

Post-Adoption SEA Statement Strategic Environmental Assessment Process

Nestrans has prepared a Regional Transport Strategy for the north east of Scotland which has been subject to a process of Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA), as required under the Environmental Assessment (Scotland) Act 2005. This has included the following activities:

1. Taking into account the views of the Consultation Authorities regarding the scope and level of detail that was appropriate for the environmental report;
2. Preparing an environmental report on the likely significant effects on the environment of the draft plan which included consideration of:-
 - the baseline data relating to the current state of the environment;
 - links between the plan and other relevant policies, plans, programmes and environmental objectives;
 - existing environmental problems affecting the plan;
 - the plan's likely significant effects on the environment (positive and negative);
 - the mitigation measures envisaged;
 - an outline of the reasons for selecting the alternatives chosen;
 - monitoring measures to ensure that any unforeseen environmental effects will be identified allowing for appropriate remedial action to be taken.
3. Consulting on the environmental report;
4. Taking into account the environmental report and the results of consultation in making final decisions regarding the plan/ programme;
5. Committing to monitoring the significant environmental effects of the implementation of the plan to identify any unforeseen adverse significant environmental effects and to taking appropriate remedial action. The key findings are as follows:

1) Effects of environmental considerations & the environmental report on the plan

The following table summarises how environmental considerations have been integrated into the strategy and how the environmental report has been taken into account in accordance with Section 18 (3)(a-b) of the Act.

Table 1: Environmental Considerations & the Environmental Report

Environmental considerations and findings from Environmental Report	Integrated into Plan (Yes/No)	How integrated/taken into account or reason for not being taken into account
Some environmental considerations which have influenced the RTS flow from the Scottish Government's National Objectives for Transport, National Transport Strategy, STAG, and Modern Transport System among others.	Yes	Throughout the RTS, these environmental considerations have shaped the vision and the strategic objectives of the RTS. They have also influenced the RTS by specifying: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – the need for a balance between improved connections and reduced carbon emissions – the need for a balance between economic development and the quality of the environment

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the need to limit the impact that transport has on the local and global economy and - the need to mitigate environmental impacts of aviation
The SEA has indicated that, although some schemes may have a negative environmental impact, the Nestrans' RTS will have a positive impact on several aspects of the environment, in particular through enhanced accessibility for all sections of the population, significant modal shift compared to baseline levels, and a reduction (0.2%) in the rate of growth of vehicle miles relative to the "do minimum scenario". At present there is a lack of detail available to calculate the full extent of potential damage, however many of the schemes will necessitate further environmental assessment at the development stage, particularly new and enhanced road infrastructure projects.	Yes	Through proposed mitigation measures particularly during implementation phases of the RTS, potential future impacts will be addressed through the EIA process through the provisions under the General Permitted Development Order.
There were concerns about the impacts of developments in the River Dee catchment , specifically improvements to the A944 and Park and Ride on A93 at Banchory. (SNH)	Yes	Detailed proposals for developments will require to go through assessment process and impacts on the River Dee catchment will be taken fully into account.
Impacts on Natura sites should be examined at the Local Transport Strategy and project level. (SNH)	Yes	Agreed.
EL3 Connections by Sea – EIA would be required to consider potential impacts on marine biodiversity and marine archaeology, and there may be uncertain impacts on the terrestrial historic environment. (HS)	No	It is considered that encouraging connections by sea is generally beneficial.
NC4 Aberdeen City Centre Interchange – Aberdeen railway station is an A-listed building, and this needs to be considered in the assessment of impacts. (HS)	Yes	Aberdeen transport interchange is now under development, and listed building status was taken into account in planning application process.
NC4 Aberdeenshire Towns – proposals for Park and Ride and new infrastructure may have negative or uncertain impacts on the historic environment. (HS)	Yes	Detailed proposals for developments will require to go through assessment process and impacts on the historic environment will be taken fully into account.

<p>Air quality: Nestrans should identify means that will assist Aberdeen City Council in improving air quality within the AQMA. Strategic road improvements may have a positive benefit on air quality if congestion is relieved, however the improvements could lead to increased traffic flows and a net increase in emissions of greenhouse gases. The impacts of any strategic improvements should be evaluated prior to commissioning of any schemes. (SEPA)</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>Impacts of strategic schemes will be assessed through the STAG process for individual schemes. Air Quality is identified as part of Improving Public Health, one of three topics addressed through Nestrans' Health & Transport Action Plan, which forms a supporting document to the RTS. Nestrans will be involved with Aberdeen City Council in drawing up an Air Quality Action Plan for areas where this is required.</p>
<p>Greenhouse Gas Emissions: (See related point above in Air Quality) It was agreed that none of the proposed measures should result in a significant deterioration in air quality or significant increase in greenhouse gas emissions, although any increase in flights at the airport will outweigh any benefits of improved public transport service to the airport. A net carbon balance of each measure in the RTS as proposed by the Scottish Executive for future NTSs would be beneficial. (SEPA)</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>The overall impact of proposals are considered in the RTS. For example, the impact of direct flights from Aberdeen Airport reduces the need for multiple flights, which can be more damaging in terms of carbon emissions.</p>
<p>Water: The issue of water quantity, as well as quality, should be addressed. Updated flood maps are now available (November 2006) and should be fed into the final development of the RTS and the Environmental Report. (SEPA)</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>Flood maps will be considered when proposals are detailed as proposed schemes.</p>

<p>Noise: There is limited coverage on the issue of noise (due to limited information being available on this) – however, the Environmental Noise Directive 2002/49/EC places responsibilities on government (including local authorities) to give greater priority to the issue of noise, and this Directive comes into force in 2007. The competent authorities will be responsible for aspects such as making and, where relevant, approving noise maps and action plans for agglomerations, major roads, major railways and major airports; delimiting quiet areas and collecting noise maps and action plans. (SEPA)</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>Impacts of strategic schemes will be assessed through the STAG process for individual schemes. Transport-related noise is identified as part of Improving Public Health, one of three topics addressed through Nestrans' Health & Transport Action Plan, which forms a supporting document to the RTS.</p>
<p>Health: The RTS may/will have negative impacts on health with regard to noise, especially where there are to be increased traffic flows on the roads, air and rail. (SEPA).</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>Nestrans and NHS Grampian have jointly developed a Health & Transport Action Plan, which forms a supporting document to the RTS.</p>

2) Consultation responses

The above table also summarises how opinions expressed during consultation have been taken into account (including any consultation required with other EU member states) in accordance with Section 18(3)(c-d) of the Act.

3) Reasons for adopting this plan in the light of other reasonable alternatives

Consistent with Section 18(3)(e) of the Act, this Regional Transport Strategy is adopted in the light of other reasonable alternatives discussed in the Environmental Report on the basis of the following reasons:

- In addition to protecting the environment, it promotes community cohesion and improved connections, both within the region and to/from it;
- The Strategy is cost effective and more readily able to be monitored than other alternatives; and
- The Strategy delivers benefits against environmental, social and economic objectives, as detailed in the RTS, having been modelled and tested via a Dynamic Model specifically engaged to compare alternative interventions.

4) Monitoring Measures

Section 18(3)(f) of the Act proposes the provision of information on the measures that are to be taken to monitor for any unforeseen environmental effects so that appropriate remedial action may be taken. The following are proposed actions listed in the monitoring framework.

- Plan review – the Strategy will be reviewed at regular intervals, probably within four-five years;

- A number of more detailed Action Plans and a Delivery Plan will be developed with the opportunity to consider impacts in more detail;
- A Monitoring Report has been prepared, including environmental indicators and targets and performance will be reported on a regular basis through annual Monitoring Updates;
- Risk assessment will be considered as a means of identifying concerns and enabling an audit of issues to be identified.

Conclusion

It is our view that the SEA has made a positive effect on the plan. It will enable Nestrans and its partners to realise their goal of sustainable development, promote evidenced-based culture and transparency as well as supporting the community well-being in the north east of Scotland.

27 August 2008