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## 4b Dyce Shuttle Bus/ Dyce station upgrade

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- Purpose of Report

The purpose of this report is to inform members of progress regarding the aspiration to upgrade Dyce railway station, and to seek approval of funding to continue the Nestrans funded shuttle bus linking the station to the airport and industrial estates.

- Background

Dyce railway station is now the second busiest in the north east, with over 515,000 passengers in 2009/10. Dyce station was reopened in 1984 and is one of the most successful reopenings in the country. However, its success has now started to highlight limitations in the capacity and standard of the station, notably for example that it does not meet current Disability Discrimination Act standards and is one of Scotland's highest revenue earning stations without full facilities and staff.

As an international gateway serving Aberdeen Airport and due to the fact that many passengers are travelling long-distance (for example oil workers heading to the Central belt or England), Dyce is a particularly important station on the network.

Recognising this role, Nestrans has funded a shuttle bus between the station and the airport, heliport and industrial estates since December 2008, which has so far carried over 150,000 passengers.

- Station upgrade

As mentioned above, Dyce station does not meet current standards in terms of access. On 29 December 2011 the Dept for Transport and Transport Scotland announced that five stations in Scotland were to be upgraded in the next tranche of Access for All funding and that the list would include Dyce.

The Department for Transport has allocated a further £9.5 million to Scotland to upgrade the five stations, subject to Network Rail feasibility work, but could include lifts, step-free access to platforms and parking for disabled passengers. Discussions with Transport Scotland have previously suggested such an investment at Dyce should probably be in conjunction with an overall upgrade which would include staffing the station and other wider enhancements.

- Potential for accessing the west side

The limitations of Dyce station are exemplified by the restricted access to the site along Station Road. In particular, this has caused difficulties for bus access and for bus turning in the car park. The service 80 shuttle bus has to be specified as a small vehicle because of these limitations, which has consequences in terms of peak time capacity, which has on occasion meant that passengers are not able to be accommodated.

Members will be aware that the station is very close to Aberdeen Airport on its west side and there is potential for enabling bus access adjacent to the northbound platform through the airport. Discussions have been held with Aberdeen Airport who are supportive of the principle of allowing access through their land to the west side of the station.

Initial drawings have been considered by Aberdeen City Council's design team which show that a solution could be achieved, particularly in conjunction with the upgrade mentioned above (a sample sketch is attached as Appendix 1 indicating one possible solution, but it should be emphasised that alternatives will also be considered). This would allow a shorter journey time for the shuttle bus, enabling an enhanced level of service and could be operated by larger vehicles reducing the overcrowding issues which have occurred.

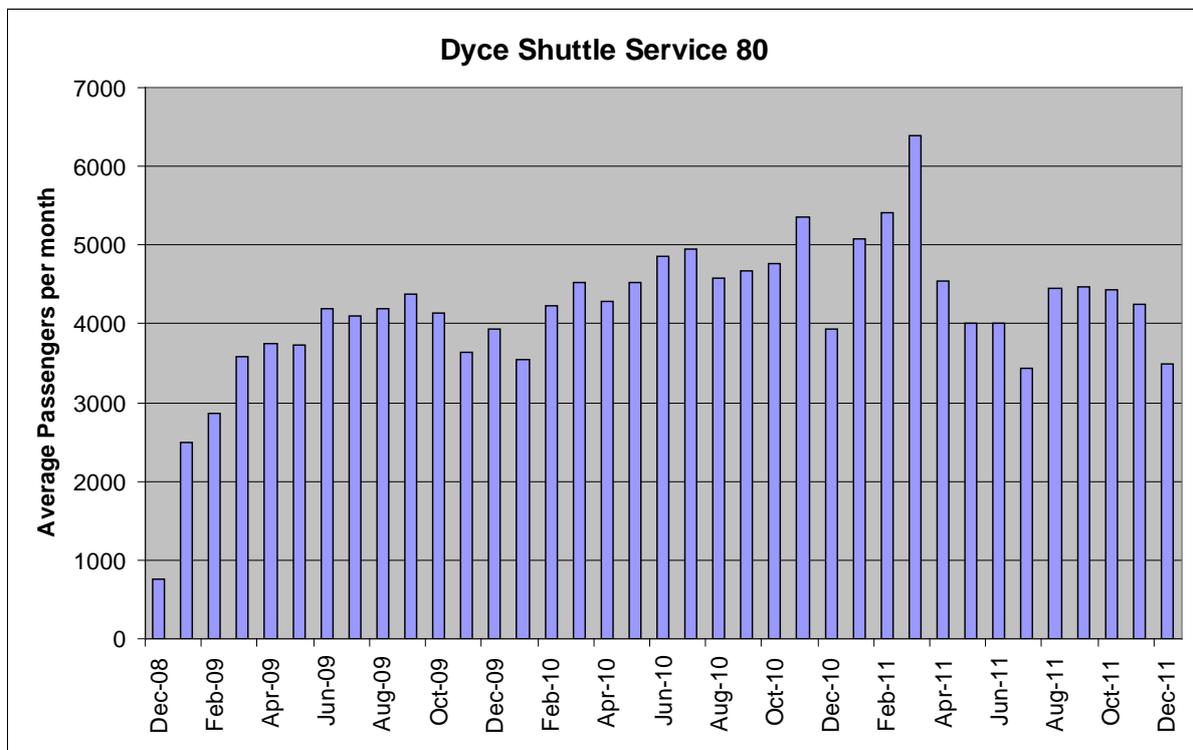
Members are asked to instruct officers to further develop the designs for a western access to the station, continue discussions with Aberdeen Airport regarding access to the land and to allow for such a development in Nestrans' 2012/13 capital budget.

- Service 80 shuttle bus

Members will recall that Nestrans has subsidised a shuttle bus between the station, airport, heliport and industrial estates operating Monday-Friday. A commercial service (the X80) which was provided at weekends was deemed unprofitable and will be withdrawn in March 2012.

The initial tender was won by First and operated with two vehicles from December 2008 – March 2011, with a single vehicle operation operated by Central since April 2011. The Figure below shows the monthly patronage, demonstrating that although the shift to a single vehicle had an initial impact on patronage, passenger levels are now fairly close to their 2010 levels.

The timetable is now operating well, with buses scheduled to depart following arrival of trains and returning to Dyce station with time to spare before departures. Although there have been a few reported instances of overcrowding, there is no easy or cost-effective solution to this and passengers appear to accept that if the bus is full they have to make alternative arrangements or await the next departure.



- Tendering for continuation of service

This level of demand appears to demonstrate the need for continuance of the service. It may be that once the station is upgraded, particularly if access to the western side is possible, that bus services could be run on a commercial basis. However at this point in time, it is unlikely that the current patronage will be sufficient to enable the service to operate without subsidy.

It is therefore recommended that Nestrans request colleagues in Aberdeen City Council to issue tender documents to continue the operation for a further year at its current level of service.

- Recommendation

It is recommended that Members :

1. note the contents of this report,
2. instruct further work to develop proposals to enhance the station, including the potential for bus access to the west side,
3. authorise issuing of a tender document for the continuation of the service 80 shuttle bus, and
4. delegate authority to appoint an operator for the next 12 months to the Director, Chair and Vice Chair.

RD/1 February 2012

