

North East Transport Consultative Forum

Note of Tenth Meeting, 17 November 2008

Woodhill House, Aberdeen, 1700-2000

The meeting was attended by 30 of the Forum's members and held in Committee Room 5 Woodhill House, Aberdeen. The meeting covered three main topics: Nestrans' emerging Bus Action Plan and Freight Action Plan and the Draft Strategy for Strategic Casualty Reduction.

Councillor Kevin Stewart, as Chair of Nestrans introduced the meeting and Rab Dickson, Transport Strategy Manager with Nestrans, gave a short presentation, which included mention of the ministerial approval of the Regional Transport Strategy and an update on progress since the last Forum meeting last November and future aims. John Yellowlees of First ScotRail then gave an update on the new rail timetables that come into effect on 14 December outlining the improvements, but noted that they would be kept under review and feedback on any issues was welcomed.

There were then three presentations illustrated by slides¹:

- Neil Birch, Deputy Divisional Director at MVA Consultancy, gave a presentation on the development of the Bus Action Plan and the identified issues and possible actions therein.
- Paul Finch, Associate Director at Faber Maunsell Consultancy, gave a presentation on the development of the Freight Action Plan. He outlined the objective agreed at a freight workshop and described the actions that are being suggested within the themes of publicity/organisation, mode specific road network actions, rail and sea freight actions and ease of use for the industry.
- Chief Inspector Tom Forrester of Grampian Police then gave a presentation on the North East of Scotland Road Casualty Reduction Strategy. He outlined the background to developing the Strategy, its aims, the top ten challenges being faced and who would be responsible for taking it forward

The meeting then split into three workshops to consider the following questions relating to the development of the Action Plans:

1. Are Action Plans going in the right direction?
2. Are actions supported?
3. Will they combine into a Delivery Plan?
4. What are the priorities
5. How can they be delivered?

¹ Copies of the powerpoint presentations are available on our website <http://www.nestrans.org.uk/news/articles.asp>

Following the workshop sessions, Margaret Bochel, Head of Planning & Infrastructure, Aberdeen City Council, gave a presentation to provide an overview of the Council's current financial position and the key issues associated with setting the budget for 2009/10². There was then a plenary feedback session from the workshops and an opportunity for discussion.

The date for the next North East Transport Consultative Forum will be advised in due course.

A light buffet and tea/coffee followed the formal conclusion of the meeting.

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² Copies of the powerpoint presentations are available on our website
<http://www.nestrans.org.uk/news/articles.asp>

Notes from Workshop Group A

Chair - Councillor Kevin Stewart, Nestrans Chair
Facilitator - Don Kent, Nestrans

Other group members: Gregor McAbery (Aberdeen City Environmental Forum), Sarah Campbell (GREC), Councillor Graeme Clark (Nestrans Board), Stan Flett (Aberdeen Disability Advisory Group), Chief Inspector Tom Forrester (Grampian Police), Ritchie Fraser (Faber Maunsell), David Lindsey (Cycle Touring Club (Grampian)), Councillor Alan Milne (Aberdeen City Council), John Yellowlees (First ScotRail).

Bus Action Plan

The group agreed that more bus monitoring of both routes and performance was needed to allow a route by route analysis and strategy. There was considerable comment on the problems of access from the Shire to the city by public transport and it was noted that cost is a major issue with fares in Aberdeen higher than other areas. Discussion was had around that issue and of Smartcards and their development.

Access - it was noted that the new coaches used on some shire routes have lifts which are accessible by those in wheelchairs but not by the walking disabled as it is too dangerous to stand on the lift. Low floor buses with coach seats were suggested. The Deeside route in particular was mentioned as having the potential to carry bikes possibly in a trailer as other areas have done. The potential for tourism was felt to be good.

The bus route development grant is no longer ring-fenced. Local Authorities are now given money in a block grant to spend how they see fit. It was felt this could pose a problem in kickstarting routes to new developments. It was asked why the potential for Wi Fi had not been explored on buses as it was in some park and ride sites. There was discussion as to if Megabus should stop at least once on the by-pass of some of the coastal villages and towns. Some felt it would slow down and make the service more expensive. The role of feeder buses was explored to take people to Megabus

Questions were asked about the future delivery of more park and ride sites.

Freight

The monitoring of freight movements which had been described in the previous session as difficult was felt to be relatively easy as all containers were fitted with existing microchips to track their progress and whereabouts. Comment was made about the lack of use of Raiths Farm rail freight depot only just opened. Was its construction for the now troubled paper industry or a way of getting space for retail on Union Square?

There was discussion on the problems of the industry including congestion caused by car drivers, HOV lanes and the hopefully temporary loss of Rosyth – Zbrugge Ferry. Lorry parking was a problem but it was pointed out that the traffic commissioners have powers over parking and they should be invoked

Casualty reduction

Cost was £1.4m per fatality the number 1 demographic and location was a male under 25 in a 60mph road. Off School bus fatalities – these were pedestrians and education was felt to be the prevention key. There was felt to be a problem with some car drivers in the city centre abusing red lights and targeting pedestrians.

Notes from Workshop Group B

- Chair** - Eddie Anderson, Nestrans Board Member
Facilitator - Jennifer Anderson, Nestrans

Other group members: Neill Birch (MVA), Iain Gabriel (Aberdeen City Council), Councillor Jill Webster (Nestrans Board Member), Rachel Milne (Aberdeenshire Community Transport Forum), Bill Phillips (The Big Partnership), Stuart Torpay (BAA Aberdeen Airport Ltd), Councillor Jenny Laing (Aberdeen City Council), Scott Ramsay (Aberdeen City Council), Douglas Forson (Scottish Government).

Bus Action Plan

The group stated that it would be difficult to respond to the set questions relating to the actions as the specific measures had not been detailed in the presentation. Instead the group raised key concerns such as how to successfully improve access to/from the airport and queried the numbers who would use a shuttlebus from Dyce rail station to the airport and long term funding and success of this proposed service. It was asked if the bus operators were likely to buy into the actions within the plan, but Council officers noted the quality partnership that exists and the good working relationship within the Local Authority Bus Operators Forum (LABOF). Assurances were sought that alternatives for ensuring accessibility in less populated areas would be built into the Action Plan eg DRT/Community Transport and whether it would look at access issues for the elderly and disabled. Council influence on bus network routes, frequencies and fares, which were considered to be expensive in the north east, was queried and comparison drawn with the bus system in Edinburgh. The group also asked whether Statutory Quality Partnerships would be considered. They then asked if there were actions relating to the provision of a successful Park & Ride network and whether other complimentary usages of the sites, such as for overnight lorry parking were proposed.

Freight Action Plan

Question raised as to whether there are environmental targets within the Action Plan as this may assist with the declared Air Quality Management Areas within the City – all of which are quite heavily trafficked by HGV's. The group were surprised at the lack of freight movement information available and agreed that it is important to find out the type and tonnage of freight being transported and the origins/destinations to be able to define the interventions that would be of greatest benefit. Also questioned what could be done to encourage more freight to be transferred to rail and noted the problems with the current grant system. It was agreed that having freight distribution centres would be of benefit.

General Discussion

It was questioned whether the action plans would be aspirational enough and suggested that they should start with identifying the goals then work down to the detail on how to achieve this. The plans should identify the main priorities and targets that will be achieved through implementation. It was noted that delivery of the actions and thus starting to achieve the aims of the RTS would be highly beneficial from a public relations point of view in helping to engage with the general public, businesses etc for the promotion and further delivery of the RTS.

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Notes from Workshop Group C

Chair and Facilitator - Rab Dickson, Nestrans

Other group members: Maggie Bochel (Aberdeen City Council), Brian Crouch (Grampian Fire and Rescue Service), Paul Finch (Faber Maunsell), Anne Fraser (Dyce TMO), Roddy MacTaggart (Aberdeen City Council), Louise Smith (Nestrans), Rita Stephen (ACSEF)

Action Plans

It was noted that a lot is happening, there is significant progress on many transport schemes and this should be emphasised. There is also a need to emphasise ongoing action, as well as Action Plans (Achievements). It was felt that projects should be seen as a series of increments with milestones – perhaps this could be demonstrated as a timeline (and noted that pictures often get a start across effectively). An example was Aberdeen local rail/Crossrail, where improvements had taken place towards the overall scheme. Other priorities were seen as integrated ticketing and Freight, recognising the challenges facing rail freight.

Actions

It was felt to be important that authorities are influencing the private sector. A question was asked regarding FQP deliverable outcomes. Other issues related to Air freight – lack of opportunities from the north east (eg. It was suggested that freight carried by air from Aberdeen to Stavanger is more likely to go via Prestwick than direct). On Freight – the question was raised regarding the need for a lorry park or not? It was also noted that agricultural vehicles and slow moving vehicles can interrupt flow. It was noted that although there is a Strategic road network it is also carrying very local (eg. Tractors and forestry trucks)

Bus – emphasised the need for a Dyce shuttle bus (and noted that the 27 can be very busy). There is a need for the Park & Ride at A96 to be developed and further improvements to Airport access.

Delivery Plan

The delivery plan will require to have costed Actions with responsibilities identified. They should also identify Development phase and Delivery phase. There is an opportunity to link to the ACSEF action plan and an offer of help, the delivery plan should have Actions with Delivery (including time, owner & cost).

Priorities

It was suggested that we should be careful not to go over old ground; Identify Actions and prioritise (perhaps through a workshop session). It is necessary to Link Actions to Delivery and emphasise ongoing implementation, with monitoring (is it doing what intended – how are we performing against success factors)

Delivery

Delivery must be Integrated and targeted towards achieving common objectives. It was also noted that although not the subject of tonight's meeting, the Transport & Health Action Plan was also making significant progress.