

Strategy -
3b Regional Transport Strategy Re-fresh

- Purpose of Report

The purpose of this report is to update the Board on the work that has been carried out to re-fresh the Regional Transport Strategy (RTS). Proposals for Strategic Environmental Assessment, Equalities Impact Assessment and proposals for consultation on the re-fresh are also provided for agreement.

- Background

At its meeting on 8th June 2011, the Board agreed to a re-fresh of the RTS to better integrate it with the emerging Strategic Development Plan and to extend the period it covers to 2030/35, taking account of changes which have occurred since the approval of the existing RTS in 2008. In February 2012, the Board approved the planned timescales for this re-fresh which aim to have a final draft for approval by the end of the calendar year.

Nestrans' Regional Transport Strategy (RTS) was approved by Scottish Ministers and published in 2008 and a separate delivery plan published in 2010. There have been some changes in the Scottish Government's expectations for review of RTSs since their initial publication and current advice is that, rather than undertake a wholesale review of their strategies, Regional Transport Partnerships (RTP) should focus on delivery of the RTS in conjunction with constituent local authorities and other partners. Having said that, in the North East, there have been a number of actions and policies emerging in recent years that the RTS needs to take account of.

The most significant of these is the publication of the Structure Plan, the subsequent Strategic Development Plan (SDP) for the North East to 2035 which is currently being developed, the adoption of Local Development Plans for both Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire and the adoption of a new Local Transport Strategy by Aberdeenshire in January 2012. The 2008 RTS was developed without the context of an up to date Structure Plan or Local Development Plans. These are now all in place and the RTS needs to support the delivery of these. Although the development plans are in line with the objectives of the current RTS, they will have significant implications for the region's transport network which need to be taken into consideration. The RTS also currently extends to 2021 and it is felt appropriate that the transport strategy is reviewed and better aligned to the timeline of the new SDP which will be to 2035.

The purpose of this review is therefore not to change the direction of the RTS but to incorporate significant developments in policy and better align it with the SDP and the transport implications of this development plan.

- Main Issues Report

An officers workshop was held in February 2012, attended by representatives from Nestrans, Aberdeen City Council, Aberdeenshire Council and the SDPA to discuss what has changed since the publication of the RTS in 2008 (in terms of policy, infrastructure and funding), what trends are forecast to 2030 and how the RTS should reflect these issues.

The results of this workshop have fed into the development of a main issues report which presents the key policy changes and forecast trends as well as reviews the objectives and actions of the existing RTS. The purpose of this review is not to change the direction of the RTS but to incorporate significant developments in policy and better align it with the SDP and the transport implications of this development plan.

The MIR reviews each RTS action in turn, providing a short textual update and identifying proposed amendments or updates. This is a consultation document and as such, a number of consultation questions are posed throughout the document and stakeholders and the public will be invited to comment on the proposed amendments.

As much of the existing RTS remains relevant, it is proposed that following consultation, this main issues report will form a background paper to the RTS and a revised actions table will be produced as an addendum to the current RTS document.

The Draft Main Issues Report is provided in Appendix A.

- Strategic Environmental Assessment

A Strategic Environmental Assessment was undertaken as part of the development of the original RTS in 2008. As such, revisions to the RTS will also have to go through an SEA process. Advice has been sought from the SEA advisor to the two Councils and it is proposed that, as the RTS is not being developed from scratch it is appropriate to assess only the elements that are new or significantly amended in a way that is proportional to the scale of the re-fresh being undertaken.

The full SEA process of scoping and environmental assessment will be followed and the relevant documents submitted to the Scottish Government's SEA Gateway, but only the actions that are new or significantly changed will be assessed against the SEA objectives. For all actions that remain, the assessment undertaken in the original SEA will remain valid. This approach has been agreed with the SEA advisor to the two Councils.

- Equalities Impact Assessment

An equalities impact assessment will also be undertaken on the proposed changes to the strategy and will use a screening template and guidance used by the two Councils. This will consider the potential impact of the strategy on different groups within society and will consider issues such as age, disability, gender, race, financial inequalities, urban and rural communities, health and accessibility.

- Consultation

The main issues report has already been circulated to officers within Aberdeen City Council, Aberdeenshire Council and the SDPA for comment however it is proposed that it be referred formally to the two Councils for their consideration and comment. At the same time, the main issues report would be made available for public and stakeholder comment through the following channels:

- the Nestrans website, with a printed copy available on request;
- a press release to be issued in early September to start a 6 week consultation period;
- An NETCF meeting to be arranged for late September / early October to provide stakeholders with the opportunity to comment and discuss the proposed changes;
- The opportunity for presentation to relevant stakeholder groups such as the Chamber of Commerce, ACSEF and Community Planning Partnerships will be made available;
- Consultation to end around the end of October;

- Collation of consultation comments and amendments to the strategy as necessary;
 - Presentation of a final document to the Board in December 2012;
 - Submission to Scottish Ministers for approval
 - Publication and launch of a revised RTS.
- Recommendation

The Board is recommended to:

- Agree the draft Main Issues report for consultation;
- Note the proposals in terms of the SEA and EIA processes;
- Agree the proposals for consultation.

KM 21 Aug 2012