**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.

- **Access to Laurencekirk Study**

Stakeholder workshops were held in Laurencekirk on Saturday 22 February and Thursday 27 February to identify problems and opportunities and help develop study objectives and options in accordance with the Scottish Transport Appraisal Guidance (STAG) methodology that is being utilised to identify a preferred solution. A public drop in session was also held on Tuesday 11 March from 2:30pm to 8pm in Laurencekirk to give all interested parties the chance to see the information gathered to date and provide their views to assist with the assessment process.

Data collection surveys have been commissioned, including classified junction turning counts, queue lengths, link counts, junction delay, journey times and a parking study. The surveys will be undertaken in March 2014. Angus Council and Tactran have been invited to join the steering group for the study given the cross boundary interest in any solution and the potential impact of future development within their area. A steering group meeting is being held on 24 March to agree the project objectives, based on feedback from the consultations to date and define the traffic modelling requirements.

- **National Planning Framework 3 – Scottish Parliament Committee’s consideration**

The Scottish Parliament debated the National Planning Framework and Scottish Planning Policy on Tuesday 18th December 2013. This marks the close of the Scottish Parliament’s consideration of the proposed NPF3. The wide ranging debate broadly welcomed the strategy, policies and the process of reviewing them in parallel. The debate also reflected on a number of the recommendations which have been made by four Parliamentary Committees which considered the proposed NPF3 and SPP (Local Government & Regeneration Committee; Infrastructure & Capital Investment Committee; Economy, Energy & Tourism Committee; and Rural Affairs, Climate Change & Environment Committee).

Nestrans responded to these Committees in a similar manner to submissions by Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire Councils, the Strategic Development Planning Authority and ACSEF with particular reference to the proposal to make high speed rail between Edinburgh and Glasgow a national development. In response to these submissions the Infrastructure and Capital Investment Committee has made the following report:

**Rail**

62. During the evidence taking process, the Committee heard several concerns from stakeholders regarding rail developments in the draft NPF3. These related to the Edinburgh to Glasgow Improvement Project (EGIP), the proposed high-speed link between Edinburgh and Glasgow, and wider rail improvement projects in Scotland.
63. In section 5 of the proposed NPF3, the Scottish Government lays out its vision for the role of rail travel will play in a more connected Scotland, with a High Speed Rail route being considered between Glasgow and Edinburgh as part of a longer term development of a route to London. The proposed framework also highlights the wider rail improvement plans for the rail network in Scotland, as covered in the Infrastructure Investment Plan (IIP).

64. In written evidence to the Committee, stakeholders raised concerns that the business case for the Edinburgh to Glasgow high speed project had not yet been established. The Scottish Council for Development and Industry stated—

“the strength of the business case for a standalone Edinburgh-Glasgow high speed link is yet to be established, and this link should not be prioritised above other improvements to the rail network in Scotland, including the electrification of the network and improvements in journey time from the central belt to Aberdeen and Inverness.”

65. This was a view echoed in the coordinated submission from Aberdeen City Council, Aberdeenshire Council, Aberdeen City and Shire Strategic Development PA and Nestrans—

“Although there is currently no published justification or business case for this project, prioritising it ahead of relatively modest improvements to the very slow journey times from Aberdeen to Inverness and Aberdeen to the central belt does not appear justified.”

66. The Minister for Transport and Veterans, in evidence to the Committee, sought to reassure that the business case for the Edinburgh to Glasgow high-speed rail line was in development, and that the EGIP project was being taken into account—

“That should come to ministers in the next few weeks and will give us more certainty about how we intend to take it forward. In considering the Edinburgh to Glasgow rail improvement project, for example, we have taken into account that the high-speed link may happen. However, we should not get involved in a lot of expenditure or plans in respect of high-speed rail that would supersede the Edinburgh to Glasgow improvement project.”

67. The Committee notes the concern of stakeholders that the business case for a high speed line between Edinburgh and Glasgow, in advance of the wider UK high speed rail project, has not yet been published.

68. However, it welcomes the indication from the Minister for Transport and Veterans that the business case will come before Ministers shortly. The Committee recommends that the Scottish Government, in considering the business case, take account of the concerns raised in relation to the impact the Edinburgh to Glasgow high speed rail plan might have upon the EGIP project, and the Scottish Government’s commitment to wider rail improvements across Scotland.

69. The Committee requests that it be kept informed of decisions following discussion of the Edinburgh to Glasgow high speed rail business case.

Other areas where further clarity of the Scottish Government’s position in NPF3 and SPP were sought included wild land, wind farms, peatlands and unconventional gas. The full committee reports and official report of the debate are available at: http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/parliamentarybusiness/CurrentCommittees/71180.aspx.

**Energetica corridor and Rapid Transit studies**

A meeting was held with Transport Scotland in October 2013 to discuss a proposed feasibility study on the Energetica corridor (Buchan corridor) looking at multi-modal options to improve accessibility, including re-opening the rail line, as set out in the RTS Refresh 2013. Since this meeting, a background paper has been produced to inform discussions internally between Nestrans and the two councils on the way forward. This paper is now informing the development of a brief for the initial stages of the study, which will be undertaken in line with STAG procedures.
A similar process is also being undertaken to look at a Bus Rapid Transit corridor in the city, as identified in Aberdeen City Council’s Strategic Infrastructure Plan and supported in the RTS Refresh 2013.

**Inverurie Interchange**

The Scottish Government concluded the Integrated Transport Fund a couple of years ago. A winning bid to that fund was the Inverurie Interchange project which has been delayed due to the processes necessary to release the land at the Inverurie Rail Freight Yards for sale/lease to permit the project to proceed. The Scottish Government awarded Nestrans £500,000 grant to hold on account for the project to proceed subject to time limit.

The process for the sale/lease of the land has now concluded and Aberdeenshire Council are considering how the project now fits into their overall spending plans. Meantime the time limit for spending the funding from Scottish Government expires on 31 March 2013.

Nestrans has therefore requested an extension of time from the Government to permit the funding to be carried forward.

**North East Business Week**

Nestrans have been invited to take part in the annual North East Business Week which this year has the theme of Connectivity Driving Growth. The week runs from 28 April to 2 May. The week ends with a lunch event at the Marcliffe. Nestrans has secured the slot immediately before the lunch for an event discussing our newly approved Regional Transport Strategy refresh, its economic development context, high level proposals within it and the projects that are to be delivered in the next few years.

It is intended to have an invited audience comprising MP’s, MSP’s, Board Members, Senior Councillors and Business Leaders. Presentations will be made by Peter Argyle, Ramsay Milne, Eddie Anderson and Rab Dickson.

**Scottish Transport Awards**

A submission by Nestrans, in partnership with First, has been shortlisted for the Scottish Transport Awards. The submission, nominated First’s Platinum service 19 in the category ‘Best Bus Service’. The Platinum service was launched in November 2013 and included the complete refurbishment and re-branding of 12 buses on the route. The Scottish Transport Awards ceremony will be held in Glasgow on 19th June 2014.

**Nestrans Press Releases**

Since the last meeting of the Board, Nestrans has issued the following press releases (please click on the heading to access details from the Nestrans website).

25 February 2014:  [Transport minister hears North East HS2 concerns](#)

A delegation of north east business leaders welcomed the positive reaction from Transport Minister Baroness Kramer in London following a discussion on the impact of HS2 on the region.

5 March 2014:  [Access to Laurencekirk study drop in session announced](#)

Following Nestrans appointment of CH2M HILL for the ‘Access to Laurencekirk Study’, a drop in session is taking place at the Masonic Hall in Laurencekirk on Tuesday 11th March from
2.30pm - 8pm. This will give interested parties a chance to see the information gathered to date and provide their views to assist with the assessment process.

10 March 2013  **Nestrans’ Regional Transport Strategy shared with key partners**

Following the approval of Nestrans’ Regional Transport Strategy refresh (RTS) by Keith Brown Minister for Transport and Veterans, the final document has been published and shared with key partners in the region. Those receiving the document include MPs, MSPs, councillors, transport operators and other key stakeholders.

**Nestrans/Getabout Communications Update**

**Media**

Since the last report there have been ten media enquiries:

- Request for more details on Bridge of Dee options
- Request for details on outcome of Bridge of Dee options at Board meeting
- More details required on the Access to Laurencekirk public exhibition
- Is Nestrans progressing with a rail feasibility study for Banchory?
- Request for clarification over Board paper content
- Clarification on spending in Board papers
- Interview request with Chair from Original 106 re train overcrowding release
- Interview request with Chair from Northsound re train overcrowding release
- Comment required on impact of transport in Aberdeen City as a result of Union Square opening
- Comment required on Budget announcements - Air passenger tax and Regional Air Connectivity Fund

Three press releases have been issued since the start of February:

- Nestrans highlight issues facing north-east train passengers to key agencies
- ‘Access to Laurencekirk Study’ drop in session announced
- Nestrans' Regional Transport Strategy shared with key partners

Nestrans’ press mentions since the start of February (links included where possible, and copies of articles are available upon request).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Headline</th>
<th>Paper</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.2.14</td>
<td>We could be facing even worse traffic congestion</td>
<td>Evening Express</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.2.14</td>
<td>New Nestrans appointment</td>
<td>Fraserburgh Herald</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.2.14</td>
<td>Green space can be used for parking</td>
<td>Evening Express</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.2.14</td>
<td>North-east ‘neglected in favour of high profile projects</td>
<td>Press and Journal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.2.14</td>
<td>Nestrans strategy gets approval</td>
<td>Fraserburgh Herald</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.2.14</td>
<td>Plan for six-lane bridge over the River Dee</td>
<td>Evening Express</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.2.14</td>
<td>Councils foot bill to fix road damaged by turbine lorries</td>
<td>Evening Express</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.2.14</td>
<td>Plans just shift problem- Scott Begbie column</td>
<td>Evening Express</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.2.14</td>
<td>Nestrans strategy gets approval</td>
<td>Press and Journal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.2.14</td>
<td>Flyover meeting plea to Brown</td>
<td>Press and Journal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.2.14</td>
<td>City council mulls new Dee bridge proposals</td>
<td>Evening Express</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20.2.14</td>
<td>Rude awakening for Scots over high speed rail link -</td>
<td>Press and Journal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Nestrans highlight issues facing NE train passengers to key agencies</td>
<td>AGCC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21.2.14</td>
<td>Radio interview re Train overcrowding release -</td>
<td>Northsound</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21.2.14</td>
<td>Peter Argyle</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Radio interview re Train overcrowding release -
21.2.14 Peter Argyle
Radio interview re Train overcrowding release -
21.2.14 Peter Argyle
26.2.14 Transport minister hears North-east HS2 concerns
27.2.14 Rail passengers face overcrowded journeys
27.2.14 Transport Minister meets with Scotland's High Speed 2 objectors
04.3.14 Inverurie’s hub moves forward after land freed
05.3.14 Plans for access and ring road approved by residents
Access to Laurencekirk Study’ drop in session announced
10.3.14 Nestrans’ Regional Transport Strategy shared with key partners
11.3.14 Study will look at reinstating rail
13.3.14 Nestrans query particulars of reinstating rail links
13.3.14 Study examines traffic at notorious A90 junctions
20.3.14 Signal goes up for more trains in Kincardine and Mearns
21.3.14 Nestrans campaign plans Holyrood protest
Nestrans to increase frequency of trains in Kincardine and Mearns
22.3.14 Two new city railway stations could cut traffic issues
24.3.14 Campaign aim to limit impact of HS2 on region

Twitter 1st February- 23rd March
- Number of followers 156
- Number of tweets 190
- Number of retweets 33
- Number of mentions 29
- Number of favourites 9
- Following 136
- Bitly click throughs 167 from 22 links

(Bitly is a URL shortening and bookmarking service and used with in our tweets)

- The most popular link was in regard to First Aberdeen launching a ticket app to buy bus tickets via your phone.
- The most popular tweet was – ‘Our ‘Access to Laurencekirk Study’ drop in session is TODAY from 2.30-8pm at the Masonic Hall in #Laurencekirk bit.ly/1cC9dTk Pls RT’ with 571 views.

*Please note these stats cover ACSEF and Nestrans related tweets

Press & Journal interview
Following an article in the Press & Journal that included out of date information on HS2, an interview was set up with David McKay the Scottish Political Editor at Press & Journal. The interview covered a variety of transport related topics and as a result two articles have appeared in the paper on 22nd and 24th March on ‘Two new city railway stations could cut traffic problems’ and ‘Campaign aims to limit impact of HS2 on region’.

THInC
Working in conjunction with Andrew Stewart, Health & Transport Action Plan Programme Manager, promotion of THInC continues. A press release will be distributed to promote the service and tie in with the launch of 70,000 THInC branded prescription bags in the north east. Key partners continue to support THInC via their websites and social media pages.

Getabout
A list of events that Getabout will attend and support has been created for 2014 with various adverts booked throughout the year to support this plan. These include billboard and bus backs advertising for European Mobility week in September and promoting the use of public transport in the festive season.

Options for promotional items are also currently being researched to ensure they support the key messages of Getabout. Options are being investigated for pedestrians, cyclists and people who car share such as pedometers, reflective items such as i.e. slap bands, hi vis vests and air fresheners (that promote car sharing).

Radio adverts continue to run on Original 106 FM promoting various Getabout initiatives, the next group of ads will cover active lifestyle and promote walking or cycling to your destination, where possible.

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

RGM/RD/JA/DK/LC 21 March 2014