



## ABERDEEN AIRPORT OUTLINE MASTER PLAN NESTRANS' CONSULTATION RESPONSE

### Introduction

NESTRANS is the regional transport partnership for Aberdeen City and Shire. As a voluntary partnership, it comprises Aberdeenshire Council, Aberdeen City Council, Scottish Enterprise Grampian and Aberdeen and Grampian Chamber of Commerce. Its work will be taken forward by the new statutory North East of Scotland Transport Partnership, which will retain the name NESTRANS, from 1 April 2006.

NESTRANS was formed in 2001 to bring together public and private sectors in the region to develop and implement a regional transport strategy. The resulting strategy - the Modern Transport System - takes an integrated approach to improving accessibility to, from and within the region, tackling congestion and enhancing external links.

NESTRANS has supported the development of the Aberdeen Airport Business Development Forum, which has successfully brought together public authorities, aviation companies and business organisations with the goal of developing passenger and freight business at the airport. In partnership with BAA and with the involvement of the Forum, NESTRANS has commissioned two studies looking at realising new opportunities for passenger and air freight services at the airport.

The primary task of the new North East of Scotland Transport Partnership will be to develop a long-term statutory transport strategy for Aberdeen City and Shire. This strategy will take forward the Modern Transport System and plan for the future transport needs of the region in 2021. The strategy will be developed in consultation with key stakeholders and the wider public and requires to be submitted to the Minister for Transport for approval in March 2007.

NESTRANS welcomes the development of an Outline Master Plan for Aberdeen Airport and appreciates the opportunity to submit detailed comments. This response was approved by the NESTRANS Board on 20 March 2006.

### Responses to Consultation Questions

#### **1. What principal social and economic benefits do you associate with Aberdeen Airport and which of these do you regard as most important to local people?**

Aberdeen Airport is of vital importance to the economy of Aberdeen City and Shire. It provides direct connections to major European and UK destinations and enables inter-lining to other parts of the world through hub airports such as Heathrow and Amsterdam. The airport plays a vital role in supporting the offshore oil and gas industry, which is a major driver of the regional and Scottish economy. It is also a major employer itself and generates employment elsewhere in the economy. The Realising Aviation Opportunities<sup>1</sup> report in 2005 suggested that the airport directly and indirectly supports over 7,700 jobs, contributing £127 million to the regional economy. The study found that the growth of the airport over the past couple of years had increased the benefit to the regional and Scottish economy, suggesting continued economic benefits as the airport continues to develop.

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<sup>1</sup> Avia Solutions for BAA Aberdeen and NESTRANS, Realising Aviation Opportunities at Aberdeen Airport, 2005.

The connections available to and from Aberdeen Airport are highly valued by companies doing business in the region, but also have a significant role in attracting inward tourism. This has potential to increase significantly with the growth in short break and niche tourism, assisted by better marketing of the region through the Aberdeen City and Shire brand initiative. The region's peripheral location in relation to the rest of the UK and mainland Europe means that aviation is perhaps more important than in other parts of Britain, where rail and sea links can provide more viable alternative means of travel. In Aberdeen City and Shire, the airport is the prime gateway to visitors from other parts of the UK and Europe and opens up opportunities for business and leisure that would not otherwise be possible.

Aberdeen Airport and the opportunities it offers for both people and business is therefore a key element of the region's competitiveness as a place to live, work and do business. The airport also has important quality of life benefits, providing opportunities for people living in the region to travel, without having to undertake long journeys to airports in the central belt. This contributes to the attractiveness of Aberdeen City and Shire as a place to live, which is well connected to the rest of the UK and wider world.

**2. Do you agree that the contents of Chapter 4 represent a fair and accurate summary of Aberdeen Airport today? If not, why not?**

Yes, this is a fair and accurate summary. NESTRANS welcomes the recent improvements at the airport and the commitment of BAA to its development. NESTRANS has some issues concerning the current surface access provision which will be discussed in our response to questions 9 and 10.

**3. In 5.1.1 we assume that growth in air travel is driven primarily by economic growth and the price of air travel. Do you share this view and if not, what drivers do you believe facilitate growth?**

While we would largely agree with the assessment of economic drivers contained in this section, we would suggest that account is also taken of increase in demand driven by in-bound tourism and place marketing to both leisure and business visitors. Consideration should also be given to the extent to which air passengers in Aberdeen's catchment area currently travel to airports such as Edinburgh and Glasgow due to the wider choice of routes and availability of lower fares. The development of more routes from Aberdeen, particularly by lower cost airlines and charters, may result some of these passengers using Aberdeen instead of travelling to other airports.

It is also appropriate in this context to consider the global issue of climate change and the need to reverse the growth in carbon emissions. The future availability of oil and its global price may also have an impact on demand for air travel.

**4. For planning purposes BAA Aberdeen bases its medium and long-term development plans on the midpoint of the range of forecasts. Do you agree that this is a sensible strategy and if not, why not?**

While NESTRANS accepts that it is sensible to base plans on the mid-point of a range of forecasts, we consider these forecasts to be rather conservative and do not regard them as being reflective of recent experience at Aberdeen Airport. The Airport has been very successful over the past two years, with a reported 9.2% increase in passenger numbers over the past year. There is significant potential for further growth from in-bound tourism and reducing leakage of passengers to other airports. NESTRANS would support revision of these forecasts to better reflect recent growth and to ensure that the master plan enables the airport to be sufficiently equipped to meet demand and build on the momentum of growth in recent years.

Should BAA continue to plan using the forecasts contained in the draft master plan then it is important for development plans to be sufficiently flexible to enable the Airport to adapt to accommodate higher than anticipated growth.

**5. In 5.2.6, BAA Aberdeen outlines its view that domestic rail developments will have little effect on the growth of air travel. Do you share this view and if you do not, why not?**

In the context of Aberdeen and its rail links to London and other English destinations, NESTRANS is inclined to agree that these are unlikely to have any significant impact on the demand for air travel. While NESTRANS would welcome improvements in rail journey times to the rest of the UK, we recognise that major investment would be required to enable rail to compete on journey times with flights to London and the south of England. NESTRANS does however consider the Caledonian Sleeper service to offer an attractive and environmentally sustainable alternative to air travel to London and welcomes First ScotRail's investment in this service.

The development of a direct rail link to Edinburgh Airport may have an impact on Aberdeen Airport as it is likely to make Edinburgh Airport more accessible to passengers from north east Scotland. The potential impact of this development should be considered.

**6. Section 6.1.3 outlines BAA Aberdeen's intention to develop the airport incrementally, to ensure capacity more closely meets demand at all times. Do you agree with this approach and if not, why not?**

NESTRANS sees the logic of this approach, however considers it important that this approach does not result in development at the airport lagging behind the needs of passengers and other airport users. There should be sufficient flexibility to enable development to be brought forward if growth forecasts appear to have been too conservative.

**7. The need for an extension to the main runway is considered at section 6.3. Do you agree that greater runway length and capability is required. If not, why not?**

NESTRANS supports an expansion in the range of destinations served by Aberdeen Airport as a means of better connecting the region to the wider world and supporting economic growth. In partnership with BAA, NESTRANS commissioned research on realising future opportunities at the airport, which considered how to overcome barriers to future route development. In particular, NESTRANS recognises that many destinations, favoured by business and leisure passengers, are beyond the point-to-point reach of Aberdeen at the current time, which requires inter-lining through other airports or re-fuelling stops en route. This makes travelling between Aberdeen and these destinations relatively unattractive and the additional take off and landings required have a negative environmental impact.

NESTRANS welcomes the commitment of BAA to the future development of the airport through the submission of a planning application to Aberdeen City Council seeking permission for a 300m extension to the runway. Without prejudice to the Council's consideration of the planning application, NESTRANS would support extension of the runway as a means of increasing the range of destinations served by Aberdeen and enabling a wider range of modern aircraft to use the airport with full payloads.

Subject to the runway extension receiving planning approval, NESTRANS would like to see this important upgrade given high priority within BAA's investment plans.

**8. In the period to 2015, are there any other facilities you would like to see developed at Aberdeen Airport? Please list these along with a brief rationale.**

NESTRANS welcomes BAA's recent investment in the terminal building at the airport, which improves facilities for passengers and enhances the role of the airport as a gateway to Aberdeen City and Shire.

NESTRANS supports the further planned investment by BAA in passenger facilities at the airport and looks forward to improvements in passenger comfort and the retail and catering offer.

One area where further action may be required is the provision of sheltered routes between aircraft and the terminal building. This enhances the passenger experience and promotes a good first impression to arriving visitors.

We also note the planned reduction in helicopter maintenance facilities at the airport over the Master Plan period due to a reduction in helicopter aviation. NESTRANS would suggest that this presents an opportunity to build up fixed-wing aircraft maintenance at the airport, as a means of building on the skill base that currently exists at the airport and safeguarding skilled jobs.

There is also little reference in the master plan to the planned development of a rail freight facility at Raith's Farm, close to the airport. This presents potential for integration with current freight operations at the airport and for supplies to the airport to be transported by rail.

**9. Do you agree with the appraisal of surface access issues given in this section? If not please explain any transport matters that concern you or your organisation.**

As the Regional Transport Partnership for Aberdeen City and Shire, NESTRANS takes a considerable interest in surface access to Aberdeen Airport. We worked previously with BAA Aberdeen on its first surface access strategy and initiatives that stemmed from it. In 2003, NESTRANS commissioned a major study looking at future transport needs in the wider Dyce area and has been instrumental in the establishment of the Dyce Transport Management Organisation, of which BAA is a member.

NESTRANS will work closely with BAA Aberdeen on the development of a revised surface access strategy for the airport and provide what support it can to assist with its implementation. As mentioned earlier, NESTRANS will be developing a regional transport strategy for north east Scotland during the course of 2006. This strategy will look to a horizon of 2021 and access to the airport and Dyce area from across the region will be a major consideration. NESTRANS hopes that, as a key stakeholder, BAA will be able to contribute to the development of this strategy and ensure integration between regional and local transport strategies and the airport's surface access strategy.

It is recognised that current surface access to the airport could be improved and that a higher proportion of passengers could travel to the airport by public transport. The current bus services to Aberdeen Airport, while improved in recent years, could be developed further particularly as passenger numbers at the airport rise. There can be shortages of taxis at the airport at peak times, which suggests both that supply should increase and that there is an opportunity for bus companies to meet some of this demand.

It is noted that the Master Plan anticipates parking at the airport to increase, but this needs to be done in the context of a wider surface access strategy. NESTRANS would also welcome an increase in the number of spaces allocated to car-sharers.

The surface access, local and regional transport strategies should consider how public transport access both to the City centre and the wider region could be improved. Integration with Dyce station needs to be explored further as the development of Crossrail provides an opportunity for rail to play a greater role in access to the airport, particularly from the wider region. The opportunity presented by the Aberdeen Western Peripheral Route for express bus services connecting with industrial areas and serving towns in Aberdeenshire also needs to be fully explored. There is also considerable scope for enhancing bus and taxi waiting facilities at the airport and providing better information and marketing for bus services, to make public transport a more attractive option. Consideration also needs to be given to how bus stops in the City and Shire which serve the airport could be branded to raise awareness of airport bus services and encourage greater use.

**10. Do you agree that new road capacity and improvements (including the Aberdeen Western Peripheral Route) must be developed in line with strategies to promote public transport improvements and usage? If not, why not?**

The Aberdeen Western Peripheral Route (AWPR) is a key element of the Modern Transport System strategy developed by NESTRANS. This strategy comprises road and public transport improvements, facilitated by the AWPR. NESTRANS was instrumental in securing Scottish Executive support and funding for the construction of the AWPR in 2003 and welcomes the support from BAA Aberdeen for this major improvement.

The AWPR will significantly improve road access to the airport (for cars, public transport and freight), widening the accessibility to the airport from the wider region and increasing its potential catchment area. The proposed new junction and link road will significantly improve access arrangements, increasing capacity and reducing potential for delay. The AWPR will also remove the need for traffic travelling to and from the airport to drive through the city, which will have a positive impact on congestion in Aberdeen.

NESTRANS completely agrees that these major road improvements need to be complemented by public transport improvements. The Modern Transport System seeks to achieve this through using the AWPR to facilitate other public transport improvements such as bus priority lanes and park and ride facilities. Another major element of the Modern Transport System is Aberdeen Crossrail, referred to in 7.3.5 of the outline masterplan, which seeks to improve cross-city rail services and open new stations in Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire. NESTRANS will also work with BAA Aberdeen to develop public transport improvements as part of the airport's surface access strategy.

**11. Section 8.1.5 states BAA's view that major airport developments should only be undertaken in line with national sustainability objectives, and in a responsible way. Do you agree with this approach? If you do not, please indicate why.**

NESTRANS agrees with the view in this section that airport developments should be aligned with national sustainability objectives.

**12. Furthermore BAA's development strategy looks for a sensible balance between promoting social and economic benefits and managing local and environmental impacts. Do you support this approach? Again, if not, why not?**

NESTRANS recognises that a balance needs to be struck between economic and social benefits and the environmental impacts of aviation and airport development. This is true of

all transport projects and it is important that economic, social and environmental costs and benefits are properly assessed and appraised as part of major infrastructure developments.

- 13. In 8.2.1 BAA states that the EU Emissions Trading Scheme will be the most effective means by which EU aviation can address its climate impacts. Do you agree with this approach? If not, please explain why not and detail any possible alternatives.**

NESTRANS would agree that this appears to be a sensible approach. NESTRANS recognises that a consistent approach needs to be adopted across the EU so BAA can operate on a 'level playing field'.

- 14. In this chapter of our outline Master Plan, BAA addresses a number of key environmental issues, from noise and air to quality to waste management and energy use. Are there any more issues that BAA Aberdeen should be addressing and if so, what are these?**

NESTRANS considers this to be a comprehensive list.

- 15. On each specific area listed in 8.2.3 do you believe that BAA is doing enough to effectively address these issues? If not, what more do you believe could be done?**

On the basis of the information in paragraphs 8.3 to 8.11, BAA appears to be taking a responsible approach to managing the environmental impacts of its activities, which is welcomed.

On the issue of waste management, the planned enhancement of north east rail freight facilities and capacity may present opportunities for more sustainable transport of waste.

- 16. Based on the limited detail provided for the period between 2015 and 2030, do you agree with BAA Aberdeen's land-use strategy as outlined in sections 9.3 and 9.10? If not, what alternative plans would you propose, which allow the airport to grow in line with national policy outlined in the White Paper?**

NESTRANS recognises the difficulties in predicting requirements beyond 2015 but considers that these will need to be integrated in due course with the future Strategic Development Plan for the Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire city region.

Surface access will become increasingly important as passenger numbers using the airport increase. The Regional Transport Strategy, to be developed by NESTRANS, will look to 2021 and will be reviewed every 4 years. NESTRANS will seek BAA's input to the development of this strategy and work with BAA to ensure complementarity between it and the surface access strategy for Aberdeen Airport.

- 17. In section 9.3, BAA Aberdeen considers further runway and taxiway extensions in the period to 2030. Do you agree with the view that this additional runway length and capability is required? If not, why not?**

NESTRANS recognises that should the proposed 300m runway extension go ahead, there will still be a range of destinations, notably North America, that will be beyond the point-to-point reach of Aberdeen. As noted previously, the range of destinations served by Aberdeen is a fundamental element of the region's connectivity and economic competitiveness as a location for business and a desirable place to live or visit. It is therefore sensible for BAA Aberdeen to plan ahead for the possibility of further runway extensions in future to facilitate an increased range of destinations and aircraft types. NESTRANS also agree that such

plans are kept under review to enable proposals to be brought forward prior to 2015 if appropriate.

- 18. Do you agree with the broad principle that airport operators must work with local communities and others to find a balance between the social and economic benefits of air travel and the environmental costs? If not, please explain why not and, if you wish, put forward an alternative strategy.**

NESTRANS agrees with this broad principle and recognises that BAA Aberdeen has a creditable record on consultation and engagement with the local community and other stakeholders, most notably through the Aberdeen Airport Consultative Committee. As noted previously, the environmental costs of any transport mode must be weighed against the wider benefits to society and the local and national economies.

- 19. Do you expect BAA Aberdeen to consider strategies for any area not listed at 10.3.1? If so, please provide details.**

NESTRANS has no suggestions to make in this regard.

- 20. Are there any other issues not currently set out in this Outline Master Plan which you feel merit further consideration ahead of the final plan's production and publication next year?**

NESTRANS has no further issues to raise.

## **CONCLUDING COMMENTS**

NESTRANS welcomes the consultation and draft master plan.

NESTRANS has enjoyed a productive working relationship with BAA Aberdeen and looks forward to this continuing through the development of the surface access strategy and the regional transport strategy. NESTRANS welcomes the recent investment in the airport and looks forward to the airport continuing to develop to meet the current and future needs of Aberdeen City and Shire.

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