

8 Information Bulletin

- 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.

- Letter from Transport Scotland's Director of Rail

Members will recall that at the last meeting of the Board on 5 October 2011, a letter was attached to item 8 from Transport Scotland's Director of Rail, Frances Duffy. This indicated that rail journey times between Aberdeen and the Central Belt had seen large improvements in recent years, whereas evidence presented showed very little improvement in mean journey times. The Director was instructed to enlighten Transport Scotland that mean journey times had only improved marginally, with longer waiting times at intermediate stations such as Dundee.

A response has now been received from Ms Duffy, which is attached as Appendix 1 to this report. In this she acknowledges that although some trains were speeded up between 2007 and 2008, not all services have benefitted by as much but other benefits such as calls at Laurencekirk and fewer intermediate stops have resulted in passenger growth.

Ms Duffy has agreed to meet with the Director and Chair, which will be held later this month.

- HS2 – High Speed Rail

Members will be aware that the UK Government's proposals for a second High Speed Rail line (HS2) are being progressed. On 28 October, Rab Dickson attended a briefing at Buchanan House in Glasgow house hosted by Transport Scotland. The main presentation was by Peter Grant of HS2 Ltd, a Government-funded organisation taking forward the proposals.

The current proposal includes a first phase from London to Birmingham with a second phase to connect to Manchester and Leeds, in a "Y" shape. This would enable 400 kph running with trains capable of carrying up to 1,100 passengers at up to 18 services per hour in each direction. In the first phase, it is the intention that trains would transfer to conventional track to enable through running to Manchester and Leeds and possibly on to Scotland.

During Q&A, representatives emphasised the importance of including Scotland within the network, that the benefits are to all of Scotland not just Edinburgh and Glasgow and the need to ensure that the project is progressed quickly.

- Rail Overcrowding Surveys

Members will recall that Nestrans had commissioned Aecom consultants to undertake surveys of passenger numbers on peak trains in and out of Aberdeen, to compare against capacity and provide evidence of overcrowding on the local network. A previous report to the Board confirmed that some peak hour trains suffer from overcrowding, but it was agreed to undertake

further studies outwith the school/university holiday period to gain further understanding of the issues.

A report has now been received from the consultants and is available on the Nestrans website at http://www.nestrans.org.uk/db_docs/docs/Nestrans_Rail_Overcrowding_Survey_NOVEMBER_draft181111.pdf. It concludes that around a quarter of peak hour trains between Inverurie and Stonehaven experience overcrowding at peak times (where there are more passengers than seats available), with a maximum loading of 141% experienced. A further quarter of peak hour trains are more than 75% full and passengers are likely to have to stand.

The report and information has been shared with Transport Scotland and ScotRail.

- Rail changes in new December timetable

Members will be aware that ScotRail normally review their timetables twice per year, in December and in May (although there will be no revision in May 2012 to ensure stability and advance purchase availability in the run up to the Olympics).

ScotRail have announced the following changes to services in and around the north east from 12 December 2012:

- ~ Additional carriages for the 1718 Aberdeen-Inverness service, providing 124 more seats (seven carriages will operate between Aberdeen-Inverurie, five for the rest of the journey);
- ~ Three other trains will operate with four carriages instead of two (The 09.03 Inverness-Aberdeen, 11.59 Aberdeen-Inverness, and 14.27 Inverness-Aberdeen);
- ~ the 0941 Glasgow-Aberdeen will call additionally on Saturdays at Laurencekirk and Stonehaven (it already does Mondays-Fridays); and
- ~ the 2105 Aberdeen-Edinburgh will call additionally Mondays-Saturdays at Laurencekirk, thus giving a later last train back from Aberdeen on Saturday nights.

These alterations are all welcome additions to local rail services and will be publicised around the time of the timetable change.

- Aviation matters

The Sustainable Framework for UK Aviation consultation has now closed. It is expected that the Department for Transport will publish a draft policy for consideration in Spring 2012.

Meantime it has been announced that BA are in discussion with BMI to purchase the BMI main business, the regional business having been sold to a local group earlier in the year. The main business includes the Aberdeen & Edinburgh flights to London. There is another prospective purchaser for the BMI business and a decision on the buyer is expected within a few weeks.

The proposed purchase will be considered by the European Union (DG Competition) to consider any competition aspects of the sale. Should BA be the purchaser this would remove competition between the Scottish Airports and Heathrow, BMI having already pulled out of the Glasgow to Heathrow route.

Nestrans has contacted the Office of Fair Trade (OfT) in the UK to highlight the possibility of the loss of competition between Scottish Airports and Heathrow. The OfT are aware of the proposals and are monitoring the proposed sales progress. There is a process where the DG Competition can refer the sale back to the UK for consideration and Nestrans has asked the OfT to consider whether this may be appropriate given that the concern is for flights internal to an EU member country.

The OfT will be considering issues as they arise as the sale proceeds. In the meantime they have passed our contact details to the DG Competition so that they are aware of our concerns and that we can be contacted to provide evidence should the DG Competition open an inquiry.

- Access to Union Square

At the last meeting of the Nestrans Board on 5 October 2011, members expressed concerns regarding city centre congestion, particularly in and around Union Square shopping mall. The weight of traffic, most notably on Thursday evenings and weekends has a severe impact on bus services, especially the ability of buses to access and exit from the bus station.

Officers facilitated a meeting through the Local Authorities Bus Operators Forum (LABOF), to ensure that the appropriate bus operators representatives could speak directly to City Council staff involved in traffic management. A note of the discussion at this meeting is attached as Appendix 2 along with information circulated by Aberdeen City Council in advance of the meeting, which detailed work either already undertaken, currently under investigation or for discussion for future possible action/investigation.

Following the meeting a joint letter has been drafted for consideration for sending to Grampian Police from the Councils, Nestrans and bus operators to request a police presence on Market Street in the run up to Christmas.

- ARI Bus Tickets

At the Board meeting on 5th October, it was requested that the issue of providing dedicated bus tickets that provide cheaper travel to ARI could be explored. Further discussion with the NHS has revealed that the following discounts and tickets are already available and being promoted to staff at ARI:

- Stagecoach NHS Aberdeen Zone 1 weekly Megarider - £12 on production of NHS staff badge to driver (£13 standard fare)
- Stagecoach NHS Aberdeen Zone 2 weekly Megarider - £14 on production of NHS staff badge to driver (£16 standard fare)
- Stagecoach NHS service 59 weekly Megarider - £10 on production of NHS staff badge to driver (£11 standard fare)
- A 10% discount is also available to NHS staff on a range of Stagecoach season tickets purchased at ARI General Office
- Although there are no specific ARI discounts with First, staff can go direct to the First Group Corporate Travel Club for discount on an annual ticket if bought direct from First's national CTC office by monthly direct debit (this is part of a UK wide First Group scheme)
- The Park and Ride service from Kingswells offers discounted travel to all passengers compared to standard bus services with an Adult return fare available for £2.80, compared to £3.40 for an Adult 2 Trip ticket available on all other services.

- Nestrans Press Releases

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

[Nestrans states the NE aviation case to UK Government](#)

Nestrans, the statutory regional transport partnership for the North-east of Scotland, has written to the Department of Transport (DfT) as part of the UK Government's aviation consultation and in response to questions posed by the DfT in its scoping document looking to develop a sustainable framework for UK aviation.

10/11/2011

[Campaign to protect landing slots launched](#)

INDIVIDUALS and organisations throughout the north of Scotland are being encouraged to get behind a campaign to ensure current connectivity to and from London and the rest of the world is maintained in future years.

09/11/2011

[Organisations give backing to retain London air links](#)

Local businesses are backing calls from Nestrans, the statutory regional transport partnerships for the North-east of Scotland, to urge the European Union to exert powers to protect the current slots enjoyed by Aberdeen at London's Heathrow airport, particularly in light of the proposed development of High Speed Rail to Edinburgh and Glasgow.

09/11/2011

[Tourist industry backs campaign to protect landing slots](#)

Leading bodies in the tourism industry have backed the campaign undertaken by Nestrans, the statutory regional transport partnership for the North-east of Scotland, to urge the European Union to exert powers to protect the current level of slots to and from Aberdeen at London's Heathrow airport.

09/11/2011

[Public consultations launched to help deliver vision for the region's future](#)

Aberdeen City and Shire Strategic Development Planning Authority (SDPA) launched a public consultation (October 7) to discover what residents and stakeholders think of potential changes to its blueprint for the future, including Draft Supplementary Planning Guidance that proposes a method of delivering identified transport projects through a strategic transport fund.

07/10/2011

[North-East Bus Passenger Satisfaction Improves](#)

A survey looking at bus services across the North East has revealed that more than 85% of bus passengers in the North East are satisfied or very satisfied with their local bus service. This is the second year that this survey has been carried out and results have shown an increase in satisfaction amongst bus passengers across the region since 2010.

03/10/2011

- Getabout events

The winter park and ride campaign has started using our 'characters'. The campaign is concentrated on the Buchan Corridor and features:

- 2 months of advertising on Waves Radio
- Highlighter billboard on Ellon Road
- Bus shelter advertisements (aimed at motorists) in Fraserburgh and Peterhead
- 30,000 car park ticket backs in car parks in Aberdeen along the corridor
- 2 months of advertising on Northsound 2
- 2 months of advertising on Original 106

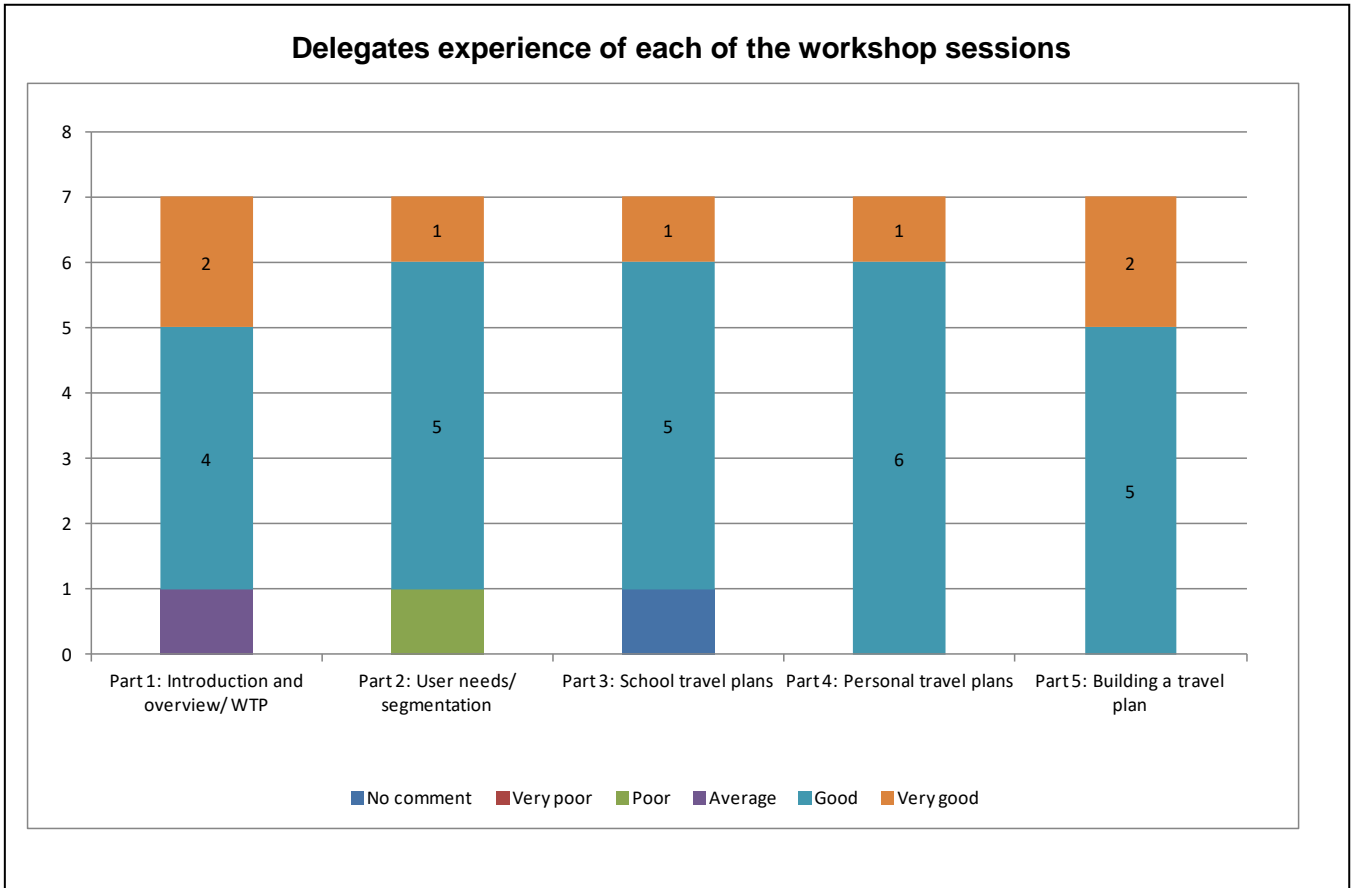
This is going to be complemented by a limited press advert in the EE Green edition



We have contracted Original 106 to run park and ride advertisements for a year. We will be taking 2 months out to ensure that the campaign covers next Christmas as well.

iTrace. The system is now fully functioning and the process of uploading travel plans has begun. There are extra features which allow individual site co-ordinators to have their own site within it. By early next year we should have an idea of the impact travel plans are having and the contribution they are making to the reduction in traffic in Aberdeen City and Shire

ACTTRAVELWISE carried out travel plan training in Aberdeen in November. The members of the Getabout partnership were paid for by the Getabout budget the evaluation was very positive about the entire course



- Recommendation

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