

8 Information Bulletin

o Purpose of Report

The purpose of this report is to provide information and updates for the Board on a number of matters not requiring decision.

o Rail franchises

In April, Transport Scotland issued a contract notice for the Caledonian Sleeper rail franchise, with the intention of separating it from the general ScotRail franchise.

Expressions of interest are being sought from suitable operators to run overnight rail services between Scotland and London. An Invitation to Tender will then be issued in September 2013, to enable a successful bidder to be announced in June 2014 to begin operating from April 2015 for a period of up to 15 years.

It is expected that the new franchise operator will continue to provide overnight rail passenger services in both directions between London Euston and each of Edinburgh, Glasgow, Inverness, Aberdeen and Fort William. Transport Scotland will make a capital investment of between £50 and 60 million to facilitate the modernisation of rolling stock in addition to commitments already made by the UK Government.

The ScotRail franchise is likely to start its process towards tendering later this year. Initial meetings have also been held with the Department for Transport and Direct Rail Services who currently operate the East Coast Main Line franchise, which is also intended to begin the process towards refranchising soon. Both of these are likely to be determined to enable a new operator to be in place by early 2015.

o Rail patronage data

ScotRail has reported record passenger numbers for the ninth consecutive year.

Figures released in April show that the company carried 83.3 million customers in the year ending 31 March 2013 – up 2.6% on the previous year's total of 81.1 million. Passenger numbers have now risen by 33% since First were awarded the franchise in 2004.

The Office of Rail Regulation has also revealed patronage data for individual stations for the year 2011/12, which demonstrate that growth in rail usage in the north east continues to outstrip Scotland as a whole.

Rail station use in the region has increased by 78% between 2004/05 and 2011/12 compared to a Scotland-wide increase of 51% for the same period, according to figures published by the Office of the Rail Regulator (members should note that these figures are slightly different to the above data as they include all movements through Scottish stations, including journeys by East Coast, West Coast and Cross-Country franchises).

The strongest growth has been achieved at stations north of Aberdeen with Dyce recording a 151% increase since 2004/05 and Inverurie a 216% increase in passenger numbers. Stations south of Aberdeen have also recorded growth ahead of the Scottish average with numbers at Portlethen up by 77% and Stonehaven/Laurencekirk by 62%. Use of Aberdeen station grew by 64%.

o **Community Rail Partnerships**

As members may be aware, the Minister for Transport initiated development of Community Rail Partnerships (CRPs) and provided ACoRP (the Association of Community Rail Partnerships) with funding to help facilitate that. Part of the funding package, which currently runs until March 2015, has enabled ACoRP to recruit two part-time Development Officers, one for the North and the other for the South. The north officer, whose remit will cover the Nestrans area is James Wilkin.

The second part of the funding package, worth £20,000 in 2013-14, allows for a small grants fund aimed at providing 'seed-corn' funding for small projects or as match-funding for larger ones. Access to this fund will only be available to CRPs that have been formed and approved by the Minister or are substantially on their way to being formed. Finance for this fund in 2014-15 is yet to be agreed but it may be increased, if the first year is deemed to have been successful.

The guidance provided by Transport Scotland and ACORP is that any CRP should be led by the relevant Regional Transport Partnership, with an agenda substantially driven by the community and the Development Officers have been engaged to assist interested agencies and organisations to form such a partnership, should they wish. Transport Scotland have however, given ACoRP a very wide remit and do not believe that there is any compulsion to form a CRP if it is felt one is not required. Equally, CRPs are not restricted to rural lines and services and the formation of urban CRPs will be considered, should that be appropriate.

o **Other Rail matters**

On 7 May, ScotRail launched its first-ever trial of recycling bins at stations across Scotland. The colour-coded bins, for items such as plastic bottles, paper and tin cans, have been installed at 19 stations, including Aberdeen and Stonehaven.

The initiative, supported by a £37,000 grant from Zero Waste Scotland as part of its Recycle on the Go project will be supported by volunteers from local community groups visiting the stations at peak times to encourage customers to make best use of the new facilities.

The stations' recycling scheme is one of more than 30 projects to have benefited from the Recycle on the Go Capital Support Fund.

The latest ScotRail timetabling conference was held in Glasgow on 16 May, attended by Rab Dickson. The major issue for the north east was the doubling of Sunday frequencies between Aberdeen-Dyce-Inverurie which was implemented from 19 May 2013. Future aspirations were discussed but due to the current franchise nearing its end, are likely to now be considerations to be included in the discussions with potential bidders for the next franchise.

Rab Dickson also attended a meeting with Network Rail and Transport Scotland on 16 May, which updated RTPs on progress towards a paper on the Effects of Pricing on Park & Ride demand and consideration of a draft policy on car parking at stations. Once the policy is finalised, it will be reported to a future Board meeting.

On Monday 3 June, ScotRail hosted a stakeholder engagement forum meeting in Dundee to which Regional Transport Partnerships and local authorities were invited. To avoid duplication of effort, the north east partners were represented by Clara Thomson from the Strategic Development Plan team.

o **National Tourism Framework**

Nestrans were consulted on a first draft of a National Framework for Tourism in March 2013, and responded raising concerns regarding the accuracy and focus of the document.

A second draft has now been received and is much improved on the earlier draft. The document makes regular and appropriate reference to the role of Regional Transport Partnerships, particularly in their role in helping to achieve improved connections to and within Scotland. Earlier references to specific airports and ports have been edited out so that policies and statements are more general, for example references are to “major airports”, and could therefore now be taken to include Aberdeen International Airport.

The Framework recognises the importance of transport in helping to support tourism and the opportunities for developing, including important schemes in the north east.

o **Flybe sale of Gatwick slots**

Although Aberdeen lost its flights to Gatwick by Flybe last year it is worth noting that Flybe have sold all their landing slots at Gatwick to Easyjet. Flybe are going through a general restructure to reduce costs but are blaming the need for this sale on Air Passenger Duty and on landing charges at Gatwick.

In Aberdeen's situation the loss of the Flybe flights was compensated to some extent by the re-introduction of flights to London City Airport. However for Inverness, who have no link to Heathrow, the potential loss of flights to Gatwick is of great concern. Easyjet are committed to keeping flights until next spring but there is potential for some loss of service beyond that time period.

o **Aberdeen Cycle Count**

Aberdeen Cycle Forum, in conjunction with Nestrans and Aberdeen City Council has published results from the annual cycle count conducted in May of this year. The full results are available from the ACF website at:

<http://www.aberdeencycleforum.org.uk/index.php?pf=news.php&nid=161>

Key findings indicate that total numbers cycling in the City are up 8-9% on last year's count but around 10% below the record high in 2011. Compared to 2008, the count is up 18% with over 700 cyclists being counted during the peak hours of a single morning.

The proportion of female cyclists was 17%, similar to previous years.

Growth has focused on just a few of the sites - the Deeside line and King St most notably, and to a lesser extent on the North Deeside Rd and on Auchmill Rd. It is notable that the sites in Aberdeen that have recorded the largest increases since 2008 are on corridors that have good cycle provision. The Deeside line has benefited from progressive improvements and so too has the on road cycle lane along North Deeside Road. King Street has decent stretches of continuous on-road cycle provision in both directions, especially along its central section. Auchmill Road is more complex, but the count shows almost half of cyclists are using the pavement which does provide a continuous route with few interruptions. This has recently been re-classed as shared use.

Similar data has been requested for sites in Aberdeenshire, but is not yet available.

o **Scottish Transport Awards**

This year's Scottish Transport Awards will take place at a ceremony in Glasgow on Thursday 20 June.

Members will recall from the last meeting of the Board that Nestrans, Aberdeen City Council and Aberdeenshire Council have been shortlisted for a total of 14 Awards between them, many in partnership.

o **Nestrans Press Releases**

Since the last meeting of the Board in April, there have been press releases on the following (more details can be accessed by clicking on the title):

16/04/2013 [Public Exhibitions on A96 Inveramsay Bridge Improvements](#)

Transport Scotland is inviting local communities to have their say on the proposed design for the £11 million A96 Inveramsay Bridge improvements. The invite comes as Transport Scotland publishes the draft Road Orders and Environmental Statement for this scheme to remove a notorious north east bottleneck.....

23/04/2013 [Haudagain design work due to get underway](#)

Nestrans welcomes Transport Scotland's announcement today that it intends to award a £3 million design contract to Jacobs to tackle the notorious Haudagain traffic bottleneck.....

24/04/2013 [North-east Rail Passenger Growth Underlines Case for Investment](#)

New figures showing significant growth in train passenger numbers across the North-east of Scotland underline the need for greater investment in the region's rail infrastructure, according to the region's transport partnership Nestrans.....

25/04/2013 [Consultation on the Draft Regional Transport Strategy Re-fresh](#)

The Draft Re-fresh of the Nestrans Regional Transport Strategy is now available for consultation. The development of this document has followed a review of the existing Regional Transport Strategy (RTS) which was published in 2008 and an initial consultation on the main issues back in October 2012.....

09/05/2013 [A96 Dualling plans start to take shape](#)

Nestrans welcomes the news that Transport Minister Keith Brown has set out how the A96 dualling programme will be driven forward. The outline strategy identifies packages of design and development work to be progressed over the next few years with the objective of completing the full dualling between Inverness and Aberdeen by 2030.....

13/05/2013 [Greenbrae Cycle Paths officially opened](#)

A series of new paths aimed at improving pedestrian and cycling access in an Aberdeen suburb has been officially opened.....

15/05/2013 [Reminder that Consultation on Draft Regional Transport Strategy Re-fresh ends 31 May](#)

The Draft Re-fresh of the Nestrans Regional Transport Strategy is now available for consultation.

North-east rail passengers will enjoy twice the number of Sunday trains between Inverurie, Dyce and Aberdeen when ScotRail introduces its new summer timetable.

o Getabout events

- The Getabout Cycle roadshow supported Getabout partner Robert Gordon University's bike promotion day on the 12th of April in part of the University's car park. The day was a success with over 150 people participating in the roadshow and being engaged about sustainable travel.
- Nestrans supported and chaired a meeting of large oil companies looking at travel plans and saw a presentation on "my personal travel plan" a service by our car share providers Liftshare. The plan is to expand the group into a travel plan network for the Aberdeen City Region.
- The Getabout Cycle Roadshow attended the Run Balmoral event over a weekend at Balmoral Castle. Over 700 people attended the roadshow and a large queue was formed, one of our most successful events.
- There was a double celebration at Greenbrae School in mid May to celebrate the opening of phase 1 of the Greenbrae Cycle Challenge works. On Friday 10th May, the roadshow was at the school for another successful day, then on Monday 13 May Councillor Peter Argyle formally cut the ribbon to open the paths.



Greenbrae Pupils ran an orienteering event during the Greenbrae School Cycle event



Councillor Peter Argyle opens the paths

- The Living Streets “Walk to Work Week” 13-17 May was supported by Getabout with partners NHS Grampian and Nestrans promoting the week. The Nestrans’ contribution was a series of adverts on Original 106 radio and bus side advertising. Figures are not yet complete but over 2,000 people logged on to the website set up for the event.



The Bus ads for walk to work week

- Saturday June 15th is the start of National Bike Week (15-23 June 2013). A number of events are scheduled and will be fully publicised.

o Performance Indicators

Nestrans reports its performance against a number of agreed indicators on an annual basis. Performance Indicators for 2012 are detailed in Appendix 1 of this report.

Over the year, the following is a summary of the key statistics:-

- The Partnership office did not have a full complement of staff for 7 months, with a vacancy for Office Manager now being filled by Tricia Howden. The remaining staff had 12 lost days through sickness or other absence.
- Of some 453 letters and other correspondence requiring a response, 97% were dealt with within the target of 10 working days (20 days for Freedom of Information requests).
- 81% of Business travel was undertaken by public transport.
- Nestrans staff mode of travel to work indicates a good split between walking, cycling, public transport and driving with 58% of travel by sustainable modes.

o Recommendation

It is recommended that the Board note the contents of this report.