

## **5a Rail Update**

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### **o Purpose of Report**

The purpose of this report is to update Board members on rail matters, particularly to note the commencement of Abellio as the new operator of the ScotRail franchise and to report on the seminar held by Nestrans with Abellio in February.

### **o Background**

The Regional Transport Strategy identifies the need for more detailed sub-strategies, one of which is for rail. A Rail Action Plan was agreed by the Nestrans Board in 2009 and is available on the Nestrans' website at:

([http://www.nestrans.org.uk/db\\_docs/docs/RAP%20second%20draft%20sept%202010.pdf](http://www.nestrans.org.uk/db_docs/docs/RAP%20second%20draft%20sept%202010.pdf))

### **o Abellio ScotRail**

As members will be aware, the ScotRail franchise will be operated by Abellio, a subsidiary of Dutch Railways company, Nederlandse Spoorwegen from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2015 for a period of at least seven years, with an option to extend to ten years following a review during Year 5.

### **o Nestrans Seminar with Abellio**

Nestrans facilitated a seminar with Abellio, which was held in the Douglas Hotel in Aberdeen on Monday 23<sup>rd</sup> February. This lunchtime event consisted of a presentation from Julian Edwards of Abellio, followed by a Question & Answer session and an opportunity for networking.

Invitations went to all local MPs and MSPs, Nestrans Board members, senior local authority representatives and stakeholders including Chamber of Commerce, SCDI, FSB, local transport businesses, Disability Advisory Groups, VisitScotland and cycling groups.

A total of some 29 people attended the event, including a representative from Transport Scotland's Rail Policy team.

A note of the meeting is attached as Appendix A to this report, which has also been uploaded to the Nestrans website, along with the slides from the presentation.

([http://www.nestrans.org.uk/db\\_docs/docs/Rail/Abellio\\_Presentation\\_Feb\\_2015.pdf](http://www.nestrans.org.uk/db_docs/docs/Rail/Abellio_Presentation_Feb_2015.pdf))

### **o Recommendation**

It is recommended that the Board:

- a) Note the contents of this report.

RD/19 March 2015



## Understanding the next ScotRail Franchise Presentation from Abellio

Douglas Hotel, Aberdeen  
Monday 23rd February 2015

### **Attendance:**

Julian Edwards, Deputy Managing Director, Abellio UK  
Mike Connolly, Stakeholder Relations Manager, Abellio ScotRail  
Louise Dunn, Mobilisation Team, Abellio ScotRail  
Councillor Ramsay Milne, Chair, Nestrans  
Councillor Peter Argyle, Deputy Chair, Nestrans  
Sandra MacDonald, Nestrans Board  
Derick Murray, Director, Nestrans  
Rab Dickson, Transport Strategy Manager, Nestrans  
Lucy Johnston, Nestrans  
Councillor Andy Finlayson, Aberdeen City Council  
Councillor Ross Grant, Aberdeen City Council  
Richard Sweetnam, Aberdeen City Council  
Peter MacCallum, Aberdeenshire Council  
Paul Finch, Aberdeenshire Council  
Patrick Barnham, Aberdeenshire Council  
Nanette Milne, MSP  
Mark Macdonald MSP  
Maureen Watt MSP  
Daniel Laird, First Aberdeen  
Rachel Elliot, Aberdeen & Grampian Chamber of Commerce  
Stanley Flett, Mobility & Access Committee Scotland  
Alastair Williamson, Aberdeen Disability Advisory Group  
Jyll Skinner, Aberdeen Cycle Forum  
David Jennings, Strategic Development Planning Authority  
Steve Harris, Visit Scotland  
British Transport Police  
Andy Willox, Federation of Small Businesses  
Ian Armstrong, SCDI  
Caroline Connolly, Transport Scotland

### **Business:**

An Introduction and Welcome was given by the Chairman of Nestrans, Councillor Ramsay Milne. Councillor Milne noted that it was an exciting time for transport in the north east of Scotland with the Aberdeen Western Peripheral Route under construction, other road and park & Ride schemes being progressed, the City Centre Master Plan about to be finalised and significant changes in relation to the area's railways.

He pointed out that the £170million upgrading of the Aberdeen-Inverness line has started and a new station would be developed at Kintore. He also highlighted the opportunity with new operators of both the InterCity East Coast and ScotRail franchises.

Councillor Milne pointed out that overcrowding has been highlighted as a key issue in the area and that growth in the north east has been staggering – passenger numbers through the eight stations in the Nestrans area has grown from 2.8million in 2004/05 to 5.8million in 2013/14, an increase of 105% in nine years, more than double the Scottish figure.

Julian Edwards, Deputy Managing Director of Abellio UK noted that there were just 37 days to go until Abellio took over operation of ScotRail on 1<sup>st</sup> April. He indicated that the majority of ScotRail staff will transfer across and that a “Deep Alliance” has been formed with Network Rail Scotland, which will involve co-locating under a single MD.

Julian indicated that they were committed to Scotland and will be moving their UK headquarters to Glasgow and that their intention was to turn the ScotRail brand “from good to better”. New Hitachi trains will be delivered for Edinburgh/Glasgow and refurbished High Speed Trains will connect all of Scotland’s cities from 2018, providing a 20% increase in capacity. Other key elements include a commitment to Smart ticketing and an aim of growing off-peak use to better utilise capacity.

Integration is another key element, with proposals for Bike & Go hire schism at stations, improved way-finding and an early commitment to consider options for improving Aberdeen station. Waiting facilities and cycle parking enhancements are proposed at stations, including Dyce and Stonehaven.

A copy of Julian’s presentation has been uploaded to the Nestrans’ website and can be viewed at [http://www.nestrans.org.uk/db\\_docs/docs/Rail/Abellio\\_Presentation\\_Feb\\_2015.pdf](http://www.nestrans.org.uk/db_docs/docs/Rail/Abellio_Presentation_Feb_2015.pdf)

There followed a Question and Answer session, which included discussion on wheelchair access and assisted travel; aspirations for new stations; onboard catering; the potential for integrated ticketing including local bus services and ferry services; specific issues relating to access to Aberdeen station; quality of wi-fi and the ability to work on trains; communication with passengers and the complaints procedure when things go wrong; cycle parking and the importance of getting involved with Aberdeen City Centre Master Plan work. There were also questions regarding the single line section at Usan near Montrose and the need to ensure that journey times are improved to make rail an attractive option compared to driving.

RD  
6 March 2015