

Scottish Transport Awards 2012
Category 4: Integrated Transport Project of the Year



Facilitating development and mitigating its impact on the strategic transport network through a strategic transport fund

Introduction

Nestrans is the Regional Transport Partnership for the North East of Scotland and in partnership with the region's Strategic Development Planning Authority (SDPA), Aberdeen City Council and Aberdeenshire Council, provides an integrated and regional approach to the planning of land use and transport across the North East. A high level of partnership working already exists between the organisations with Nestrans and the SDPA co-located and working together with the two Councils on a re-refresh of the Regional Transport Strategy and development of the Strategic Development Plan.

The adoption of the Structure Plan in 2009 marked a significant shift to a positive and ambitious planning framework for the area. This was critical to secure the long term vibrancy of the local economy, resulting in significant land releases (up to 72,000 new houses and 438 hectares of employment land) and recognition of the importance of the transport network in facilitating this vision.

Such a scale of growth required a new and innovative approach to dealing with the resulting impacts on the transport network. It was identified at an early stage that the potential cumulative, cross boundary impacts on the strategic transport network and the likely solutions required to mitigate these effects needed to be better understood and a mechanism found to address them.

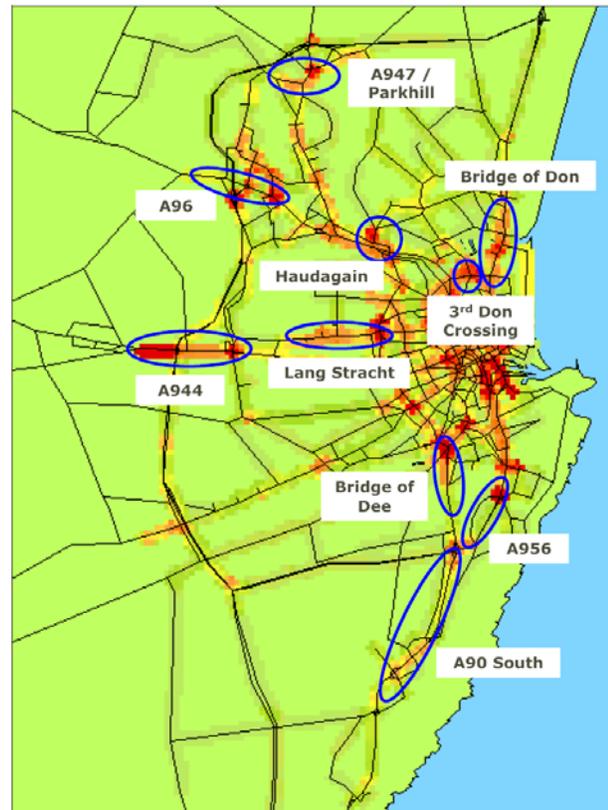


Cumulative Transport Appraisal (CTA)

In November 2009, Nestrans, in partnership with the SDPA, Aberdeen City Council, Aberdeenshire Council and Transport Scotland, commissioned a transport appraisal of the emerging LDPs for Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire. The study, carried out by MVA, used ASAM4 (the Aberdeen Sub Area Model) to consider the cumulative strategic transport impacts associated with the scale of development proposals. It took into consideration the range of schemes already committed and assessed the additional impact of new development on the transport network.

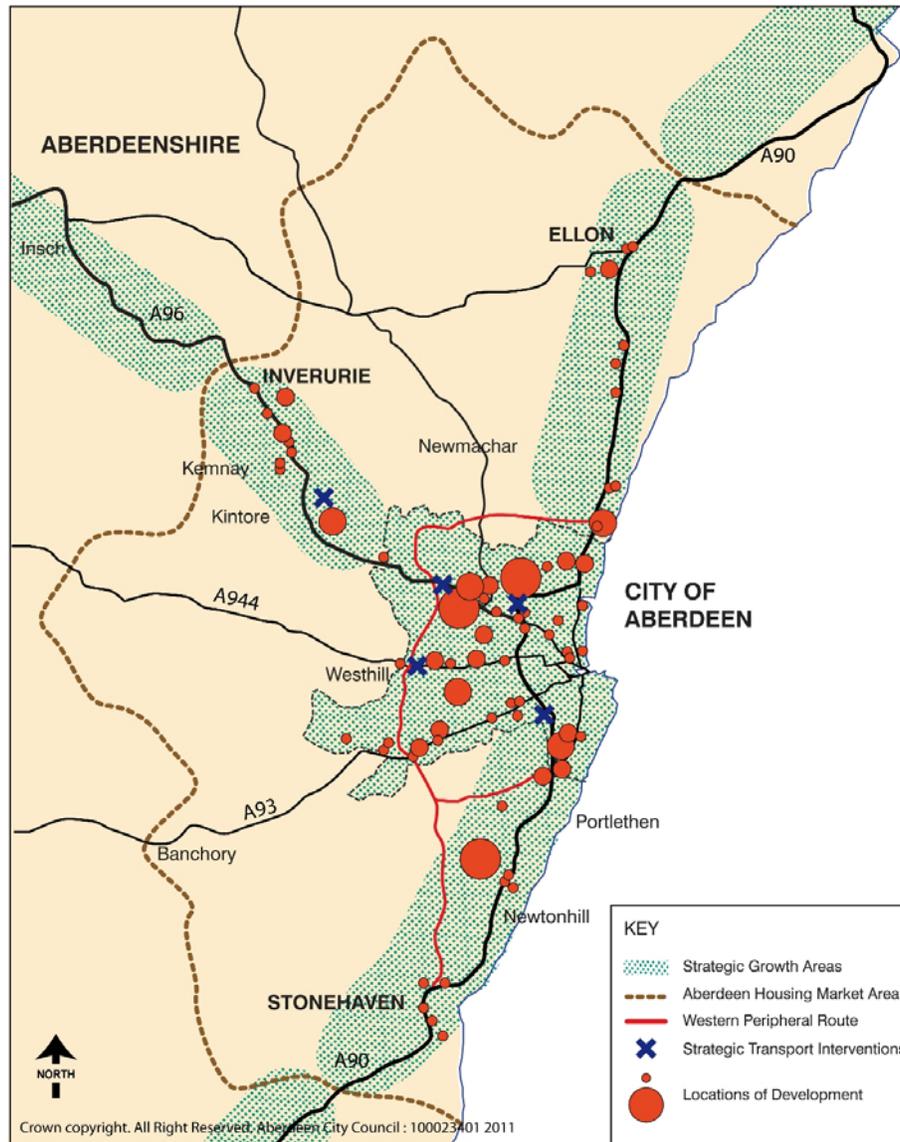
The use of ASAM has enabled, for the first time, a strategic region wide overview of the impact of the development proposals to be taken and an understanding of the cumulative impact and likely scale of intervention that may be required on the strategic transport network to mitigate the impact of future development.

The study concluded that the scale of development proposed in the structure plan will have a significant impact on the region's transport network, particularly in areas approaching and within the city. A number of transport interventions are already being delivered or in the pipeline, and are shown to have a significant benefit. However, the study showed that there will be areas across the network which will still cause major concerns with this scale of development. A package of road and public transport interventions to mitigate these impacts was subsequently proposed and tested.



The study methodology and its findings were supported by Transport Scotland and used as an example of best practice in informing the development of the recently published Development Planning and Management Transport Appraisal Guidance (DPMTAG). It also demonstrates a significant step forward in joint working between land use planning and transport across the north east at a very early stage in the development plan process.

Distribution of development and intervention areas



Supplementary Planning Guidance and a Strategic Transport Fund

Following conclusion of the CTA a working group was set up consisting of representatives from Nestrans, Aberdeen City and Shire SDPA, Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire Council's Planning and Transportation officers and the Council's joint Planning Gain Team.

The role of this group was to discuss how best to address the cumulative transport impacts generated by developments allocated in the emerging LDPs and to establish a mechanism for funding and delivering the strategic transport interventions required to mitigate the cumulative impact of development. This has resulted in the development and approval by the SDPA of an innovative

funding mechanism and associated supplementary planning guidance (SPG) for the current structure plan, setting out requirements for developer contributions into a strategic transport fund specifically to deliver identified transport improvements.

The purpose of the SPG is to enable the development allowances in the structure plan to be delivered and to provide a clear and transparent mechanism that provides some certainty to the development industry. Without the planned delivery of some form of intervention, there is a real possibility that transport assessments prepared for specific sites or masterplan areas would demonstrate an unacceptable impact on the transport network.



Under the existing scheme, a single development could trigger the requirement for a multi-million pound piece of infrastructure that renders the entire site unviable. The ability to spread expenditure on these strategic interventions across a wide range of developments in both council areas and identify these costs upfront, is seen as a proactive approach to a complex emerging problem, a real advantage to the development industry and an opportunity to facilitate improvement in transport and accessibility.

The solution set out in the SPG is to seek contributions from housing and non-residential development in the LDPs and windfall proposals that meet the set criteria. The contributions proposed for housing have been based on a per unit price linked to the number of bedrooms with an average price of £2,064 per unit. For employment uses, a per hectare contribution has been arrived at based on the Use Classes Order and weighted on the basis of relative land value and trip generation. This has produced an average price per hectare of £62,010. These costs will be indexed in line with the tender price index of construction costs and reviewed every five years.

The contributions received into the STF will total £86.6 million if all development comes forward and will be ring-fenced for the delivery of the strategic transport projects identified through the CTA. Under this new approach, developers will continue to make appropriate payments towards local roads, education, affordable housing, community, waste and other services required to facilitate their development. In order to facilitate development and limit the risk to the development industry however, contributions will be able to be deferred to allow some development to be completed and income generated before any monies are paid.



This approach is a significant change in the way that developer contributions are sought and is understood to be the first of its kind in Scotland involving partnership working to facilitate and fund necessary interventions across local authority boundaries. Consultation with residential and commercial development industry representatives has been undertaken throughout the process and has helped to inform the details

of the mechanism as well as keeping the industry informed of its development.

The STF will be administered and managed by Nestrans who, in close consultation with partners, will prioritise schemes for investment, lead delivery and report annually on progress. The CTA will be reviewed every five years to ensure interventions remain appropriate to the scale, location and phasing of development.

The approval of the SPG by the SDPA in December 2011 was a key milestone and formal noting of that decision by the two Councils will mark the start of the strategic transport fund into which contributions will be agreed as part of the planning application process. This is a first in Scotland and marks a significant change in the way in which the strategic transport impact of development is identified and mitigated. It also demonstrates a significantly greater level of integration between transport and land use planning across two Council areas and has enabled a far greater level of understanding of the transport impacts at a regional level from the outset than has been the case in previous plans.

The SPG document can be viewed at http://www.aberdeencityandshire-sdpa.gov.uk/News/2012_02_01_ACC_ratify_strategic_transport_fund_SPG.asp.