DELIVERY PROGRAMME PERFORMANCE REPORT

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 This report updates the Committee on the performance of the Partnership's strategy and project workstreams for 2026/27, focusing on quarter 2.

2 BACKGROUND

2.1 In previous reporting cycles, this report was presented to the Project and Strategy Delivery Oversight Group (PaSDOS) prior to issuing to this Committee. Following the revision to the PaSDOS terms of reference, this report will no longer be reviewed by PaSDOS, and so the P&A Committee will be the principal location for scrutiny of SEStran's delivery programme.

2.2 In light of the above and the move to a programmatic approach for delivery work, the format of this report will be revised for the next quarter – this had been planned for this quarter but other work had to be prioritised. These revisions will focus on a clear dashboard overview for each project, alongside a single overview dashboard. Going forward, this covering report will be reduced as all key information will be included on each dashboard.

2.3 Members should also note that spend to date and budget projections, broken down by programme, are included in the Finance Officer Report elsewhere on this agenda. This paper will therefore focus on delivery against milestones, risks and issues.

3 PEOPLE AND PLACE (P&P)

3.1 Status Update

P&P is currently on budget and programme, with the budget fully allocated, and it is expected that the grant will be spent in full as in 2025/26.

3.2 Milestones

1 milestone is delayed, and all others are either complete or on track. The delayed milestone in relation to the programme evaluation approach is currently being progressed and anticipated to be achieved by the end of Q3, with no impact on the overall programme.

3.3 Risks

The top 3 risks currently identified, along with their current mitigations, are:

Risk: Reduction in revenue funding could lead to an inequitable programme that favours cycling over walking and wheeling and/or lacks capacity to engage with seldom heard groups – rated as a high risk.

Mitigation: The impact of reduced revenue funding is being raised continually with Transport Scotland. Planning for 2027/28 will consider how available revenue funding can be optimised to protect walking and wheeling projects, supported by monitoring the transport modes covered by funded projects.

Risk: Errors being made in payments after they have been authorised and passed to CEC for payment, resulting in overpayment or payments to the wrong account that need to be recovered and/or underpayments that impact fundees' cashflow – rated as a high risk.

Mitigation: Payment errors will be escalated with the CEC finance team to understand their causes, identify preventative measures, and ensure any future errors are prevented or, if they do occur, that they are detected and resolved quickly.

Risk: With the reductions to funding in 2026/27, schools' projects have had completion dates shortened by 3 months i.e. Q4+1 is no longer funded so, in 2026/27, they are funded from Q4+1 of 2025/26 plus 9 months funding from the 2026/27 budget. This risks creating an increased funding gap for 2027/28 if the reduction is continued because, without funding for Q4+1 from this year's funding, schools will require 12 months funding from the 2027/28 budget. This is rated as a medium risk.

Mitigation: The potential 2027/28 funding gap for school projects will be built into programme planning, with delivery organisations made aware of the pressures and the issue continuing to be raised with Transport Scotland.

3.4 Issues

There are two issues logged for the People and Place programme. One relates to the revenue funding reduction that was previously reported to the Board. The second is a medium severity issue around incorrect payments being made – this is as per the risk noted above.

4 REGIONAL BUS ACTION PLAN (RBAP)

4.1 Status Update

The Regional Bus Action Plan is currently on programme. Governance arrangements are in place through the Regional Bus Programme Board, with actions being agreed for Year 1. Thistle Assistance and Real Time Passenger Information remain on budget and on target.

4.2 Milestones

Key Quarter 2 milestones have been achieved, with priority actions for Year 1 agreed with the Bus Board, which will be integrated into the Regional Bus Action Plan being

developed by SYSTRA. Progress has been made on the procurement of Podaris transport planning software, with the platform intended to support planning and analysis across multiple projects. A Bus Board meeting was held early September; it saw significant engagement from stakeholders and discussions focused on SEStransit, the Congestion working group proposal and the paper on Bus Service Improvement Partnerships. Following this, the Bus Board agreed to the creation of a Congestion working group which will take place in early December.

One Thistle Assistance milestone has been delayed and reprogrammed, with all others completed or on track.

One RTPI milestone has been completed, with work underway to complete the rest of the milestones.

4.3 Risks

The top three risks and their mitigations are:

Risk: Changes to services, fares, or access could reduce public trust or disproportionately impact certain groups (e.g. rural, digitally excluded).

Mitigation: Embed Equality Impact Assessments and targeted engagement in all workstreams. Use pilot approach with visible benefits to make the case for supported services. Advocacy and facilitating engagement to ensure action is taken early where services are at risk or new policy will heavily impact the network.

Risk: The respective future roles and responsibilities of SEStran, constituent local authorities, Transport Scotland and other partners under a franchised or more regulated system are not yet clear, creating uncertainty for programme planning and decision-making.

Mitigation: Continue to keep Programme Initiation Documents; Risk, Assumptions, Issues and Dependencies (RAID) log; Comms Plan; and milestones up to date and ensure change control forms are completed where appropriate. Use agile project management processes to ensure we are ready for changes.

Risk: Real Time Passenger Information: Lack of knowledge and resource within the project results in screens being installed poorly or behind schedule.

Mitigation: Procure expert consultant support to ensure the standard for screens across the region improves to:

- Ensure 100% of screens are being tested by the supplier
- Ensure supplier delivers the screens within the financial year and works with local authorities to overcome any blockers
- Support knowledge of screen maintenance to ensure local authorities are better equipped to report defective screens

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4.4 Issues

There are currently two issues logged for the Thistle Assistance project. One issue is related to the app having been removed from the Apple store. Next steps have been agreed internally, and efforts are currently being made to enable the app to be reinstated on the app store. The other issue is about the Thistle Assistance 'contact us' form on the website, which has stopped working, preventing any queries from reaching the Thistle Assistance inbox. The origin of the issue has been identified, and efforts are currently being made with our IT supplier to resolve this issue shortly.

5 TRANSPORT TO HEALTH (TtH)

5.1 Status Update

TtH is currently on budget and on target. The budget is 70% committed and the remainder is expected to be spent in full this financial year.

5.2 Milestones

Quarter 2 saw the completion of one milestone, with a consultant appointed to support capacity and a stakeholder engagement plan agreed to review TPOs. Three milestones are currently delayed with the rest of them being either completed or on track. The delayed milestone in relation to the strategic engagement with the Health Boards has seen its remit changed and due date revised to reflect amended project plans. Although a draft vision is now in place, the associated milestone is delayed pending final internal approval, which should be achieved by mid-November. The third one relates to engagement activities with stakeholders has now a revised date and is now on track to be completed by the end of December 2026.

5.3 Risks

The top 3 risks currently identified, along with their current mitigations, are:

Risk: £2 Bus Fare impacts the bus market such that routes are cut or funding for wider transport interventions is unavailable.

Mitigation: We are actively monitoring and influencing Transport Scotland / Scottish Government as part of the development of the Bus bill.

Risk: Lack of buy-in and commitment from stakeholders at officer and senior level, diminishing quality, collaboration of efforts and limiting progress.

Mitigation: With the consultants appointed, a stakeholder engagement plan has been agreed to maximise value of engagement activities while being mindful of the time commitments required from our partner organisations. Additionally, following the initial letter addressed to each NHS Boards CEO, further internal discussions have led to a revised approach to establish a more formal engagement with them.

This will result in online meetings being held in January 2027 to present the TtH vision, the TPOs and shortlist of interventions.

Risk: Proposed NHS Scotland restructuring may alter Health Board governance arrangements, leadership structures, priorities and decision-making processes during delivery of the Transport to Health programme. This could lead to delays in stakeholder engagement, uncertainty regarding programme ownership, or changes in strategic priorities.

Mitigation: We aim to maintain engagement at multiple organisational levels (executive, strategic and operational), regularly monitor Scottish Government reform developments. We'll review stakeholder mapping regularly and update governance arrangements as required and we'll ensure programme objectives align with national health priorities rather than individual board structures.

5.4 Issues

There are currently no issues recorded for this programme.

6 TRANSPORT TO EMPLOYMENT (TtE)

6.1 Status Update

TtE is currently on budget and programme. There remains approximately £100,000 of budget to be committed, but plans are in place to allocate this funding and it is still expected that the grant will be spent in full.

6.2 Milestones

Most milestones are currently on track or complete with the exception of one milestone in relation to the evaluation framework. This milestone is slightly delayed and expected to be achieved by the end of Q3. This delay is not expected to have a knock-on impact on the programme.

6.3 Risks

The top 3 risks currently identified, along with their current mitigations, are:

Risk: Errors being made in payments after they have been authorised and passed to CEC for payment, resulting in overpayment or payments to the wrong account that need to be recovered and/or underpayments that impact fundees' cashflow – rated as a high risk.

Mitigation: Payment errors will be escalated with the CEC finance team to understand their causes, identify preventative measures, and ensure any future errors are prevented or, if they do occur, that they are detected and resolved quickly.

Risk: TtE is a new work area for SEStran and therefore knowledge of the best solutions may be lacking, which could lead to low quality proposals and/or lack of

faith in SEStran's ability to deliver from those already working in this area – rated as a medium risk

Mitigation: We have sought input from external partners and existing experts in the field, including the Workforce Mobility Programme, Community Planning Partnership partners and Local Employability Partnerships (LEPs). Engagement with these organisations is intended to improve understanding of effective approaches, while further knowledge development opportunities for the SEStran team are being identified during 2026/27.

Risk: Lack of national guidance on evaluation, combined with likely difficulty in evidence in significant shift in child poverty in one year, results in risk of programme not showing significant impact on its core aim – rated as a medium risk

Mitigation: We are maintaining ongoing engagement with Transport Scotland and other Regional Transport Partnerships to agree evaluation requirements and core outcomes. In addition, a specialist consultant has been commissioned to work with SEStran and three other RTPs to develop an evaluation framework and undertake programme evaluation, with the risk to be reviewed when that framework is in place.

6.4 Issues

There are currently no issues recorded for this programme

7 REGIONAL TRANSPORT STRATEGY DELIVERY PLAN (RTSDP)

7.1 Following the confirmation of a multi-year grant award from the Local Growth Fund, work on the RTSDP has restarted during 2026/27 following delays associated with the confirmation of funding and a lack of internal capacity. The programme will build on the prioritisation work already undertaken with regional partners to develop a coherent and investable pipeline of strategic transport interventions across South East Scotland. This will also be aligned with the development of SEStransit and the Regional Bus programme.

7.2 A comprehensive consultancy commission has now been awarded to take forward the next phase of the Delivery Plan. The commission includes reviewing and refining existing project prioritisation, undertaking baseline mapping and gap analysis, reviewing relevant recommendations from the 2nd Strategic Transport Project Review, and identifying future regional investment priorities. This work will provide the evidence base for developing a prioritised and deliverable programme of interventions to 2035 and beyond.

7.3 It is anticipated that from next quarter that the RTSDP will be reported in a similar format to the other programmes above.

8 SEStransit

8.1 Following the delayed confirmation of Bus Infrastructure Funding, SEStransit has belatedly moved into the next phase of developing a Programme-Level Strategic Business Case. The programme is intended to form a coordinated, long-term approach to public transport investment across South East Scotland. It continues to be developed in partnership with local authorities, Transport Scotland and other regional stakeholders, building on completion of the Strategic Context and the evidence developed through the Case for Investment.

8.2 The next phase will focus on identifying, modelling and appraising potential transport interventions to improve regional connectivity. This will include further stakeholder engagement and development of the environmental and impact assessment work alongside the commercial, financial and management cases. The resulting business case will provide the basis for an integrated regional programme of future public transport investment.

8.3 Procurement for additional programme management support has also concluded, providing dedicated capacity to manage the next phase of SEStransit through to December 2027 (subject to funding continuing into 2027/28). This additional resource will strengthen programme governance, coordination, programme controls and management of the substantial technical consultancy work required as the Strategic Business Case progresses. This will also include the formation of a wide Programme Management Office, bringing in additional resource for communications and stakeholder engagement as well as programme administration, all funded by the Bus Infrastructure Fund.

9 CROSS PROGRAMME WORK

9.1 This area of works covers Comms and Marketing, Project Consultancy, and the projects contingency budget.

9.2 Comms and Marketing

This funding has covered the redesign of the SEStran logo (which is now complete) and will also be used to rebuild and redesign the SEStran website to enable our messaging to reach our target audiences in a clear, effective and impactful way (for which work is now underway). There are no specific risks for this area of work. Milestones are all complete or on track, with the procurement for the website completed slightly late, but work will still complete in advance of 31st March 2027. The budget is fully allocated with a small contingency remaining.

9.3 Project Consultancy

This funding has covered seconded roles within the projects team to provide additional capacity and experience. There are no specific milestones or risks associated with this budget. We are predicting a slight underspend based on current commitments, which cancels out the slight overspend noted in 9.4.

9.4 Projects Contingency

This budget is covering a wide range of both unexpected costs that have come up in year related to other delivery areas, as well as providing funding for standalone opportunities that have arisen, such as sponsorship of a Powering Futures Challenge, work looking at land value capture, and support for work on a data strategy. There are no specific milestones or risks associated with this project. The budget is predicting a slight overspend based on current commitments, which is cancelled out by the slight underspend noted in 9.3.

10 RECOMMENDATIONS

10.1 The Committee is asked to note the contents of this report

Michael Melton
Programme Manager
20th November 2026

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.