

General -

6b Publications and Consultations

- Purpose of Report

The purpose of this report is to inform members of a number of recent publications and consultation papers and to seek approval of draft responses as appropriate.

- High Speed Rail

At its last Board meeting Members agreed to submit a response to the current DfT consultation on High Speed Rail. A response is attached for Members agreement. Members also agreed to ask the Community Planning Partnerships and Partners to consider putting in a response. Reports will be considered by both Community Planning Partnerships in June. Those reports attached the Nestrans response as a template for responding.

Following approval by the Board the response will be circulated around wider stakeholders for their information and response as appropriate.

The proposed Nestrans response is attached as Appendix 1.

At the Board meeting in April Members heard that the northern RTP Chairs had written to Norman Baker MP, Under Secretary of State at the Department for Transport, to highlight the view from the North of Scotland. A reply has been received and is attached as Appendix 2.

- Reform of Air Passenger Duty

The Treasury are currently consulting on the reform of Air Passenger Duty. The consultation can be found at http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/2011budget_airpassenger.htm

The consultation runs until 17 June 2011.

Passenger duty or per plane duty

The Government have been keen to replace the current Air Passenger Duty with a per plane duty, this has been discussed previously by the Board, where concerns about the possible impact on passenger numbers and previous failures of the system in other parts of Europe were discussed. They were keen to broaden the tax base by including air freight traffic and passenger who transit or transfer at UK airport whilst also believing that a per plane duty would encourage operators to fly planes as full as possible, operating more efficiently thereby reducing the impact on the environment.

There is some concern however that such a move would not be permissible under current international agreements therefore (at para 4.5) the Government have decided not to introduce a per plane duty in place of APD at the present time preferring to build support and understanding for this approach with international partners in the future.

Extension of duty to private passenger flights (including helicopters)

The Government do though intend to extend the current air passenger duty (at para 4.11) to private passenger flights on aircraft (including helicopters) below the present weight and passenger seat de minimus (business jet flights).

(At para 4.12) The Government proposes a per passenger tax for passengers aboard aircraft with an authorised take off weight in excess of 5.7 tonnes where APD is not already payable. *This could include helicopters ferrying passengers to North Sea Oil installations from Aberdeen Airport.* The proposal is to tax passengers in this category at the highest standard rate of APD irrespective of distance travelled. *Estimates from the Oil industry suggest that this could cost in the region of £195m per annum to the industry.*

However (still in para 4.12) the Government states that the precise definition of flights covered by the new tax will be determined in light of consultation evidence and responses.

(At para 4.14) The Government recognizes that reducing the APD de minimus would catch a number of flights that are likely to fall outside what might be regarded as “business jet flights”. These include emergency and public services (e.g. air ambulance, search and rescue, police, fire) and other essential services. The Government recognizes that there may be social or economic reasons for exempting these and other flights from the proposed tax, and welcomes views on this issue. In considering the case for any exemptions, the Government will seek to ensure that there is no conflict with the efficient operation of the European single market. Any exemption will also need to be easy to implement and take account of compliance and administrative burdens.

The Board may wish to consider submitting a response making the case for exempting passengers onboard helicopters serving installations at Sea. These passengers are servicing the oil and gas industry by the only practical means of transport available and such a response would seem to fit within the Government’s invitation to consider the precise definition of flights.

Range of banding charges for APD

The Board may also wish to consider the issue of banding of charges for APD. There are currently four banding charges defined by distance traveled. These are split into a standard charge for each band and a reduced charge for economy class for each band. The consultation proposes options for amending the number of bands and provides examples of the possible impact on charges.

In considering this issue the Board will be aware of the High Speed Rail proposals which are intended to improve the environment by reducing the number of short haul flights within the UK. The Board has agreed that High Speed Rail within the UK, from London to central Scotland is desirable but concluded that due to distances traveled air travel was still likely to be the mode of choice for Aberdeen to London journeys whether these are to London or beyond to the global markets. This equally applies to other destinations where the surface journey is over the 3 to 4 hour journey threshold.

In these circumstances it may be possible to sustain an argument that would suggest that passengers who will not have the benefit of the investment in High Speed Rail to provide an alternative to short haul travel air travel should be exempt from APD. This would equally apply to other peripheral airports including Inverness. This also ties in with the Governments consultation on the impact of APD on regional economies.

Regional impact of APD

Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire are one of the more peripheral regions of the UK. Local business interests, including the off-shore energy business, the production of high quality high added-value food and drink, higher education and tourism, all make a major economic and fiscal contribution to the overall success of UK plc. Ease of access to and from markets, and frequent reliable transport connections to all parts of the UK, and beyond, are absolutely vital to their continuing success. Because of our geographic location within the UK, air travel forms an essential part of the mix of transport options for business and leisure travellers.

Surface transport frequently does not offer the best option for getting around the UK particularly from the more peripheral regions. These areas are reliant on a wide range of domestic air services. Aviation is vital to the continuing success of regional economies, such as our own.

The Board will be keen to ensure that any proposal to increase APD or to change its structure does not militate against the business and tourism interests of this and other similar regions, in terms of both incoming and outgoing traffic.

The Scottish Airports commissioned a report by York Aviation, in 2010, that identified that an increase in APD could reduce the number of passengers to, from and within Scotland by as many as 1.2 million over a 3 year period, although the impact on Aberdeen airport was less severe given the largely business nature of travel. Increases in levels of APD are therefore going to have a significant impact on the regional economy and hence the national economy.

Devolving APD to Scotland

The consultation also considers the possibility of devolving responsibility for APD to the Scottish Government. The Board may wish to discuss a response based on the above.

- **Aberdeen City Council Draft Open Space Strategy**

Aberdeen City Council is currently consulting on a Draft Open Space Strategy and Supplementary Planning Guidance being produced in parallel with the strategy to help deliver its aims and support the Local Development Plan. The strategy sets out a strategic vision, aims and objectives for open space in Aberdeen with the purpose of ensuring that the city has enough accessible and good quality open space. Nestrans have been involved in the development of the strategy through attendance at a number of stakeholder events during 2010. Of particular relevance is the link the Draft Open Space Strategy has with the desire to create open space networks and paths that encourage not only access to open spaces but also encourage active travel. A letter has been drafted in response to this consultation supporting the aims and objectives of the draft strategy and in particular the actions that refer to the development of green networks, improving access to open space and promoting opportunities for active travel. A response is provided in Appendix 3 for approval.

- **United Nations Decade of Action for Road Safety 2011-2020**

On 11 May the UN launched a decade of action aimed at reducing casualties worldwide. A ten-year plan aimed at reducing fatalities across all member states was marked by several hundred events in over 70 different countries. It is estimated that there are 1.3 million deaths and between 20 and 50 million injuries in road traffic collisions worldwide annually – the Decade of Action will aim to save 5 million lives.

- Aberdeen City Council / Aberdeenshire Council / Moray Council Joint Road Safety Plan

On Monday 16 May, the three Grampian local authorities jointly launched a Road Safety Plan for the period 2011-2015. A copy is available at:

<http://www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/transportation/roadsafety/RoadSafetyPlanFinal.pdf>

This is the first time that the three authorities have jointly produced a Road Safety Plan and emphasises the co-operation and willingness to work together to tackle the issue of road casualties in the north east. Members will be aware that Nestrans and other partners including Grampian Police and Fire & Rescue Service have been working together to ensure efficient and effective work on reducing casualties.

- Recommendation

It is recommended that Members note the contents of this report and the attached appendices.

It is recommended that the Board considers the issues relating to Air Passenger Duty and agree an appropriate response to the consultation.

RGM/31May 2011

High Speed Rail Consultation Response

Contact details:

First Name: Derick

Surname: Murray

Postcode: AB24 5AA

Email: derickmurray@nestrans.org.uk

Organisation:

Is this a response from an organisation: Yes

If yes state organisation: Nestrans

Do you wish your response to be treated as confidential: No

If yes state why:

Questions:

1. This question is about the strategy and wider context:

Do you agree that there is a strong case for enhancing the capacity and performance of Britain's inter-city rail network to support economic growth over the coming decades?

Nestrans agrees that there is a strong case for High Speed Rail. We are of the view that there is both an economic and environmental case for HSR.

The Inter-city network plays an increasingly important role to link the main city centres in the UK and is the best performing mode to do so in terms of efficiency and sustainability. Investing in additional capacity and improved performance of the inter-city network is therefore key to support economic growth. The question is therefore not if, but how.

The economic case for HSR is not only strong but is strengthened the further HSR extends Northwards with an extension to central Scotland providing a particularly strong economic case.

The environmental and sustainability argument is strong but also strengthened by extension to Scotland. The figures for transference of air passengers to the more sustainable rail mode are persuasive but HSR needs to extend to central Scotland to achieve the full benefits particularly on carbon reduction.

Nestrans believes that such a significant national investment should benefit the whole nation. Over certain distances, the current inter-city network cannot compete fully with air travel and it is therefore necessary that a new inter-city rail network can operate at very high speeds and significantly reduce journey times, thereby also reducing dependence on air travel. However, recognising that there is unlikely to be a significant economic return on extending HSR beyond central Scotland, regions to the North of the central belt have to find a way to benefit in more indirect ways.

For regions north of the central belt where air will continue to be more advantageous over rail Nestrans believes that this can be achieved by reserving a proportion of the landing slots at London's airports, particularly the national hub at Heathrow, released by reduced air travel between the north of England and the central belt of Scotland to/ from London, to safeguard the economically vital air links to London and the global markets for the UK's peripheral regions. These links are important not only to the regional economy's but also to the national economy.

Nestrans notes that rail issues are devolved to the Scottish Parliament for journeys starting and finishing in Scotland. Therefore HSR starting or finishing in London is a matter for the UK parliament. Such national projects are paid for by the UK exchequer and Nestrans would expect that this national project would be funded similarly.

Nestrans are also of the opinion that, whilst some degree of phasing is necessary to complete such large scale works, the proposed timescales are too long and need to be shortened to ensure that the benefits to be gained are not lost due to an intermediate period of difficulty in accessing both London and the global markets.

2. This question is about the case for high speed rail:

Do you agree that a national high speed rail network from London to Birmingham, Leeds and Manchester (the Y network) would provide the best value for money solution (best balance of costs and benefits) for enhancing rail capacity and performance?

Nestrans believes that the case for HSR is strongly enhanced if the HSR network extends to the central belt of Scotland. Several studies have shown that the economic and environmental benefits of a high speed network are significantly enhanced with the network reaching Edinburgh and Glasgow but it is also accepted that such a network will have to be built in stages. Whereas the most serious capacity issues are in the London – Birmingham corridor, the slowest parts of the existing inter-city network are found in the north so consideration should also be given to an early phasing of high speed rail in the northern end of a national network extending as far as the Central Belt of Scotland.

The full benefits (economic and, in particular, environmental benefits) will not materialise until journey-times between Edinburgh/Glasgow and London are such that most people will choose rail rather than air. This will not happen until a rail journey time of around 3 hours is achieved, which would be the case with a high speed network all the way to Scotland.

3. This question is about how to deliver the Government's proposed network:

Do you agree with the Government's proposals for the phased roll-out of a national high speed rail network, and for links to Heathrow Airport and to the High Speed 1 line to the Channel Tunnel?

Nestrans believes that the Government's proposals should include a stronger commitment to extending the network north of Manchester and Leeds.

However, Nestrans agree that the network will have to be built in achievable phases and agrees that the first bill through Parliament should encompass the London-

Birmingham section. However, detailed planning of the network to central Scotland should be undertaken over the next year or so and consideration should be given to construct High Speed track at the northern end of a UK network (which should result in the greatest journey-time reductions) in advance of or at the same time as the sections between Birmingham-Manchester and Birmingham-Leeds.

Nestrans supports a link to Heathrow to be constructed once the HSR network extends beyond Birmingham.

Nestrans also supports a link between the new High Speed line (HS2) with HS1, thereby allowing direct services between UK cities north of London and Continental Cities, primarily Paris and Brussels.

4. This question is about the specification for the line between London and the West Midlands:

Do you agree with the principles and specification used by HS2 Ltd to underpin its proposals for new high speed rail lines and the route selection process HS2 Ltd undertook?

It is important that questions of route selection are most closely examined by those most affected. However the principle of a route should not be compromised.

5. This question is about the route for the line between London and the West Midlands:

Do you agree that the Government's proposed route, including the approach proposed for mitigating its impacts, is the best option for a new high speed rail line between London and the West Midlands?

It is important that questions of route selection are most closely examined by those most affected. However the principle of a route should not be compromised.

6. This question is about the Appraisal of Sustainability:

Do you wish to comment on the Appraisal of Sustainability of the Government's proposed route between London and the West Midlands that has been published to inform this consultation?

This proposal will be significant in the Governments attempts to reduce carbon emissions and to achieve a sustainable transport system whilst increasing economic growth. However it should be remembered that the whole nation should benefit from such a significant national investment. Areas beyond the HSR proposal should not be detrimentally impacted by the proposal and this should take into account areas beyond where HSR can have a direct impact on travel to London and the global markets beyond.

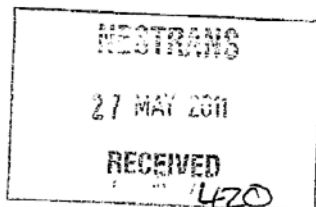
7. This question is about blight and compensation:

Do you agree with the options set out to assist those whose properties lose a significant amount of value as a result of any new high speed line?

Nestrans has no comment on this issue.



From the Parliamentary
Under Secretary of State



Department for **Transport**

Great Minster House
76 Marsham Street
London SW1P 4DR

Tel: 020 7944 2566
Fax: 020 7944 4309
E-Mail: norman.baker@df.gov.uk

Web site: www.dft.gov.uk

Ref: NB/012202/11

Councillor Duncan MacIntyre, Chair of HITRANS
Councillor Kevin Stewart, Chair of Nestrans
Councillor Will Dawson, Chair of Tactran
Councillor Iris Hawkins, Chair of ZetTrans
Nestrans
Archibald Simpson House
27-29 King Street
Aberdeen
AB24 5AA

23 May 2011

Dear Councillors,

Thank you for your letter of 25 March regarding the Government's proposals for high speed rail, on which we are currently consulting. I apologise for the delay in replying.

I welcome your support for high speed rail, and note the points you make regarding links to the North of Scotland and the potential of new high speed lines to help safeguard valuable air access to London airports by encouraging the transfer of passengers on other routes to rail.

The public consultation will continue until 29 July 2011, and I note that your individual Boards will be considering their separate responses to the consultation over the coming weeks. In order to ensure that the issues you raise are captured, however, the Department will also treat this current letter as a response to the consultation.

Yours sincerely

NORMAN BAKER

*Please scan and send
a copy to the other RTP's*

27 May 2011

Our Ref KMN13/11

Aftab Majeed
Open Space Audit
Enterprise Planning & Infrastructure
Aberdeen City Council
8th Floor St Nicholas House
Broad Street
Aberdeen
AB10 1GY

Dear Aftab

Draft Open Space Strategy Consultation

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on Aberdeen City Council's Draft Open Space Strategy. I am writing to express Nestrans' support for the vision, objectives and actions set out in the draft strategy, in particular those relating to improving access to open spaces, developing a network of open spaces and encouraging active travel.

Through involvement in the stakeholder events held during 2010 we feel that we have had significant opportunity to contribute to the development of the strategy and can see the feedback from these events reflected in the draft strategy being consulted upon.

The only specific comments I would like to make refer to the following actions contained within Chapter 7 of the draft strategy:

- Action 4.3.1 – we would welcome a reference to working with Nestrans as the Regional Transport Partnership as well as with local transport teams in better integrating access to the outdoors with other policy areas. The Nestrans Health and Transport Action Plan is one policy area where we are actively working to promote the benefits of active travel in terms of health and wellbeing.
- Action 5.3.1 – it would be relevant to include a reference to promoting the benefits of active travel as well as open space and outdoor recreation.

We welcome the development of supplementary guidance to deliver the aims of the strategy and support the Local Development Plan. I have no specific comments to make on this other than it would perhaps be relevant to also specify rail stations as well as bus stops in the table titled 'Paths and Access' on page 15 of the guidance.

Thank you again for the opportunity to comment on the draft strategy and supplementary guidance.

Yours sincerely

Kirsty Morrison
Transport Executive (Strategy & Delivery)