, focusing on the app instead of card uptake. The campaign ran for 4 weeks (between mid Feb to mid March 2026). Procurement exercise finalised for the distribution and printing of cards for 3 years - contract to start in April 2026. Held RTP meeting providing updates and budget information.	A high level plan for 26/27 has been developed and includes a key element on the evaluation of the scheme for Q1 and Q2 - exact scope still to be discussed. It was decided to remove the delivery of the user survey for 25/26 and the transport operator survey, to include this in the Evaluation work for 26/27. This will help us identify if and how the scheme meets our objectives, as well as identify any areas for improvement.

Milestones

Name	Due Date	Revised Date	Completed Date	Status	Last Updated
App quarterly maintenance Q1	30/06/25		05/05/25	Complete	05/05/25
Printing brief circulated to 3 potential suppliers	01/06/25		08/05/25	Complete	08/05/25
Printing supplier appointed	30/06/25		09/06/25	Complete	09/06/25
Provide key updates to the Board	20/06/25		20/06/25	Complete	20/06/25
POD laying out plans for 25/26 approved and signed off	30/09/25		01/08/25	Complete	01/08/25
First RTP Thistle Assistance meeting	30/09/25		01/09/25	Complete	01/09/25
Update privacy policy prior to any new marketing initiative	30/09/25		30/09/25	Complete	30/09/25
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	10/11/25	10/11/25	Complete	10/11/25
Plan next digital marketing campaign	30/09/25	31/10/25	30/10/25	Complete	30/10/25
Transport operator survey created and distributed	30/09/25		25/09/25	Complete	25/09/25
App quarterly maintenance Q3	19/12/25		01/10/25	Complete	30/10/25
Results from transport operator survey collected and analysed	19/12/25	31/03/26	31/03/26	Complete	31/03/26
Digital marketing campaign done	19/12/25		12/12/25	Complete	19/12/25
User survey created and distributed	19/12/25	30/09/26		Delayed	31/03/26
Procurement exercise started to appoint a printer/distributor on a multi-year contract	19/12/25		19/12/25	Complete	19/12/25
App quarterly maintenance Q4	31/03/26		05/01/26	Complete	05/01/26
User survey analysed	31/03/26	30/10/26		Delayed	31/03/26
High level project plan for 26/27 based on all data collected and recommendations	31/03/26		28/02/26	Complete	28/02/26
Procurement exercise finalised with a supplier appointed	31/03/26		25/03/26	Complete	25/03/26

Project Name	Transport to Health Strategy
Current Exp Budget	£50,523
Project Code	92062
SEStran Lead	Rachael Murphy
SEStran Manager	Keith Fisken
Project Partners	NHS Boards
Lead Partner	SEStran
Last Updated	31/03/2026

Finance Status
Underspend >£5k
Programme Status
On Target

Budget	Income	Expenditure	SEStran Spend
Original Budget	£0.00	£60,000.00	£60,000.00
Current Budget	£0.00	£50,522.59	£50,522.59
Current Actual	£0.00	£36,240.24	
Current Remaining	£0.00	£16,762.35	
Predicted Future Spend	£0.00	£0.00	
Predicted total spend	£0.00	£36,240.24	£36,240.24
Predicted Variance	£0.00	£14,282.35	£14,282.35

Milestone Status	Count	Percentage
On Track	0	0%
Delayed	0	0%
Overdue	0	0%
Complete	11	100%

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

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 georgraphies 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 Health Boards 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**
Meetings held with Borders, Lothian, Fife. Further meeting required for Fife and FV. Positive feedback from Fife. Further data collected by DES in August 2025 on disable people's experiences to access healthcare services; data can be compared to an initial survey distributed in 2019.	The C4C will focus on addressing partially or fully the identified research gaps from the Literature Review.
Q3 Project Progress and RAG status update	**Q3 Objectives & RTS Actions Progress**
C4C tender exercise finalised with Urban Foresight appointed. Public and stakeholder engagement will be taking place in Q3. Public consultation saw over 1,500 responses across the region. Meeting with HBs to take them through public consultation/ focus group working. Held second meeting of all RTPs on TtH and agreed to meet again in Jan and consider what if any more structured collab we might want to take on in 26/27. Opportunities to present our work at key meetings will be assessed in Q4 instead of Q3, as well as the review of the Learning Network. Unspent advertsing budget moved to Thistle Assistance.	
Q4 Project Progress and RAG status update	**Q4 Objectives & RTS Actions Progress**
First draft of the C4C has been provided by Urban Foresight and is getting shaped based on comments from SEStran and the HBs. Stakeholder consultation continues to be carried out in January to feed into the C4C, as well as pop-up sessions in key sites (i.e. Borders General Hospital). Held our third meeting with the Learning Network in January to gather feedback on C4C and our fourth and last meeting in March to present final findings of the C4C to the group. Regular RTPs meetings took place in February and March to discuss current funding opportunities and potential impact on our TtH work. Final C4C report is being designed by Urban Foresight.	Although SEStran remains the lead organisation with the development of the Case for Change, we've maintained an active collaboration and engagement with our Learning Network by providing transparency on steps and actions to undertake as part of this work. The Learning Network members have also been involved in this work and invited to comment / share suggestions on the draft Case for Change, providing them with an opportunity to shape the C4C report. The Case for Change will provide a strong overview on current challenges and opportunities in the region to help us develop an associated Strategy. Plans for 26/27 are being developed as part of the Business Plan 26/27; this will involve the revision of the TtH PID.

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	01/12/25	01/12/25	Complete	19/12/25
Webinar for equalities/ other stakeholders?	30/09/25	31/03/26		Late	31/03/26
Pursue work on Case for Change (how to identify potential solutions?)	19/12/25		19/12/25	Complete	19/12/25
Pursue engagement via Learning network	19/12/25		19/12/25	Complete	19/12/25
Review effectiveness of Learning network and identify potential improvements	19/12/25	31/03/26		Late	31/03/26
Presentation draft Case for Change at Q4 Board	31/03/26		13/03/26	Complete	13/03/26
Identify key actions for 26/27	31/03/26		31/03/26	Complete	31/03/26

Project Name	**Regional Bike Share**
Current Exp Budget	£12,509
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
Underspend <£5k
Programme Status
On Target

Budget	Income	Expenditure	SEStran Spend
Original Budget	£0.00	£25,000.00	£25,000.00
Current Budget	£0.00	£12,509.00	£12,509.00
Current Actual	£0.00	£8,221.39	
Current Remaining	£0.00	£4,287.61	
Predicted Future Spend	£0.00	£1,810.92	
Predicted total spend	£0.00	£10,032.31	£10,032.31
Predicted Variance	£0.00	£2,476.69	£2,476.69

Milestone Status	Count	Percentage
On Track	0	0%
Delayed	0	0%
Overdue	0	0%
Complete	5	100%

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**
Engaged with Midlothian and East Lothian about potential locations for Brompton locker. E-bikes surplus to requirement moved to LCDT in Linlithgow to support local hires.	
Q3 Project Progress and RAG status update	**Q3 Objectives & RTS Actions Progress**
Meeting held with QMU to promote Brompton lockers on site. Dunbar Station identified as potential site for Brompton locker as alternative to Haymarket. E-bikes relocated from Walkerburn to Melrose and West Lothian. Blog in newsletter to promote the e-bike employer trial. Review of budget required as any install of Brompton bike hire at Dunbar will not be until 26/27. Approx £12.5k tfrom Haymaket locker unlikely to be spent this year due to delays - will no longer go ahead	Supported addition of e-bikes to Melrose fleet and provided servicing for bikes and small e-bike to West Lothian to meet demand for this size.
Q4 Project Progress and RAG status update	**Q4 Objectives & RTS Actions Progress**
Supported servicing of e-bikes at several locations. Delivery of training also offered to existing Go e-bike projects with Cycle Ride Leader training taking place in West Lothian, Edinburgh and Scottish Borders. Velotech bike maintenance training also supported in Scottish Borders and West Lothian.	

Milestones

Name	Due Date	Revised Date	Completed Date	Status	Last Updated
Complete three employer e-bike trials at NHS sites	31/03/26		31/03/26	Complete	06/04/26
Secure confirmation of Brompton locker location	30/06/25		31/03/26	Complete	06/04/26
Support training sessions for e-bike groups	31/03/26		31/03/26	Complete	06/04/26
Collect case studies from e-bike loans	30/09/25	31/03/26	31/03/26	Complete	06/04/26
Carry out promotion of existing Brompton lockers	01/09/25	31/03/26	31/03/26	Complete	06/04/26

PEOPLE AND PLACE GRANT AWARDS

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 The purpose of this paper is to report grant awards for 2026/27 to the Board for noting.

2 GRANT AWARDS

2.1 As per the Grant Standing Orders, grant awards have been made to various organisations to support delivery of People and Place, Transport to Employment, and wider activities to further the aims of the RTS. All awards were under the delegation limit for approval by the Partnership Director.

2.2 Appendix 1 shows a list of grant awards issued under the People and Place programme for 2025/26. These awards have been updated to reflect funding changes for the programme set out earlier on this agenda. As such, these awards supersede those noted and approved by the Board on 13th March 2026.

2.3 Appendix 2 sets out the Transport to Employment grant awards that have been made to date. Detail is also provided on which programme area these sit within, which are set out earlier on this agenda. The also includes a grant award made to Scottish Borders Council to deliver the workforce mobility programme on behalf of all RTPs, with funding provided by Transport Scotland.

2.4 Appendix 3 lists other grant awards made that fulfil the objectives of the RTS. The reason for offering each grant is given against each one, along with any further relevant detail.

3 RECOMMENDATIONS

3.1 The Partnership Board is asked to note the content of this report and the grant awards contained in appendices 1-3.

Michael Melton
Programme Manager
19th June 2026

Appendix 1: People and Place 2026/27 grant awards
Appendix 2: Transport to Employment 2026/27 grant awards
Appendix 3: Other SEStran 2026/27 grant awards

Policy Implications	All grant awards are made to support the aims of the RTS. Grant awards for People and Place and Transport to Employment also support national policy objective set by Transport Scotland
Financial Implications	All costs are within the approved budget. Grant for People and Place and Transport to Employment are funded via a grant from Transport Scotland to SEStran. Funding agreements are in place for each grant to ensure funds are appropriately managed.
Equalities Implications	In supporting people to travel sustainably, the grants should have a positive impact on equalities. All grantees are expected to comply with the Public Sector Equality Duty when carrying out grant funded activity.
Climate Change Implications	In promoting sustainable travel, the grants will support the transition to net zero.

People and Place Plan 2025/2026 grant awards

Organisation	Project Name	Org Type	Total Award
City of Edinburgh Council		Local Authority	£891,749.10
Clackmannanshire Council		Local Authority	£162,472.50
East Lothian Council		Local Authority	£175,307.27
Falkirk Council		Local Authority	£140,080.25
Fife Council		Local Authority	£527,721.00
Midlothian Council		Local Authority	£ 98,160.00
Scottish Borders Council		Local Authority	£339,289.70
West Lothian Council		Local Authority	£86,640.15
CoMoUK Trust	Pop-up Hub	Large Delivery Partner	£ 65,360.00
Cycling UK	Cycle Access Fund	Large Delivery Partner	£250,000.00
Cycling UK	Connecting Communities Midlothian	Large Delivery Partner	£115,000.00
Cycling UK	Connecting Communities - East Lothian	Large Delivery Partner	£115,000.00
Cycling UK	Play Together on Pedals	Large Delivery Partner	£40,000.00
FEL Scotland	FEL Schools	Large Delivery Partner	£360,548.00
FEL Scotland	Linlithgow Academy Active Travel Hub	Large Delivery Partner	£102,788.00
FEL Scotland	FEL Community	Large Delivery Partner	£79,303.00
Forth Valley College	FVC Routes to Active and Sustainable Travel	Large Delivery Partner	£31,078.00
Greener Kirkcaldy	Fife Access to Cycles project	Large Delivery Partner	£110,000.00
Greener Kirkcaldy	Healthy and Active Ways to Work Fife project	Large Delivery Partner	£95,000.00
The Bike Station	Kids Bike Life	Large Delivery Partner	£143,467.38
The Bike Station	Wee Bike Library	Large Delivery Partner	£128,404.61
Scottish Cycling	Rock Up & Ride Inclusive Communities (Edinburgh)	Large Delivery Partner	£65,000.00
Scottish Cycling	Rock Up & Ride Inclusive Communities (Fife)	Large Delivery Partner	£65,000.00
Travelknowhow Scotland (Shona Drummond Marketing Ltd)	Travelknowhow Scotland/ CalCommuter Workplace Travel Planning Support 2026/27	Large Delivery Partner	£4,000.00
University of Edinburgh	BioQuarter Sustainable Travel	Large Delivery Partner	£49,056.00
Transition University of St Andrews	A More Active Way St Andrews	Large Delivery Partner	£32,575.00
Walk Wheel Cycle Trust	I Bike SEStran	Large Delivery Partner	£243,029.00
Walk Wheel Cycle Trust	Behaviour Change Embedded Officer	Large Delivery Partner	£15,000.00
A Greener Melrose SCIO	E-bikes for Borderers (EB4B)	Community Group	£13,169.00

Bikes for Refugees (Scotland) SCIO	Edinburgh New Scots Cycling Inclusion Project	Community Group	£36,371.00
Borders Wheels	Indoor Walking	Community Group	£14,000.00
Bridgend Farmhouse	Community on the Move	Community Group	£28,668.00
Clackmannan Development Trust (CDT)	Clackmannan Active Travel Hub	Community Group	£16,048.00
FEL Scotland	Community Grants	Community Group	£35,000.00
Hope in Place	Hope on Wheels – Fife	Community Group	£36,840.00
In-Tandem East Lothian	Expanding Participation through Cycling	Community Group	£26,364.00
Just Cycle Ltd	Just Cycle community hub expansion pilot	Community Group	£5,950.00
Linlithgow Community Development Trust	Move For Good 2627 - LCDT Active Travel programme	Community Group	£21,135.24
North Edinburgh Arts	North Edinburgh Active Travel	Community Group	£20,000.00
Parents For Future Scotland	Clean Air In Edinburgh Schools	Community Group	£28,950.00
Porty Community Energy	Porty Community Energy bike library and Equal Footing project	Community Group	£33,630.00
SHRUB Cooperative	Wee Spoke Hub	Community Group	£5,000.00
Stow Cycle Hub CIC	Stow Cycle Hub CIC	Community Group	£23,478.00
Strengthening Communities for Race Equality Scotland (SCOREscotland)	Wester Hailes Walk, Pedal & Thrive 2026/27	Community Group	£20,000.00
The Pennypit Community Development Trust	Prestonpans Walking Bus	Community Group	£8,619.00

Transport to Employment 2025/2026 grant awards

Project Name	Organisation	Programme Area	Total Award
Transport Access Pilot	FEL Scotland	Working with School Communities	£87,600
Skills Development & Apprenticeships within Kids Bike Life	The Bike Station	Working with School Communities	£77,455
School communities careers pathways	Powering Futures	Working with School Communities	£50,000
Midlothian west links to RIE	Midlothian Council	Transport to large workplaces	£245,000
East Lothian links to Fort Kinnarid and Western General	East Lothian Council	Transport to large workplaces	£103,000
East Lothian links to RIE	East Lothian Council	Transport to large workplaces	£102,700
West Lothian Sunday Links	West Lothian Council	Transport to large workplaces	£190,000
Supporting access to NHS sites in Fife	Greener Kirkcaldy	Transport to large workplaces	£25,000
Paid transport related work placements	Clackmannanshire Council	LEP Delivery Support	£66,000
Contribution to Transformation Space	Clackmannanshire Council	LEP Delivery Support	£40,000
After school transport to support employment for parents	Clackmannanshire Council	Rural Transport to Work and Further Education	£12,000
Travel for NHS skill academies	Clackmannanshire Council	Rural Transport to Work and Further Education	£15,000
New Bus Route linking Hawick directly to the Borders General Hospital	Scottish Borders Council	Rural Transport to Work and Further Education	£125,000
Direct link to Borders College from Tweeddale serving Peebles	Scottish Borders Council	Rural Transport to Work and Further Education	£70,000
RIDONKULOUS Project Expansion into employability	Scottish Borders Council	Rural Transport to Work and Further Education	£50,000
South west Fife DRT	Fife Council	Rural Transport to Work and Further Education	£300,000
Levenmouth DRT	Fife Council	Transport to Healthcare Pilot Projects	£200,000
Clacks to Forth Valley Hospital DRT pilot	Clackmannanshire Council	Transport to Healthcare Pilot Projects	£20,000
Employer Engagement role to strengthen employer engagement and targeted support	West Lothian Council	Capacity and Capability	£60,000

Job Broker Post to support employer engagement	Clackmannanshire Council	Capacity and Capability	£49,887
Dedicated Behaviour Change Officer - Transport to Employment	Scottish Borders Council	Capacity and Capability	£42,000
Workforce Mobility Project Delivery	Scottish Borders Council	Workforce Mobility Project	£172,272.99

Other SEStran 2025/2026 grant awards

Project Name	Organisation	Description	Total Award
Edinburgh and Lothians Regional Equality Centre	Edinburgh and Lothians Regional Equality Centre Ongoing Delivery	A small award to support the ongoing running of the organisation for 1 month to deliver active travel projects and allow alternative funding sources to be explored following unsuccessful people and place funding application.	£3,000
Climate Risk Interdependencies Project	University Of Glasgow (National Centre for Resilience)	Supports a Scotland-wide study to map and model climate-related infrastructure interdependencies, including risk cascade analysis. Outputs will include an open-access database, interactive model, and case studies to support resilience planning across critical infrastructure systems.	£10,000
Powering Futures	Powering Futures	An award on behalf of SEStran and other RTPs to jointly sponsor a transport challenge for school pupils as part of the wider Powering Future initiative to equip young people with the meta and employability skills needed for the jobs in a net zero future.	£30,000