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## **Strategy – 3b RTS Re-fresh Consultation**

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### **o Purpose of Report**

To provide the Board with an update of the consultation on the RTS re-fresh and a summary of the responses received.

### **o Background**

The Draft RTS Re-fresh was approved by the Board for consultation at its meeting on 20<sup>th</sup> February 2013 and the SEA and Equalities Reports approved in April 2013. All three documents were subsequently made available for a 6 week period of consultation from 22<sup>nd</sup> April to Friday 31<sup>st</sup> May 2013.

### **o Summary of responses**

In total 24 responses had been received by the 31<sup>st</sup> May. A response on the SEA Environmental Report was also received from each of the three statutory SEA consultation authorities (SEPA, SNH and Historic Scotland).

Of the 24 responses received on the RTS, 16 respondents have written to press for a commitment within the strategy that a feasibility study into re-establishing a rail link to Buchan be carried out in the short term.

The table in Appendix A below provides a summary of the key points raised.

### **o Next steps**

The consultation responses will be analysed, the comments responded to individually and consideration given to if and how the RTS should be changed as a result.

A final RTS Re-fresh document will be brought back to the next meeting of the Board in August 2013 for final consideration.

### **o Recommendation**

That the Board consider and note the comments received during consultation and note the next steps.

KM/3<sup>rd</sup> June 2013

### Summary of comments received on the Draft RTS Re-fresh

|    | Respondent                                     | Initial summary of key comments made   |
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| 1  | Cllr Fiona McRae,<br>Aberdeenshire Council     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Request that Nastran's commit to holding an early feasibility study into re-establishing a rail link to Buchan</li> <li>Lumping consideration of a rail link in with other transport priorities is not a sensible way to proceed.</li> </ul>  |
| 2  | Cllr Anne Allan,<br>Aberdeenshire Council      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A feasibility study into re-establishing a rail link to Buchan should be carried out in the short term</li> </ul>   |
| 3  | Cllr Stuart Pratt,<br>Aberdeenshire Council    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A feasibility study into re-establishing a rail link to Buchan should be carried out in the short term</li> </ul>   |
| 4  | Cllr Lenny Pirie,<br>Aberdeenshire Council     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A feasibility study into re-establishing a rail link to Buchan should be carried out in the short term</li> </ul>   |
| 5  | Cllr Jim Ingram,<br>Aberdeenshire Council      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A feasibility study into re-establishing a rail link to Buchan should be carried out in the short term</li> </ul>   |
| 6  | Cllr Charles Buchan,<br>Aberdeenshire Council  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A feasibility study into re-establishing a rail link to Buchan should be carried out in the short term</li> </ul>   |
| 7  | Cllr Brian Topping,<br>Aberdeenshire Council   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A feasibility study into re-establishing a rail link to Buchan should be carried out in the short term</li> </ul>   |
| 8  | Cllr Stephen Smith,<br>Aberdeenshire Council   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A feasibility study into re-establishing a rail link to Buchan should be carried out in the short term</li> <li>This should not be linked to other, competing transport options.</li> </ul>   |
| 9  | Dr Eilidh Whiteford, MP<br>for Banff & Buchan  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A feasibility study into re-establishing a rail link to Buchan should be carried out in the short term</li> </ul>   |
| 10 | Stewart Stevenson<br>MSP                       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A feasibility study into re-establishing a rail link to Buchan should be carried out in the short term</li> <li>Do not accept the position that this is a matter for the longer term</li> <li>This is an issue that should be looked at on its own and not against a range of competing priorities</li> </ul> |
| 11 | Ian Houghton, MEP                              | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Proposals put forward by Aberdeenshire Council for a feasibility study into the reintroduction of a rail link to Buchan deserve support and would back this to go ahead at an early opportunity.</li> </ul>   |
| 12 | Ian Sandison                                   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Support the re-opening of the rail link to Buchan based on environmental impact, reducing emissions, existence of existing infrastructure, future development and benefits to the north.</li> </ul>   |
| 13 | Dorothy Murray, Crude<br>Community Councillor  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A feasibility study into re-establishing a rail link to Buchan should be carried out in the short term</li> </ul>   |
| 14 | Linda Bogler,<br>Peterhead Projects<br>Limited | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A feasibility study into re-establishing a rail link to Buchan should be carried out in the short term</li> </ul>   |
| 15 | Cllr Jim Gifford,                              | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Support proposals to integrate the RTS with the Strategic Development Plan</li> </ul>   |

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|    | Aberdeenshire Community Planning Partnership                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Welcomes the extension of the timeline for the strategy to 2035.</li> <li>• The RTS will support the delivery of other local and national priorities within the SOA.</li> </ul>  |
| 16 | Stuart McLean, Thistle Seafoods                               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fully support the RTS, particularly in relation to “improving external connections between the north east and elsewhere”</li> <li>• The objective of improvements to “rail links and services (EC1) and “Freight (IC9)” is particularly appealing.</li> <li>• Desire to work with suppliers to transfer as much freight from road to rail as possible.</li> <li>• Request to receive more information on and be involved in the Freight Forum.</li> </ul>  |
| 17 | Guus Glass, Cults, Bieldside and Milltimber Community Council | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Impressed by the CTA study however in spite of this feel that strategic guidance to the local authorities emerging from the re-freshed RTS falls short of expectations.</li> <li>• The CTA study would be much more valuable if it were accompanied by a timeline that shows when the various transport projects and interventions will realistically be implemented.</li> <li>• This timeline should also include the ‘hotspots’ identified in the CTA together with the developments causing the additional traffic. Only then can the timing of development aspirations be tuned to the feasibility of coping with transport requirements.</li> <li>• If the above is outside the scope of the RTS, the document should at least include an instruction to local authorities to prepare a time schedule in this manner.</li> <li>• It is essential to maintain the balance between development and the provision of infrastructure.</li> </ul>  |
| 18 | Cllr Graeme Clark, Aberdeenshire Council                      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A feasibility study into re-establishing a rail link to Buchan should be carried out in the short term</li> </ul>  |
| 19 | Rona Main, Scottish Enterprise                                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Growing international profile of oil and gas and the need for Aberdeen City &amp; shire to remain competitive in attracting skills and in providing good connections locally, nationally and internationally.</li> <li>• GVA figures show City &amp; Shire has experienced a 6.5% increase in GVA growth for the period 2011, the highest in the UK and retains position of 2<sup>nd</sup> highest GVA per head in UK behind inner London</li> <li>• Very encouraged by the number of transport projects and policies within the RTS budgeted and committed and pleased with the considered approach to planned improvements in rail, public transport and pedestrian/cycle connectivity.</li> <li>• AWPR – real appetite from the business community for more information about the AWPR in terms of detailed timescales and the travel benefits it will bring. Would encourage the RTS to reflect and promote the AWPR and its associated benefits in a very clear and transparent way. This will encourage companies to take a longer term view and provide line of sight of the medium term benefits. SE and ACSEF happy to support Nestrans / Transport Scotland in this.</li> <li>• The same point as above is also made about A90 Balmedie-Tipperty, 3<sup>rd</sup> Don Crossing and</li> </ul> |

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|  |  | <p>Haudagain roundabout improvements.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A96 corridor – RTS provides strong reference to aspirations to dualling the A96 between Inverurie and Inverness which is most welcome. SE endorse this strategy.</li> <li>• The RTS does not appear to reference the proposed Inverurie relief road and references to Inveramsay Bridge works could be strengthened.</li> <li>• SE &amp; ACSEF happy to work with Nestrans / Aberdeenshire Council to assist articulate the economic benefits of the A96 corridor.</li> <li>• Airport access – Greater clarity on the timescales and commitment of the A96/AWPR/Airport Link Road is required.</li> <li>• Efforts to co-ordinate an early delivery of Airport end of AWPR and associated link road and P&amp;R is welcomed. A more detailed illustration of what this project will deliver over the next 4 years is required. This project is particularly acute given the extent of companies based in Kirkhill and Wellhead industrial estates and the growth opportunities that exist around the Airport Development Zone.</li> <li>• Air cargo – Aberdeen International Airport Masterplan for Nestrans and SE to work with the airport to deliver an improved cargo strategy that opens up commercial opportunities for the Airport and efficiencies for the oil &amp; gas sector. Reference to this in the RTS is required as well as an action for the parties to scope out and fund this project. SE happy to facilitate discussions with the Airport on this.</li> <li>• Air connectivity – Welcome Nestrans' commitment to continued support to Aberdeen Airport in their route development work and lobbying to protect regional slot allocation access and highlights 'Strategic Framework for International Air Connectivity' work currently with Scottish Ministers for comment. Encourage Nestrans to reference this initiative in the RTS and continue the dialogue and market intelligence sharing carried out to date.</li> <li>• European Air Routes Conference 2015 – AECC have secured this event to be hosted in 2015 which is a huge opportunity. Would welcome reference to this in the RTS and the Action Plan, including the need to identify a lead organisation.</li> <li>• Supporting infrastructure for Elsick – would wish clarity in the RTS on the strategic road improvements and public transport requirements to support this level of concentrated growth, including how links between Elsick and the Aberdeen employment hubs to the south will be impacted. A cumulative impact of this and other developments (including at Edzell) on the A90 and links to the south of the city should be identified.</li> <li>• A944 corridor growth &amp; impact on city traffic – There is a need for both Councils to work together on a joined up Shire / City strategy to address peak time congestion. Request that this is identified in the RTS. There is a concern that growth opportunities in this corridor will be constrained without a transparent approach.</li> </ul> |
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|    |                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Aberdeen City Centre - consider that a greater emphasis needs to be placed on the importance of the city centre as a major employment centre. The RTS, in conjunction with the SDP, has a role to play in providing policy direction that will allow and encourage more employment to be located in the city centre, particularly new office development. There is a need to look at innovative ways to address employer's transport requirements, particularly around parking, otherwise there is a risk office occupiers will continue to choose out of town locations and there will be missed opportunities for the city centre.</li> <li>• Wish to see greater flexibility built into transportation policies (particularly parking provision) for the city centre in the short to medium term until new major transport infrastructure projects are completed. Flexibility on parking provision could be investigated or more innovative measures to accommodate access to the city centre. Ties in with the Regional Parking Strategy.</li> <li>• North Dee, Aberdeen City Centre – Would welcome reference to the Development Framework being proposed for the North Dee Area to create a major Central Business District.</li> <li>• Aberdeenshire towns – the RTS has a role to play in working with Aberdeenshire Council on the new LDP to provide policy direction that will allow and encourage new office development within or within walking distance of Aberdeenshire's town centres. Greater flexibility built into transport policies in the short to medium term is encouraged. SE happy to work with Nestrans on these proposals.</li> <li>• Harbours and Ports – strong emphasis should be placed on the investment in and expansion of Aberdeen Harbour including impact on Harbour operations and surrounding transport infrastructure. Peterhead is also an important area to consider from wider transport infrastructure perspectives.</li> <li>• South Peterhead &amp; St Fergus – A development framework is being prepared by Aberdeenshire Council and there will be impacts on strategic transport. SE would be pleased to meet with Nestrans to discuss the impact this may have on the RTS.</li> <li>• Public transport initiatives – Welcome the work Nestrans are engaged in to develop better information and promotion of public transport. The NE is very employee competitive and the offer of car parking places for staff is an integral part of their recruitment packages. Improving access to rail, bus and pedestrian / cycle routes is imperative to adjusting the culture of dependency on private car and providing credible choice to individuals.</li> </ul> |
| 20 | Tom Smith, ACSEF | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ACSF have endorsed the response submitted by Scottish Enterprise.</li> <li>• Delivery of the Regional Transport Strategy will mean delivery of ACSEF's transport priorities.</li> </ul>  |
| 21 | Stuart Alexander | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is great oversight in not mentioning the Elswick development. Where is the strategic thinking to allow people to travel to work safely in reasonable time.</li> <li>• Since the 2008 RTS depressingly little has been achieved on the railways in the NE. Questions the statement that Aberdeen Crossrail is at an 'advanced stage of development'.</li> </ul>   |

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|    |                       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Newtonhill station isn't mentioned and there should be north and south station stops.</li> <li>• Highlights the progress being made on the Borders railway line and this sort of ambition should come from Nestrans to demand action.</li> <li>• The ageing local rolling stock is becoming increasingly unreliable. The next franchise should be made to invest in modern train stock.</li> <li>• Despite recent improvements the stopping frequency of trains at Laurencekirk and Portlethen is still inadequate. Nestrans must defend local commuters.</li> <li>• Dyce station facilities are woeful and upgrade is long overdue.</li> <li>• The 80 bus between the Airport, Kirkhill and Dyce station is a valuable service and there should be guarantees of its continuation.</li> <li>• Newtonhill should be given serious consideration due to the impact that Elswick will have on the A90</li> <li>• With rail passenger numbers going through the roof the justification clearly exists for a step-change in the rail strategy in the NE and things have to happen quicker.</li> </ul>   |
| 22 | Eric Guthrie, Tactran | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The partnership will work with Nestrans to achieve the RTS vision and strategic objectives.</li> <li>• Welcome the reference to joint RTP working on cross-boundary connectivity and accessibility issues and will continue to work with Nestrans in support of maintaining and enhancing strategic transport connections through the Tactran region to and from the north east.</li> <li>• Suggest that the reference should be made specifically to the electrification of the Edinburgh/Glasgow – Aberdeen route and this should be promoted as a high Scottish Government electrification priority upon completion of the current Edinburgh Glasgow Improvement Programme proposals.</li> <li>• Whilst fully supportive enhancing rail services between Aberdeen and the central belt, Tactran does not support faster journey times being achieved at the expense of existing stopping patterns at key stations along the route.</li> <li>• Nestrans support for the Tay Estuary Rail Strategy proposals as a means of achieving the objective of faster Aberdeen – Central Belt rail journey times while maintaining and potentially enhancing rail connectivity at intermediate rail halts along the route would be welcomed.</li> <li>• Tactran support and shares Nestrans views on the future development of High Speed Rail and the need to prioritise HSR connections between Scotland and the south, and also the need for rail service enhancements north of the central belt, to be implemented as a complement to, and ideally ahead of HSR.</li> <li>• EC2 – request that references to the need to improve the A90 “through” Dundee are amended to read “through or around Dundee”</li> <li>• IC3 – it is recommended that consideration should be given to future cross-boundary bus service requirements and provision between Aberdeenshire and Angus as a consequence of development</li> </ul> |

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|    |  | <p>proposals in the Laurencekirk area. Cross RTP co-operation will be needed in considering further development of real time information across the regional boundary.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• TB1 – Tactran notes the reference to development of Car Clubs in the Mearns area and would welcome the opportunity to work jointly on such initiatives, where appropriate.</li> <li>• TB2 – Tactran would welcome the opportunity to work with Nestrans in considering cross-boundary health and transport issues, particularly in relation to access from the Mearns area to Stracathro Hospital and other regional health facilities.</li> <li>• No comments on the SEA or Equalities Impact Assessment.</li> </ul>   |
| 23 | James Bream,<br>Aberdeen & Grampian<br>Chamber of Commerce | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Members broadly agreed that the stated vision to underpin the RTS objectives is consistent with the ambition to promote economic growth.</li> <li>• Rail Links and services (EC1) – improved rail services could play a significant role in the development of the region and improve links to/from the area. Support for aspirations to reduce rail journey times to Edin, Glas &amp; Inverness as do not believe current travel times are acceptable.</li> <li>• Support for ambition to improve capacity, comfort and reliability.</li> <li>• Suggest that the inclusion of wi-fi across all Scotrail services should be included as a priority in the updated strategy.</li> <li>• Road improvements (IC2) – Welcome the advanced attention placed on interventions at North Aberdeen, Kingswells North, A944 corridor and the A956/A90 corridor and encourage these plans to be brought forward as soon as possible once the need becomes apparent.</li> <li>• The strategy should consider how delivery risks can be mitigated, particularly focussing on the lessons we have learned from previous delays which must be avoided in the future.</li> <li>• Port surface connections (IC8) – Existing access arrangements to Aberdeen Harbour have been identified as a limitation to its effective operation and future expansion. Development of the Harbour should be promoted in the updated strategy, noting that significant surface access improvements will be required if the harbour brings forward development proposals, particularly if it expands to previously undeveloped locations.</li> </ul> |
| 24 | Alyn Smith MEP   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A feasibility study into re-establishing a rail link to Buchan should be carried out in the short term</li> </ul>  |
| 25 | Bob Collier  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The condition of roads in and around Aberdeen City should be featured as a high priority. Traffic densities that are way beyond design capacities is making road travel a serious issue.</li> <li>• A major element of the strategy should be significant upgrade of these roads.</li> </ul>   |
| 26 | Aberdeenshire Council                                      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The issue of a feasibility study into re-opening the rail link from Aberdeen to Fraserburgh was discussed at Aberdeenshire’s ISC meeting in January and Aberdeenshire Council have formally requested that the refreshed RTS includes a specific commitment to a full investigation into the long term benefits of the provision of a rail line to Ellon, Peterhead and Fraserburgh, including a cost</li> </ul>   |

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| 27 | Aberdeen City Council | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Draft comments received but awaiting final approval of them from ACC.</li> </ul> |

| <b>Comments on the SEA Environmental Report from the three statutory consultees</b> |                   |   |
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| 1   | Historic Scotland | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The ER sets out clearly the scope and findings of this assessment and note the amendments which have been made in response to comments on the scoping report.</li> <li>• Broadly content with the assessment methodology and findings.</li> <li>• For several elements of the RTS (e.g. strategic roads) there is potential for negative effects on the historic environment, but content to agree that these are uncertain at this level due to lack of detail relating to scale, location and options.</li> <li>• Welcome the general advice regarding mitigation of these potential effects.</li> <li>• Would have liked to have seen more detail on how mitigation will be embedded into the detailed development of the policies and proposals which are established by the RTS.</li> <li>• It should be clear that adverse effects on heritage assets <i>and their settings</i> should be avoided.</li> </ul>  |
| 2   | SEPA              | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Generally, no major concerns with the Environmental Report.</li> <li>• In relation to park and ride, while such sites may appear to provide a sustainable option, in reality they remove a very small number of cars and increase the number of buses which have been shown to emit disproportionately high levels of nitrogen dioxide in urban centres. It is therefore essential that only buses with the highest EURO specification or hybrid alternatives be used on busy commuter routes and that the location of park and ride sites be considered thoroughly for their impact on local air quality.</li> <li>• Table 3.1 – should contain commitment to “...<i>reduce the effects of transport on climate and air quality</i>”</li> <li>• Section 4.2 should recognise that buses and HGVs can emit disproportionately high levels of nitrogen dioxide in urban centres, although not that HGVs and buses are mentioned in other sections.</li> <li>• Table 6.1 impact on human health should reference poor air quality.</li> <li>• RTSs support of SUDS, habitat recreation and wildlife corridors described under the heading ‘Water’ would be equally applicable to Biodiversity, flora and fauna section.</li> <li>• Further consideration to the carbon emissions from the loss of soil organic matter under objectives and indicators and the following points are suggested: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Include the area of peak likely to be affected by the RTS as an environmental indicator</li> <li>• Identify mitigation / prevention measures to reduce carbon emissions from peat; and</li> <li>• Monitor the area of peat disturbed.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Agree with SEA objective for air quality and welcome reference to routes with higher proportion of buses and HGVs. Also welcome the link to air quality under ‘<i>population and human health</i>’</li> <li>• SEPA commends the decision to undertake a cumulative transport appraisal that has enabled a</li> </ul> |

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|   |                           | <p>strategic overview of the impact of development plan proposals and welcome the reference to the cumulative impact of development on local air quality. Suggest this paragraph also includes a reference to the need to protect areas that are very close to exceeding air quality objectives.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The RTS policy which states that compensation for lost habitat as a result of transport developments should be seen as a last resort measure where avoidance of impact is not possible is supported and welcomed.</li> <li>• Clarification of references to emissions data in Table 10.1 is required.</li> </ul>   |
| 3 | Scottish Natural Heritage | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pleased to note that comments on the scoping report have generally been addressed.</li> <li>• Table 6.1 – Biodiversity, flora and fauna – the possible role of the RTS should be a bit more explicit. Suggest re-wording first bullet to “<i>The RTS should minimise the impact of the transport network on designated sites and semi-natural habitats, especially where the latter form part of green networks on which many species critically depend</i>”.</li> <li>• Would be worth noting that green networks are important for people too.</li> <li>• Second bullet could then be amended adding the sentence “<i>the RTS will not promote schemes / policies likely to have an adverse impact on designated sites, including SACs and SSSIs</i>”.</li> <li>• The RTS should have a positive role in promoting schemes which could enhance the condition of designated sites and wider habitats and species, through for example reducing runoff to watercourses with well designed and integrated SUDS and the protection / enhancement of green networks.</li> <li>• Suggest that the sentence “<i>RTS can only indirectly influence the condition of protected sites through partnership working and EIA</i>” could be expanded to recognises its responsibility in promoting best practice and more sustainable development.</li> <li>• Landscape – suggest that the role of the RTS should be to take landscape setting and character into account.</li> <li>• The biodiversity objective should include reference to impacts on protected species, including EPS.</li> <li>• Note that full EIA and Habitats Regulations Assessment will be required.</li> <li>• Para 9.22 is unclear. Suggest following sentence is removed “<i>Some adverse changes might be avoided through changes to the RTS, such as adding, deleting or refining specific policies or proposals, or by bringing forward new alternatives</i>” and the next sentence changed to read “<i>where impacts cannot be avoided, it may be possible to limit damage through changes to construction methods or timing</i>”. Remainder of this para could then be removed.</li> <li>• Para 9.24 – depending on the nature of works a licence may be required for works affecting EPS.</li> <li>• Para 9.25 – suggested slight wording change for clarity.</li> <li>• Table 10 – emissions from air travel as well as road transport should be included.</li> <li>• Indicator for biodiversity should include number of licenses applied for disturbances to EPS.</li> </ul> |

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|  |  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Include indicator for number of journeys made by active travel for population and human health.</li></ul> |
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