

5a Rail Action Plan

- Purpose of Report

The purpose of this report is to seek approval of a draft Rail Action Plan, as a supporting document for the Regional Transport Strategy and to agree a process for consultation and development of rail priorities for the north east of Scotland.

- Background

Nestrans Board has previously considered reports on Local Rail matters and concluded that a Rail Action Plan should be developed. This report asks members to consider a first draft which could be the basis of informal discussions before a further version is prepared for formal consultation. This version is intended to encourage debate and discussion on rail matters in the area and give consideration to balancing the needs and priorities regarding rail travel to, from and within the north east.

- Rail Action Plan

A first draft of a Rail Action Plan is attached as Appendix One to this report for members' consideration. It is recommended that this form the basis of initial consultation with stakeholders, the rail industry and local authorities in the north east.

- North East Rail Forum

One of the proposed actions within the Plan is to establish a Rail Forum. Previously, there was a North East Rail Transport Working Party, which operated at local authority member level with senior managers from each of the main rail operating companies and Network Rail. It covered a wide range of issues from availability of toilets for disabled people to strategic enhancement schemes. It fell into abeyance around 2002, with the responsibility for strategic rail issues being regarded as an RTP issue.

ScotRail's franchise requires them to consult with Regional Transport Partnerships on timetable changes and this liaison has taken the form of a biannual meeting in Glasgow involving all seven partnerships, with a limited agenda exclusively on timetable matters. The opportunity to discuss other aspects of developing railways, such as infrastructure needs, fares, etc has been lost. In other parts of Scotland, notably the Hitrans area, however the Regional Transport partnership has established a Rail Forum which meets regularly around once per year and brings together rail industry representatives with stakeholders and community groups.

It is suggested that a Rail Forum be established in the north east involving the two Councils, Nestrans, business leaders and rail industry representatives and possibly including community representatives of towns with stations. An initial meeting could consider issues such as structure, format and regularity of meetings as well as be asked to consider the issues raised in the draft Rail Action Plan.

- Recommendations

It is recommended that Members:

1. approve the attached draft Rail Action Plan as a basis for discussion with stakeholders;
2. agree to the establishment of a North East Rail Forum, to which the Rail Action Plan should be presented prior to its finalisation; and
3. instruct officers to report back on the results of discussions with a final Rail Action Plan for formal consultation later in the year.

RD/ 29 January 2010