

Strategy -

3a Director's report on liaison between RTPs, and with the Scottish Government and Others

o **Purpose of Report**

The purpose of this report is to update the Board on liaison with other RTPs and with the Scottish Government and other organisations.

o **Background**

This report details meetings with other RTPs across Scotland, Transport Scotland and other national transport bodies highlighting issues of interest across Scotland. It also notes meetings of the Health and Transport Steering Group and the Local Authority Bus Operators Forum.

o **Recent Developments**

The last Board meeting was held on 9 October 2014, since which the following updates are available from meetings:

❖ **National Connectivity Task Force, London, 16 October & 24 November 2014**

The Task Force has now held three meetings. A programme of research has been developed and is being progressed with a view to preparing a report to be submitted to the Airports Commission by their closing date of 3 February 2015.

The Task Force has agreed that to hold credibility it should, although still sponsored by Heathrow, be independent of Heathrow in its considerations. In addition to the research that is underway the Task Force is going to receive evidence from each of the three short listed options under consideration by the Airports Commission, a third Heathrow runway, an extended Heathrow runway and a second runway at Gatwick.

The Task Force Chair and secretariat are also planning to meet with the Airports Commission, Civil Aviation Authority and European Union and will also try to meet with HS2 Ltd. The Task Force are also looking at interim solutions to increase regional access.

The Task Force is also calling itself the National Connectivity rather than Regional Connectivity to reinforce that any national hub has to serve the whole nation and therefore regional connectivity is a national rather than regional issue.

Feedback from the research and meetings will be presented to the Task Force to assist determining agreed recommendations which will be firmed up at meetings due to be held in January.

❖ **Transport Scotland, video conference, 23 October 2014**

This meeting was held to discuss park and ride proposals. It was attended by Nestrans and our Local Authorities. Transport Scotland, recognising the importance of park and ride proposals within the Strategic Transport Project Review, have created a small team to review current park and ride provision across the country and look at proposals for future delivery.

❖ **Abellio, Aberdeen, 3 November 2014**

This was an early introduction and consultation meeting with the new Scotrail franchise winner, Abellio who met with Derick Murray and Rab Dickson. The meeting was used to permit Abellio to explain what was included in their winning bid for our region and to discuss with Nestrans what the local aspirations for the rail system were.

Included in the discussions were Abellio's proposals for:

- Replacement of the current trains on the intercity services (includes Aberdeen to Inverness as well as Aberdeen to central belt) with shortened Intercity 125's.
 - The proposal is to refurbish the current trains on the London to Cardiff route, splitting them into 4 and 5 car units when these are replaced by electrified units. This is due by 2018
- Possible plans for a cycle hire scheme (an as yet unidentified 15 stations are to be equipped with such a scheme)
- Plans for a significant improvement to the Guild Street frontage to Aberdeen Station
 - Discussions have subsequently taken place with the City Centre Masterplan team on this proposal.

Also discussed were Nestrans' proposals for a timetable study to determine how to make best use of the track upgrading on the Aberdeen to Inverness line to permit a significantly enhanced local rail service in our area including the possibility of additional local stations. The Sunday offering was also discussed with Nestrans pointing out that it was not possible to arrive in Edinburgh from Aberdeen before lunchtime on a Sunday. Abellio undertook to consider this.

❖ **AGCC event with Gatwick Airport, Aberdeen, 10 November 2014**

This event permitted Gatwick airport to discuss their bid to the Airports Commission for a second runway at Gatwick to be the method for increasing runway capacity in the South East of England.

Gatwick are of the view that future aviation expansion is likely to be based in the main on low cost, short haul flights to destinations in Europe. This is based on the assumption that a reduction of interlining transfer traffic – due to an increase in point to point traffic and an increase in worldwide competition most notably from the middle east – will reduce the influence of worldwide hubs (including Heathrow) and that Gatwick is best placed to serve this traffic given its better environmental credentials.

❖ **RGU and its region, Garthdee, 11 November 2014**

Rab Dickson attended this event, which was primarily a networking opportunity which also launched the University's Strategic Statement and showcased some of the partnership working that RGU is engaged in, across the north east. Speakers included both the Lord Provost of Aberdeen and the Provost of Aberdeenshire, who both emphasised the partnership working between the local authorities, academic institutions and other partners which are prevalent in the area and in helping to ensure strong and relevant links to support the regional economy.

❖ **RTP Lead Officers, Inverness, 12 November 2014**

Rab Dickson represented Nestrans at the Lead Officers meeting, by teleconference. The agenda included:

- a presentation by Alexandra Ostroumoff-Croucher of the Improvement Service, on the Governance First / Roads Collaboration Programme;
- Bus Issues: an Update on the Bus Stakeholder Group and Bus Service Registration and on the Bus Investment Fund;
- Active Travel Strategies Update by Matt Davies of Sustrans, consideration of the National Walking and Cycling Network Project Plan and a Cycling Scotland Update;
- Ferry Issues: Ferry Accessibility Fund and Ferry Service Development /Partnership Working;
- Rail Issues: High Speed Rail Update, ECMA, ScotRail Franchise and Community Rail Partnerships
- Agenda for Chairs meeting on 3rd December 2014 in Aberdeen.

❖ **SCDI aviation event, Glasgow, 12 November 2014**

This event, in the main, offered the opportunity for two issues to be discussed:

1. Heathrow versus Gatwick

Both Heathrow and Gatwick airports were able to pitch their proposal for runway expansion to a cross section of Scottish businesses.

From the presentations it can be deduced that the Airports Commission will have to consider their view of the future based on Gatwick's view of reducing importance of hub traffic and Heathrow's view of the economic importance of hub operations to the worlds global cities that Heathrow connects to.

Both airports are keen to emphasise the importance of regional access to their services although Heathrow appear to be giving this issue greater weight.

2. Scottish Airports view of the future

The major Scottish Airports were able to discuss how things were progressing from each of their viewpoints. The biggest issue to arise from this discussion was the possibility of inter airport services which currently don't exist.

The airports believe that there is a possibility of introducing services between the major airports (Aberdeen/ Inverness to Edinburgh/ Glasgow and perhaps Aberdeen to Inverness). This was discussed from the point of view of point to

point traffic to compete against what was being presented as unsatisfactory rail journey times. It also opens a possibility of linking Aberdeen/ Inverness to world destinations served by the bigger central belt airports with the convenience of using the local airport rather than long journeys by car or rail.

The benefits of such a service would need to be weighed against any environmental costs but the thinking of these proposals does highlight the belief that the rail services from Aberdeen/ Inverness to the central belt do need to be significantly improved.

❖ **City Region Deal, Aberdeen, 14 November 2014**

This event included a workshop to discuss priorities for development in the City Region. It was attended by Peter Argyle, Stephen Archer and Derick Murray and included a presentation by Stephen Archer.

Nestrans officers have been fully engaged with the City/ Shire team who are taking forward the development of the bid to UK/ Scottish Governments providing information in relation to the infrastructure requirements of the region.

❖ **Aberdeen City Centre Masterplan, Aberdeen, various dates**

Nestrans officers have also been fully engaged with City colleagues who have been involved with their consultants BDP in developing a City Centre Masterplan. Officers have attended briefings and workshops to discuss the consultants developing thinking. Nestrans has also been involved with the consultants traffic sub-consultants in considering the traffic implications of the consultants proposals.

❖ **Network Rail, Perth, 20 November 2014**

This meeting was the first in a series of Network Rail consultations on their proposed Scotland Route Study. This study is part of their Long Term Planning Process and replaces the Scotland Route Utilisation Strategy (RUS). As such the study will feed into the Scottish Government's thinking and their High Level Output Statement (HLOS), essentially their instruction as funding client to Network Rail detailing what works they are willing to fund for the period 2019 - 2024.

The meeting itself is an improvement in the Network Rail process and is welcomed. Previous discussions have centred on a draft document whilst this time discussions are starting from the beginning of the process. Nestrans, and our constituent Councils, are included in a northern Scotland meeting along with Tactran and Hitrans.

The process to be followed was presented and includes an early market study. Previously this included the Aberdeen area within the inter-urban market study which we have argued loses the impact of local growth. This time around Network Rail have agreed to add Aberdeen to their urban market studies that include Edinburgh and Glasgow. This is a welcome change to previous studies as it enhances the chances of properly capturing potential growth in the North East.

There was considerable discussion on demand analysis with Network Rail saying that they were going to use Transport Scotland's models as a baseline. Nestrans has argued, in line with the letter that was recently sent to the Minister, that these models currently appear flawed. Greater emphasis should be placed in the north east on the Strategic Development Plan and national Office for National Statistics projections for growth in population as these are likely to be more accurate and realistic than Transport Scotland's models.

It was noted that the situation in the north east is different to that in the central belt where development plans are competing against each other but due to geography and the nature of business in our area, our development plan is not competing against others.

It was agreed that if there was merit in having further detailed discussions on individual areas Network Rail would attempt to include these in the programme going forward.

❖ **Health & Transport Action Plan Steering Group, Aberdeen, 24 November 2014**

The formal meeting of the HTAP Steering Group was cancelled due to the unavailability of both Chair and Vice-Chair, but agreed to continue with a get-together on an informal basis to progress the developing workplans for the two Sub-Groups. As an informal meeting, there are no notes or minute available.

❖ **AGCC Heathrow event, Aberdeen, 2 December 2014**

As discussed above with Gatwick, Heathrow will be given to opportunity to put forward their proposals to local businesses. A verbal update will be given at the Board meeting.

❖ **RTP Chairs, Aberdeen, 3 December 2014**

A verbal update will be available at the Board meeting.

❖ **Aberdeen International Airport Consultative Committee, Aberdeen, 5 December 2014**

As agreed at the last Board meeting, Eddie Anderson will be attending this meeting for Nestrans. A verbal update will be available at the Board meeting.

○ **Future Programme of Meetings**

❖ **National Connectivity Task Force, London, 11 December 2014, 9 and 21 January 2015**

These meetings will finalise the Task Force's report.

❖ **Transport Scotland, Aberdeen, 16 December 2014**

This meeting will be part of a regular series of meetings with Transport Scotland's Rail Division.

❖ **SCDI Annual Lecture, Aberdeen, 15 January 2015**

This year's annual lecture will be given at a dinner by Mark Carne, the Chief Executive of Network Rail. Given the speaker, Nestrans has agreed to sponsor this dinner and will have a table at the event along with a top table seat.

❖ **East Coast Main Line Authorities, York, 3 February 2015**

The ECMA, of which Nestrans are a member, is meeting in York in February. This one of a series of Consortium meetings, normally representatives from other RTPs have provided input and feedback as appropriate.

o **Workshop Proposal**

At the last Board meeting, the Board agreed to hold a workshop to discuss the ACSEF key messages once they have been finalised.

A further issue is emerging that could benefit from a Member workshop and discussion. The Regional Transport Strategy approved in 2008 and its recent refresh both concentrated heavily on infrastructure that was required to make progress. Much of this infrastructure is due to be delivered in the next few years. This includes:

- o Aberdeen Western Peripheral Route/ Balmedie to Tipperty;
- o Aberdeen to Inverness Rail upgrades including Kintore Station;
- o Inveramsay Bridge;
- o Airport Link Road & A96 Park and Ride;
- o Third Don crossing; and
- o Haudagain.

It is therefore considered that the next review of the Regional Transport Strategy (and perhaps the next Strategic Development Plan) will look considerably different to the current document.

Work elsewhere on locking in the benefits of the AWPR and the city centre proposals also point to a reworking of a roads hierarchy changing the way that people will access Aberdeen and surrounds. Such a significant change in peoples behaviour in terms of their movement requires considerable thought and discussion.

It is therefore proposed that the workshop to discuss the ACSEF messages be extended to consider the scope of the changes discussed above and to discuss Members' views on how these topics can be pursued further. It is proposed that a suitable date be agreed for a half day workshop in the first instance in February 2015.

o **Recommendation**

The Board is recommended to note progress on liaison arrangements with other RTPs, the Scottish Government and others and arrangements for future meetings.

The Board is recommended to agree a suitable date in February 2015 to hold a half day workshop.

RGM/RD 28 Nov 2014