

## General -

### 6b Publications and Consultations

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- 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. The Transport Scotland consultation on the Rail 2014 franchise is the subject of a separate report on this agenda.

- Scottish Ferries Draft Plan

Members will be aware that Transport Scotland have been undertaking a national Ferries Review. In December 2011, they issued a Draft Plan for Consultation, with comments sought 30 March 2012.

The Draft Plan sets out the conclusions of the Ferries Review and seeks views on the conclusions prior to publishing a Final Ferries Plan in 2012 to provide guidance for the provision of ferry services in Scotland for the next decade.

The report is laid out in separate sections for each of the ferry groupings and asks far-reaching questions relating to the funding, procurement and operation of services. The section of most relevance to Nestrans is obviously the Northern Isles services, particularly those to/from Aberdeen. Although it is intended to retain a broadly similar level of service to that currently operating, there are options regarding separating the Pentland Firth crossings from the Aberdeen services. However, the Northern Isles tender for services from 2012 will specify at least one sailing each way per day, every day throughout the year between Aberdeen and Lerwick; no less than the current level of service between Aberdeen and Kirkwall and a regular, broadly similar level of service between Kirkwall and Lerwick.

It is suggested that Nestrans should welcome this continued commitment to serving the Northern Isles from Aberdeen and to otherwise note the Draft Ferries Plan.

- Possibility of Road User Charging for HGVs

On 25 January, the Department for Transport issued a consultation document entitled "Charging Heavy Goods Vehicles".

It is proposed that a charge will be introduced on all goods vehicles over 12 Tonnes within the life of the current Parliament (May 2015). Currently, Britain is one of the few countries in Europe which does not charge heavy vehicles to use its roads and a system has been devised which would see charges being levied, which would be chargeable to both UK-based and foreign vehicles (UK hauliers could obtain rebates through their road tax arrangements, whereas overseas operators would pay for daily, weekly or monthly or passes). Charges would range from between £1.70 per day up to £10 per day, depending on inflation and the strength of the Euro with charges to UK operators equivalent to existing road tax. In this way, British-based hauliers would be unlikely to pay more than they

currently do, but overseas operators would be contributing towards the upkeep of British roads on a more even playing field.

Nestrans has sought the views of partners involved in the North East Freight Forum and it is suggested that Nestrans respond to the consultation in support of their views.

Generally, the proposal is welcomed but should be kept simple by a charge on the number of days (as opposed to any attempt to charge per mile, which would be cumbersome and costly and could be difficult to administer) and that it is broadly cost neutral for UK hauliers. However, the proposal seems to be primarily about revenue raising and will be unlikely to achieve modal shift.

Responses are sought by 18 April 2012.

- Recommendation

It is recommended that Members :

- a) note the report and the documents referred to above and endorse the comments as Nestrans' responses to the consultations.

RD/6 February 2012