

Nestrans Rail Action Plan 2010-2021 Second Draft

Introduction

The past few years has seen phenomenal growth in numbers using the rail system in the north east of Scotland. Over two million passengers used trains to travel to, from or within the north east in 2007/08, an increase of over 30% since 2003/04, which is above the Scottish average over the same period. This success has led to a necessity to improve the system and calls for enhanced services to accommodate further travellers.

Nestrans' Regional Transport Strategy was approved by Scottish Ministers in July 2008. It contains a number of policies and proposals towards improving transport within, to and from the north east of Scotland. One of the key areas identified is developing the rail system in the region and to this extent, the strategy proposes the production of a number of action plans, one of which is a Rail Action Plan.

The Strategy aims to improve transport and travel choices in the area and rail has the potential to become an even more significant part of the overall transport network. Although currently attracting just one per cent of journeys, they can be significant in being longer than average distance, supporting business and tourism markets as well as commuters and can contribute to reducing car travel often at the busiest times and on the busiest routes.

Vision

Our **vision for transport** underpins our objectives and actions:

“A transport system for the north east of Scotland which enables a more economically competitive, sustainable, and socially inclusive society.”

The Vision for the Rail Action Plan follows this overarching vision contained in the Regional Transport Strategy and the objectives similarly reflect the 12 objectives identified in the RTS. These are repeated below, as they are equally valid for this Action Plan as for the Strategy as a whole.

Aims and Objectives

Strategic Objective 1: Economy

To enhance and exploit the north east's competitive economic advantages, and reduce the impacts of peripherality.

- To make the movement of goods and people within the north east and to/from the area more efficient and reliable.
- To improve the range and quality of transport to/from the north east to key business destinations.
- To improve connectivity within the north east, particularly between residential and employment areas.

Strategic Objective 2: Accessibility, Safety and Social Inclusion

To enhance choice, accessibility and safety of transport, particularly for disadvantaged and vulnerable members of society and those living in areas where transport options are limited.

- To enhance travel opportunities and achieve sustained cost and quality advantages for public transport relative to the car.
- To reduce the number and severity of traffic related accidents and improve personal safety and security for all users of transport.
- To achieve increased use of active travel and improve air quality as part of wider strategies to improve the health of north east residents.

Strategic Objective 3: Environment

To conserve and enhance the north east's natural and built environment and heritage and reduce the effects of transport on climate and air quality.

- To reduce the proportion of journeys made by cars and especially by single occupant cars.
- To reduce the environmental impacts of transport, in line with national targets.
- To reduce growth in vehicle kilometres travelled.

Strategic Objective 4: Spatial Planning

To support transport integration and a strong, vibrant and dynamic city centre and town centres across the north east.

- To improve connectivity to and within Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire towns, especially by public transport, walking and cycling.
- To encourage integration of transport and spatial planning and improve connections between transport modes and services.
- To enhance public transport opportunities and reduce barriers to use across the north east, especially rural areas.

All of these objectives will be supported by this Rail Action Plan, which covers the period to the end of the existing approved Regional Transport Strategy, that is 2021.

Current Rail Network in North east Scotland

The Nestrans area has eight stations, since the reopening of Laurencekirk in December 2008. There are around 90 miles (145 kilometres) of railway line in the region, effectively a line to the south from Aberdeen forming part of the East Coast Main Line to London and a predominantly single-track line to the west towards Inverness. Other than this single route in either direction from Aberdeen and one freight branch line between Kittybrewster and Aberdeen Harbour via the Waterloo Line, there are no other railway lines in the north east.

A number of **Issues and current problems** associated with rail travel within the north east and to/from the north east have been identified through correspondence and consultations. The Rail Action Plan should endeavour to address these and provide actions which would reconcile these or at least provide an opportunity for further consideration.

Problems:

- Lack of regular, frequent stops at some stations – there may be a need to identify a hierarchy of stations, reflecting the role and function of each;
- Uncertainty/confusion of ticket pricing;
- Anomalies in fares from certain stations/certain trips;
- Inequity of fares (where peak hour fares may be cheaper than off-peak);
- Fare levels generally;
- Limited access to stations;
- Limited car parking at some stations;
- Calls for additional stations;
- Overcrowding – there is a need to identify times/trains with concern now and projected;
- Poor quality rolling stock, particularly in relation to other long distance railways in Europe and beyond;
- Poor response to incidences or inclement weather, with inadequate replacement services, poor information and low priority given to the north east;
- Lack of a process for bringing forward rail issues to the industry – need to engage with Transport Scotland/ operators and Network Rail/local authorities and Nestrans/ community and public, rail users etc;
- Poor connections and timings particularly across Aberdeen;
- Uncertainty regarding the continuation of through services from north east Scotland to London;
- Limited opportunity for station to station travel within the north east except to/from Aberdeen; and
- Lack of integration with other transport services.

This Action Plan will seek to identify where these concerns are reconcilable and where value for money can be achieved in investing public money to improve the passenger experience and enhance the opportunities for rail travel. Nestrans recognises the complex nature of timetabling across a national network and acknowledges that balance has to be struck between different objectives.

For example, it is not possible to have regular stops at all minor stations whilst reducing inter-city journey times. Identification of a stations hierarchy within the region will enable operators and authorities to agree on the relative needs of stations and market these appropriately to maximise benefits to the rail network as a whole. However, by seeking to engage with stakeholders and communities, it is intended to improve communication and better understand the difficulties in pleasing everyone, providing value for money and achieving a suitable rail service for the 21st century. Achieving appropriate mode shift and thereby achieving the wider economic and environmental benefits which can be afforded by greater rail travel will also be important considerations.

Average journey lengths to and from Aberdeen station are close to 150 kilometres, with over half of all journeys being over 100 kilometres (compared to Glasgow stations, which have less than 5% of journeys of over 100km). Rail therefore is still predominantly a strategic, long distance choice of transport. It is imperative that in encouraging more local rail use we balance the needs of longer distance travellers - fare structures and ticketing initiatives will need to reflect these needs.

Franchises serving north east stations:

Since privatisation of the railways in the 1990s, the track and infrastructure are the responsibility of Network Rail with three primary franchises which operate passenger services to, from and within the north east of Scotland. Most services are operated under the ScotRail franchise, currently held by First Group, which is let and funded by Transport Scotland. Transport Scotland also funds and manages enhancements to the infrastructure within Scotland.

Therefore any proposals to improve rail services in the Nestrans area will need to be approved by the respective bodies. Transport Scotland, under the guidance of the Scottish Government and the Minister for Transport are the key decision-maker, able to invest in new and improved infrastructure which would be managed by Network Rail; they can also include service enhancements within the ScotRail franchise and influence the cross-boundary franchises. The ScotRail franchise also contains operational aspects and management of stations as well as day-to-day operational aspects of the railway. Any enhancements to timetables or operations would need to be approved by ScotRail or other operators, but final decisions are ultimately the responsibility of Transport Scotland.

- ScotRail – the franchise which was initially awarded to First Group in October 2004 was extended in 2008 to cover the period to November 2014. ScotRail currently manage all eight stations in the north east and operate some 400 services per week to or from the north east as well as the Caledonian Sleeper services between Aberdeen and London. ScotRail services in the north east are operated using diesel multiple units.
- East Coast – the East Coast franchise has changed hands a number of times in recent years and is currently operated by the East Coast Main Line Company, a Government-owned company, which took over from National Express in November 2009. The Department for Transport is likely to seek tenders to re-franchise the operation during 2010 for services from midway through 2011. There are three through services per day between Aberdeen and London Kings Cross with an end-to-end journey times of a little over seven hours and a Leeds-Aberdeen service. These are operated using diesel InterCity 125 rolling stock. Recent proposals to enhance the timetables under a “Eureka” brand will offer improvements to the level of service, but mostly on the southern-most part of the route.
- Cross Country – The Cross Country franchise operates between Aberdeen and Penzance and is currently operated by Arriva, who were awarded the franchise from November 2007 to 2016. The service to Aberdeen is operated by Class 220 Diesel-Electric Multiple Unit Voyager trains, which have one of the best reliability performances in the country.

Station Issues

Access for All

Access to the rail network for disabled people is a responsibility of the UK Government under the auspices of the Department for Transport. Access for All funding is a key part of its strategy to improve accessibility to the railways.

Transport Scotland, working with the Department for Transport has an annual budget of £0.7million to invest in small-scale improvements that can be made to rail station access and

passenger services. Applications for all types of disability are eligible, and the DfT welcome innovative or locally focussed solutions to improve access to the rail network for everyone, including those which demonstrate improving integrated accessible transport solutions.

Nestrans has worked with Aberdeen City Council and Aberdeenshire Council and Disability groups across the area to produce an application covering all stations in the region. For 2010/2011 approval was received for £20,000 although projects are currently on hold pending spending review. Summaries of the measures proposed for each station are contained in this document and the authorities will work with Transport Scotland to prioritise work where they can have the greatest impact for passengers with a disability and programme further works into future years.

Information should also be available to travellers with sensory impairments through various options including email, SMS and text alerts.

Car Parking Demand/Supply issues

Many rail travellers choose to drive to their nearest station. Therefore, the availability of car parking is a key determinant of the number of people using rail. Nestrans are working with the two local authorities to develop a Regional Car Parking Strategy and the Councils will deliver parking policies locally.

The eight stations in the Nestrans area have differing levels of demand and availability of car parking and different management controls. The following table indicates the general level of car parking at stations across the region.

	No. of spaces	Est. Demand	Charge	
Huntly	18	medium	Free	
Insch	41	medium	Free	
Inverurie	104	Full by 11am	Free	
Dyce	84	high	Free	
Aberdeen	130 within College Street multi-storey	100% plus	Yes	
Portlethen	30 spaces	low	Free	
Stonehaven	100 spaces	Full by 9am – >30 cars parked on-street	Free	
Laurencekirk	70 spaces	medium	Free	

At Aberdeen station, although there is limited capacity exclusively for rail use, there is also sufficient commercially-available parking to ensure that rail users have the opportunity to park, albeit at commercial rates.

Inverurie has a long-standing proposal to improve the area around the station to implement a transport interchange, serving the town centre and the railway station. This has been halted because of land issues regarding the existing freight servicing yard, which is let to a rail freight handling company who are not prepared to allow its redevelopment without replacement capacity being provided. Nestrans and Aberdeenshire Council are in contact with the company to discuss alternative arrangements which would allow the development of a new interchange and improved vehicular access into Inverurie and the station.

At Stonehaven station, the parking issues are perhaps most acute. Although the car park was extended recently, the car park is regularly full by mid-morning and cars park in neighbouring streets around the station. It is likely that some potential rail passengers are

put off from using rail because of perceived limited availability of parking at the station. In particular, capacity should not be constrained which puts off potential long-distance and/or off-peak travellers.

Nestrans will investigate with Aberdeenshire Council and the rail industry the potential for additional car parking at Stonehaven. It is felt that a car park with capacity for up to 200 cars would resolve the parking constraint within the timescale of this Action Plan. However, peak time trains between Stonehaven and Aberdeen are already operating close to capacity – additional car parking will need to be supported by improved stopping patterns, additional capacity and/or car park management to ensure that spaces are available for off-peak and long-distance travellers.

Station Hierarchy: Stopping frequencies/Call Patterns

Within the rail network, different stations perform different functions. As mentioned above, the majority of passengers into Aberdeen station are travelling long-distances unlike other major city stations where the primary function is commuting over fairly short distances.

To achieve the objectives of this Rail Action Plan, it is necessary to maximise the efficiency and effectiveness of the rail network, increasing the number of local rail journeys where appropriate, balanced against the need to ensure that overcrowding does not make other journeys less attractive.

It is suggested that within the Nestrans area, the eight stations can be separated into three distinct categories.

Tier 1: Aberdeen station – a major station acting a primary destination for many intercity and local journeys.

Tier 2: Stonehaven, Dyce and Inverurie – secondary stations, acting both as origin for local commuting trips and significant destinations in their own right. Many through journeys (across Aberdeen) now terminate at these stations to provide Cross-Aberdeen opportunities.

Tier 3: Laurencekirk, Portlethen, Inch and Huntly – tertiary stations with a limited number of stops on through services. Opportunities should be provided both for short commuting trips into Aberdeen, but also longer distance services to other destinations.

All trains currently serve Aberdeen station, either as terminating or stopping trains. At the Tier 2 stations, the majority of trains stop and some terminate, particularly there are a number of trains between the Central Belt and the north east, which have recently been extended to Dyce or Inverurie. There may be opportunities in future to extend Inverness to Aberdeen trains as far as Stonehaven to secure further cross-Aberdeen services and provide further stopping opportunities south of the City without impacting on journey times of long-distance trains. There are a few trains which currently pass through Stonehaven without stopping – whilst it is recognised that stopping all trains at Stonehaven may add slightly to journey times between Aberdeen and Glasgow or Edinburgh, it is felt that the benefits offered for travellers from the south part of the Nestrans area would significantly outweigh this.

The Tier 3 stations have different stopping patterns, from Huntly where all trains stop to Portlethen with just six trains in each direction per day. Nestrans will press for a better balance of trains stopping to provide frequent and regular opportunities for travellers from these stations to use the railways.

Costs of rail travel

Nestrans recognises that the railway franchises are operated by commercial companies and fares is the way that franchisees recoup their investment in operating the railways. However, the franchises are let by the Government, sometimes for substantial amounts of public money – for example in 2010/11, the Scottish Government budget for operating the railways is £667million, including letting the franchise and investing in infrastructure.

The main issues regarding the cost of rail travel which this Rail Action Plan will seek to consider are:

- Fare levels generally across the north east;
- Fare levels from north east to key destinations;
- Lack of incentive to use less crowded trains;
- Need for move away from national pence per mile formula;
- The comparative cost of rail versus air for long distance travel; and
- Unavailability of discounted fares at minor stations.

Nestrans has raised with ScotRail and the Scottish Government the anomalies which arise from the fact that not all tickets are available from all stations. Despite on-line booking and the purchase of advance tickets being increasingly important, advance single tickets are only available from major stations, resulting in anomalies where a passenger can pay more to travel a shorter distance than another passenger on the same train. In practice, this results in passengers buying tickets for journeys they are not making, travelling to another station to make their journey or not using the rail at all.

It is also suggested that this will result in undercounting of passenger demand from minor stations.

In some parts of the country, concession card holders are entitled to travel by rail as well as bus - either free or for a discounted sum. Nestrans will work with operators and local authorities to establish the impact and feasibility of such a system in the north east and the cost of operation.

Nestrans will also seek to work with operators towards an off-peak rail incentive scheme through the Getabout campaign to consider opportunities to fill empty seats by encouraging rail travel at quiet times.

Nestrans and the local authorities work with bus operators through a Quality Partnership and it may be appropriate to consider the possibilities for linking public transport journeys including through ticketing initiatives.

Existing Proposals

The Scottish Government, Network Rail and others produce national or other documents outlining their long-term plans.

The most significant of these for rail in the north east of Scotland is the Government's daughter document to the National Transport Strategy entitled "Scotland's Railways". Published in December 2006, the document sets out proposals for a twenty year development of the rail system across the country.

Scotland's Railways identified:

- the importance of Aberdeen-Central Belt journey times as a priority for improvement by timetable alterations,
- platform extensions at Elgin and Inverurie to allow six-car operation on Aberdeen-Inverurie;
- Aberdeen-Inverurie extensions to enable cross-Aberdeen services;
- Improve frequencies between Aberdeen and Inverurie to hourly;
- Introduce further cross-Aberdeen commuter services and supporting infrastructure, if feasibility shows a strong case;
- Examine how best to improve capacity, reliability and journey times including the value of electrification on the routes south of Aberdeen and Inverurie.

The Government has also produced a 20-year Strategic Transport Projects Review (STPR), which was published in December 2008. The STPR contains 29 priority projects, including some significant commitments to railways in Scotland. Those of significance to rail travel in the north east include:

- Project 2: Maintenance and Safe Operation of Scotland's Rail network. Committing over £3billion in a ten-year period, it recognises the importance of maintaining and managing Scotland's railway network and the need to support a £5billion asset of rail infrastructure.
- Project 6: Electrification of the Rail Network. Committing up to £2billion to increase electrification from current 23% of the Scottish network to include Edinburgh-Glasgow and then routes north to Aberdeen and Inverurie in five phases.
- Project 7: Reconfiguration of the National Rail Timetable. A proposal to review stopping patterns to enable reduced journey times between Aberdeen/Inverurie and the Central Belt by up to 20 minutes.
- Project 10: Integrated Ticketing. To allow integrated ticketing nationwide using smartcard technology for all public transport.
- Project 12: Rail System Enhancements. Focussing on pinch-points to improve efficiencies across the rail network.
- Project 19: Rail Improvements between Aberdeen and Inverurie. To reduce journey times and increase frequency of service between Aberdeen and Inverurie, including new loops, dual track sections to allow at least one train per hour between the two cities. Up to £500million has been allocated for this scheme.
- Project 23: Rail Improvements between Aberdeen and the Central Belt. A phased introduction of enhancements, including reworking the passenger timetable to provide faster journeys to Glasgow (2¼ hours) and express services to Edinburgh (2 hours) with separate stopping services for intermediate stations and railfreight improvements. This would be complemented by additional loops, signal upgrades and rolling stock improvements, with a second phase seeing double tracking the line at Usan near Montrose with a new bridge over the Montrose Basin. Up to £600million is committed for these works.

Network Rail produce a series of Rail Utilisation Strategy documents (RUS). In addition to the nationwide Freight RUS, the majority are for distinct parts of the network and the Nestrans area is wholly covered within the Scotland RUS.

The Scotland RUS was considered by the Nestrans Board at its meetings in November 2006 and April 2007, and responses forwarded to Network Rail.

Nestrans expressed concerns regarding the RUS assumption that there would be declining patronage in the North East, based on out-dated and flawed forecasts; asked Network Rail to focus improvements on passenger miles rather than the emphasis on passenger numbers as a primary indicator and called for a clear commitment in timetabling for improvements to the Aberdeen-Inverurie line. Network Rail has now started the process of producing its revised RUS and Nestrans will contribute to that process as a stakeholder.

Although the Freight RUS covers the whole of Britain, and given the relatively low volume of freight transported by rail from the North East, Nestrans has expressed its disappointment that despite representations made there was limited acknowledgement of the potential for growing rail freight from Northern Scotland and the opportunities where travel distances were longest.

Scottish Ministers provide a High Level Output Specification (HLOS) to the Office of Rail Regulation in order that proper planning can take place across the country in a co-ordinated fashion. The Scotland HLOS produced in July 2007 assumes a background growth of around 3% per annum in passenger kilometres plus additional route-specific growth.

The key initiatives contained in the document relating to the north east are:

- to facilitate additional express services from Edinburgh-Aberdeen;
- Infrastructure enhancements required to permit an hourly service between Aberdeen and Inverness; and
- Infrastructure enhancements required to permit further journey time improvements between Central Belt and Aberdeen.

Summary of issues by location

Aberdeen

Aberdeen Guild Street station has been recently refurbished and is now integrated with the Union Square retail and commercial centre with direct links to the City's main bus station. Issues remain regarding the opportunity for passengers to access the station as there are limited spaces available for drop off, particularly for passengers with a disability. Taxi access is an issue and demand can outstrip supply when trains arrive.

The station is fully accessible for wheelchair users, but an application has been made to the Access for All fund to provide wheelchairs for passengers, to install Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) compliant seating on the station concourse, adjustable information boards as well as the need to provide changing and shower facilities.

There is also an opportunity to improve pedestrian signage between the station and the Northern Isles ferry terminal to improve existing links.

Dyce

Despite handling nearly half a million passengers per year, including a large proportion of long-distance passengers and acting as an important international gateway, Dyce station is unstaffed and has limited facilities for disabled travellers. Nestrans and Aberdeen Airport have entered into a partnership with Aberdeen City Council and First Aberdeen to operate a shuttle bus service between Dyce station, Aberdeen Airport and Kirkhill industrial estate. Operating from 6:20 to after 19:20 Monday-Friday, it provides a connection with almost every train during the day, enabling commuters and airport passengers a quick link making rail an increasingly attractive way to get to Dyce and the airport.

Nestrans has been in discussions with Transport Scotland regarding the potential to upgrade Dyce station to make it fully accessible in line with Disability Discrimination Act guidelines. This would necessitate an overbridge with ramps or lifts and a major upgrade of the station as a whole. ScotRail have commissioned a major study into Dyce station, looking at access opportunities, car parking layout and arrangements and considering issues such as taxi ranks and opportunities for improving bus turnaround. This includes the possibilities of

increasing car parking availability and better circulation, but Nestrans would wish to see a wider study looking at the feasibility of incorporating an access to the north-bound platform, possibly for bus access or for better access as a whole.

The Access for All application also identifies the need for upgrading access paths, platform resurfacing, dropped kerbs, tactile edging strips and adjustable information boards.

Nestrans will work with the rail industry to assess the possibilities of bringing Dyce station up to standard and will press for the station to be manned with a ticket office and waiting rooms in addition to the improvements identified above.

Inverurie

Inverurie station is staffed on a part-time basis, and has the potential for major improvement as an interchange site if agreement can be reached with the lease holders on the nearby freight yard. This could see improved access and further car parking provision as well as better linking the station to the town centre.

The Access for All application also included the need for variable height ticket counter, DDA compliant seating, push pad entry systems to waiting room doors, automatic door entry to ticket office, tactile bands and edging strips, upgrading toilet facilities to enable wheelchair use, relocation of disabled parking bays, installation of seating, wheelchairs and adjustable information boards.

Insch

Access for All funding has been applied for at Insch station to install push pad entry to waiting room doors, tactile bands and edging strips, adjustable information boards and handrails on the footbridge. As mentioned above, there is a Government proposal to extend the platforms at Insch.

Huntly

Huntly station is staffed on a part-time basis. Access for All funding has been applied to enable tactile bands and edging strips, adjustable information boards and to provide wheelchairs for passengers.

Portlethen

The main issue at Portlethen is the infrequent service of trains stopping at the station. Although the December 2009 timetable added one additional evening peak stop, there are currently just six trains stopping in each direction Monday-Saturday and three trains on a Sunday. A more frequent service, along with local marketing and other improvements could see this station better used.

The Access for All funding application for Portlethen identified the need for identifying a space for disabled parking, dropped kerbs, tactile bands, Help Points, audio and visual alerts when trains are approaching and improvements to remove a hinged gate.

Stonehaven

Key issues for Stonehaven relate to the occasional trains which do not stop. Adding this stop could significantly improve journey options, particularly to/from Glasgow and journey times between Aberdeen and Dundee are not substantially different between trains with/without this stop. Car parking constraints are discussed above and should be a priority to improve use of Stonehaven station. Additional capacity on peak hour trains and better stopping patterns would be necessary to complement additional parking.

The application for Access for All schemes funding for Stonehaven included the following – resurfacing of access ramp, tactile bands at stairs, automatic door at ticket office, push pad entry system at doors, improved toilet and waiting room facilities, install intercom and provide wheelchairs for use of disabled passengers.

ScotRail intend providing a further waiting shelter at Stonehaven later this year.

Laurencekirk

As a new station with modern facilities and a new car park, there are not significant issues at Laurencekirk station. Nestrans will continue to monitor usage and customer feedback from passengers and community groups.

A number of issues for Access for All funding have been identified at Laurencekirk, including colour contrast on barriers, the need for automatic visual and audio alerts when through trains are approaching, dropped kerbs at various locations between the town centre and the station, and complementary footpath improvements.

Aberdeen CrossRail

The Nestrans' Regional Transport Strategy contained an aspiration to deliver a CrossRail system with frequent services between Inverurie-Aberdeen-Stonehaven. This would involve a first phase including reopening the station at Kintore, providing a 30-minute frequency local service. In the longer term, a dedicated local service would provide a 15-minute frequency with further stations at Aberdeen North, Newtonhill and Aberdeen South.

A feasibility study under Scottish Transport Appraisal Guidance indicated that the first phase for the scheme could cost in the region of between £49m and £89million capital cost. The longer-term option of adding a dedicated Inverurie-Stonehaven shuttle to enable 15 minute frequency and three further stations would entail a total capital cost of between £143m and £215million, including the medium term elements.

The additional passenger revenues in each scenario (between £0.5m and £0.8million per annum) were also believed to be insufficient to cover additional operational costs of £3.2m to £7.9million per annum. This resulted in a Benefit:Cost Ratio of just 0.65, where benefits did not outweigh the costs involved. It should be noted however, that traditional railway modelling techniques appear to understate the potential patronage as has been demonstrated by patronage figures at Laurencekirk. Nestrans will press Transport Scotland and the DfT to update these models to more appropriate levels taking account of suppressed demand in this area.

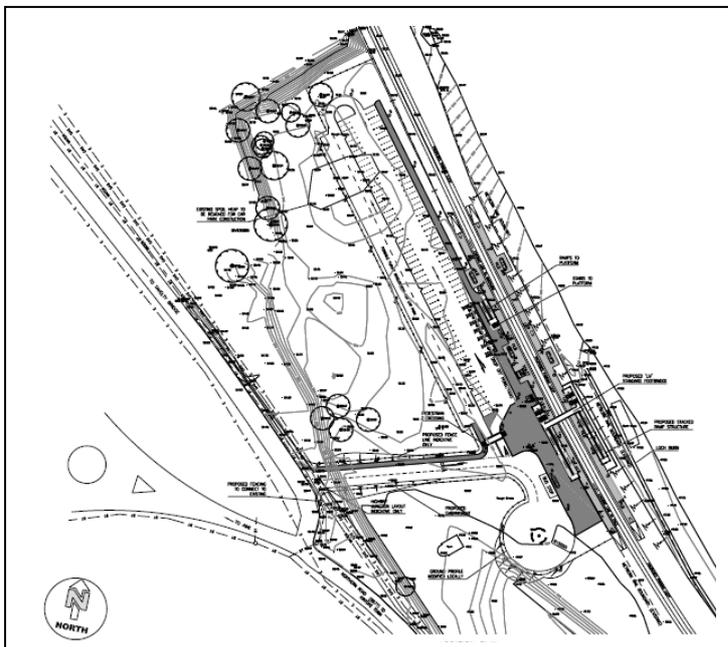
After discussion with Transport Scotland, the Nestrans Board agreed to focus on the objectives of CrossRail using an integrated, incremental approach delivering benefits rather than focussing on the end scheme. To this end, additional services now operate across Aberdeen to Dyce and Inverurie and a new station has been opened at Laurencekirk.

Feasibility work has been carried out on reopening the station at Kintore and Network Rail will include further feasibility of this station reopening within the work currently being carried out on Aberdeen-Inverness enhancements.

Nestrans will seek to bring forward proposals to improve local rail services, in partnership with the Scottish Government, Transport Scotland, Network Rail and operators by identifying priority elements which can be delivered in an incremental fashion towards the overall scheme. The top priority will be to bring forward design and further feasibility work at Kintore.

Nestrans also recognises the importance of parking constraints in town and city centres if we are to achieve modal shift.

Kintore station



A site has been identified to the north end of Kintore, which has been recognised in Aberdeenshire's Local Development Plan as a suitable site for a station. Initial costings have indicated that to realign the route (allowing for future potential doubling of the track) and construction of a single platform station could cost up to £6million, with a two-platform option costing a further £12million.

However, much of the cost relates to work which is necessary for the Aberdeen to Inverness enhancements which are proposed by the Government as a national priority. It has therefore

been accepted that the design work for Kintore should be included within the analysis of the Aberdeen-Inverness line which Network Rail are taking forward. This will ascertain the additional costs of a station at this location and Nestrans and Aberdeenshire Council can then negotiate with the Scottish Government the best way to deliver and pay for such a facility.

Most services stopping at a reopened Kintore station can be accommodated on the extended Glasgow-Inverurie services or outwith busiest times, when journey time issues are less critical.

Potential for line reopenings

There have been regular calls for lines closed in the 1960's to be considered for reopening. The possible routes would be the Deeside line to Ballater and the Formartine & Buchan line to Peterhead and Fraserburgh. Both of these routes would be hugely expensive to reopen and are now both extensively used as important recreation and transport corridors, carrying many cyclists and walkers. The Deeside line in particular is affected by development and connection to the main line would be difficult. The Regional Transport Strategy, approved by

Scottish Ministers in 2008, acknowledges the merits of re-opening railway lines, but cautions that bus-based solutions are likely to be more cost-effective solutions. Nestrans will work with local authorities and operators to encourage the use of bus/rail tickets and “virtual branch line” promotions to facilitate and encourage better integration between buses and trains, particularly on these corridors but also in other locations where potential exists.

Nestrans will not rule out the possibility that there may be future potential for reopening such lines, but does not feel that the potential benefits currently achieve the objectives or offset the loss of the existing routes’ functions. The former rail alignments should, however, continue to be preserved as transport corridors and protected from developments that could prevent long-term redevelopments for transport purposes.

Similarly, there have been questions asked as to whether an Airport spur would be feasible from the Aberdeen-Inverness line. Again, it is felt that this is likely to prove hugely expensive and would not provide a solution that could not be more readily achieved by more cost-effective options.

High Speed Rail

There has been considerable discussion at a national level regarding the prospects for a High Speed Rail network in the UK. Network Rail has put forward a proposal for discussion which links London to the north west of England and to both Edinburgh and Glasgow. Other protagonists have argued for a link to the east Midlands and to the north east of England and the coalition Government has indicated an intention to progress a first phase of HSR to Birmingham and Manchester.

Nestrans and business leaders in the north of Scotland are concerned to ensure that such a significant investment in the UK’s transport infrastructure benefits all parts of Scotland. There is therefore an argument that the possibility of extending the High Speed Line to Aberdeen should be investigated and assessed, and that should it not be feasible to continue the line to the north east, then complementary investment in upgrading the conventional network, with integration to the High Speed Rail must ensure that peripheral regions are not relatively worse off because of the scheme.



There is potential for the north east to benefit from High Speed Rail through use of conventional tracks, but this should be considered along with the question of electrification between the Central Belt and Aberdeen so that either dual-fuelled trains could be operated or electric trains once High Speed reaches Scotland.

Freight

Nestrans will work with local authorities, operators and others to ensure that there are sufficient facilities and freight paths to enable rail to maximise its share of long-distance haulage of freight.

Through the Freight Action Plan and North East Freight Forum, Nestrans will endeavour to ensure that this Action Plan is consistent with the aims and objectives of other policy documents, both locally and nationally.

Nestrans will also campaign for suitable freight grants to ensure that the above objectives are met.

ACTION PLAN:

Delivery priorities for the period 2010-2021.

Actions:

Information

1. To produce north east specific rail information by end 2010 including timetable information, station facilities and plans. Nestrans launched a guide to stations in the north east and local train times booklet in July 2010 under the Getabout banner.
2. To initiate a website (or page within the Get-about website) dedicated to promotion of rail in the north east by end 2010. Nestrans and the Getabout partnership have established a dedicated page promoting rail travel through the Getabout website at <http://www.get-about.com/rail.asp>
3. To have Customer Information Screens at all stations in the north east by 2012.

Communication

4. To establish a North East Scotland Rail Forum. This should be led by Nestrans with support from local authorities and involve Transport Scotland, operators and Network Rail. It may be appropriate to invite representatives from communities with stations and rail users.

Access to stations

5. to assess all stations in the north east to identify issues for access, for able-bodied, mobility-impaired and for users of sustainable transport by end 2010.
6. to draw up a programme of improvements relating to above and to seek funding contributions to enhance access to stations throughout the north east by end 2010 and improvements to be delivered by 2016.
7. to work with Transport Scotland to bring Dyce station up to DDA compliance by introducing ramps or lifts and fully compliant access levels by 2016.
8. to have Dyce station upgraded from unmanned to staffed station by 2016.

Car parking

9. to identify car parking requirements at each station in the north east by 2012
10. to programme improvements to ensure adequate car parking at each station by 2016.
11. to work with Aberdeenshire Council in identifying and developing a new 200-space car park in the vicinity of Stonehaven station by 2021.

12. to work with Aberdeenshire Council, ScotRail and other partners to develop an improved interchange and car park in the vicinity of Inverurie station by 2021.

13. to work with Aberdeen City Council, ScotRail, Aberdeen Airport and others in developing enhanced layout and improved car parking at Dyce station by 2016.

14. to work with Aberdeen City Council, Union Square, ScotRail and other partners to improve facilities at Aberdeen station particularly for pick-up and drop-off including taxi and bus operators by 2012.

15. to work with ScotRail, local authorities and other partners towards introducing a car park management regime at appropriate stations to ensure encouragement of sustainable travel options, maximise use of limited space at stations and facilitate effective management of available space.

Facilities

16. To identify appropriate thresholds for the provision of staffed stations, waiting rooms, toilets and other facilities at stations in the area.

17. to work with ScotRail to ensure adequate waiting facilities at all stations within the north east. A heated, lit and well-maintained waiting room is required at Stonehaven station by 2012.

18. to have full catering facilities available on all journeys to, from or within the north east over half an hour duration.

Integration

19. to work with ScotRail, Transport Scotland and local authorities to ensure there are adequate cycling facilities at all stations in the north east to meet future requirements to facilitate cycling to stations.

20. to work with partners to ensure the continuation of a shuttle bus connecting Dyce railway station with Aberdeen Airport and major employment areas in the vicinity.

21. to work with local authorities and operators to maximise the opportunities for public transport connections at stations and to provide clear and promotional information to encourage such use.

22. to assess taxi issues at stations throughout the north east to identify where specific policies or measures are required to improve travel opportunities.

23. to work with ScotRail to ensure effective and efficient connections wherever possible to minimise overall journey times when a change of train is required

Safety

24. To have Closed Circuit TV and customer help points at all stations in the north east by 2012.

Ticketing

25. Maximising the use of PlusBus, RailBus and other schemes, including adequate publicity of such schemes to encourage and enable through ticketing and enable bus/rail interchange.
26. To work with ScotRail and Transport Scotland towards having automated ticketing machines at all stations in north east by 2012.

Fares

27. To campaign for all ticket types to be available from all stations in the north east by 2012, so ironing out existing anomalies where longer-distance trips can be more expensive than shorter journeys. Simplifying ticket pricing structures should be considered whilst ensuring value for money fares and reflecting the supply/demand differences throughout the day.
28. to work with rail operating companies to encourage off-peak travel to be competitively-priced to encourage rail travel to, from and within the north east whilst maximising efficiency for train operators.
29. to campaign for long-distance rail fares to be competitively priced, relative to short-distance and commuter fares (reflecting efficiencies in filling seats for the majority of a train's journey).
30. to investigate the feasibility, including costs and benefits of introducing a local rail travel concession scheme for eligible people.
31. Encourage the Scottish Government to consider the possibility of introducing a rail element to the national concessionary travel scheme.

Stopping patterns/ frequencies

32. to work with ScotRail and other train operating companies to maximise stopping patterns for the benefit of the majority of travellers in the north east, including a recast of the Aberdeen-Glasgow service to facilitate faster end-to-end journey times and/or better stopping patterns.
33. to achieve all through trains stopping at major stations in the north east (Aberdeen, Dyce, Inverurie and Stonehaven) by 2012.
34. to have at least 10 trains per day in each direction stopping at all other stations in the north east, with a spread of times to facilitate long-distance and local travel, including better connectivity with major stations where all trains stop.
35. to work with ScotRail and Hitrans to ensure a more frequent Sunday service between Aberdeen and Inverness by 2012.
36. campaign to ensure the continuation of through trains between the north east and London.

37. When incidences occur, there should be plans in place to ensure that a reasonable level of substitute service is provided. Too often, it seems, the north east loses out in the case of inclement weather or unusual circumstances.

Rolling Stock

38. To work with Government, train operating companies and others to ensure adequate number of carriages and quality of rolling stock to serve rail services to, from and within the north east.

Freight

39. To work with local authorities, operators and others to maximise the potential of the railways in carrying long-distance freight.

Infrastructure

40. to work with Network Rail, Hitrans and local authorities to assess the necessity for level crossings on the Aberdeen-Inverness line and the potential journey time enhancements possible by removing them.

41. to work with Network Rail and Transport Scotland to assess the feasibility of major improvements to the Aberdeen-Inverness line to facilitate a journey time of less than two hours and an hourly frequency.

42. In association with the above study, to assess the feasibility and progress the design and delivery of a station at Kintore by 2014.

43. to work with Network Rail and Transport Scotland to develop electrification between Aberdeen and the central belt as contained in the Scottish Government's Strategic Transport Projects Review.

44. to encourage the Scottish Government to include electrification between Aberdeen and Inverness in their assessments of electrifying the main Scottish rail network.

45. to work with Network Rail and Transport Scotland to find a solution to the line constraints at Usan near Montrose as contained in the Scottish Government's Strategic Transport Projects Review.

46. to consider the preferred locations for further stations north and south of Aberdeen, which could be developed if future timetable recasts were to provide opportunities for further stops within the north east. The CrossRail benefits can most likely be developed by demonstrating the above increments improve passenger numbers and future extension of Inverness–Aberdeen trains through to Stonehaven and further Edinburgh/Glasgow–Aberdeen trains through to Inverurie will be less time sensitive allowing for further stops.

Long Term

47. To ensure that any proposals for High Speed Rail in the UK take full cognisance of the north east's contribution to the national economy and the need for excellent connectivity between Aberdeen and the HSR network to maximise the benefits of the scheme. The

potential for extending the use of High Speed trains to Aberdeen should be assessed, including the possibility of operating new trains on conventional track.

48. To protect the former railway lines between Aberdeen and Peterhead/Fraserburgh and between Aberdeen and Ballater from developments which would preclude reinstating these as future transport corridors. Work will be required to identify possible future alignments so that these can be adequately protected from developments which could prevent their future reuse.

49. work with local planning authorities to protect land identified as necessary for future and/or improved infrastructure, including new lines and stations.

RD/ 1 September 2010

This document can be made available in large print format or in key community languages if required. If you require the document in a different format, please contact Nestrans on 01224 625524

APPENDIX:

extract from Nestrans' Annual Monitoring Report

Trains and Railways

There are now eight railway stations in the north east. Three of these are in Scotland's hundred busiest.

The number of rail passengers in Scotland as a whole in 2006/07 exceeded 77 million passenger journeys and passenger kilometres travelled increased to over 2.4 billion, this represents an increase of 22.4% in passenger numbers and 24.0% in passenger kilometres since 2000/01.

In 2005/06, 61% of passengers using Aberdeen and Dyce stations had travelled over 100 kilometres, compared to 19% and 24% at Edinburgh and Glasgow stations respectively (Source: Scottish Transport Statistics 2007).

Indicator 1. Number of railway stations	Baseline 2007: 7 stations (two in Aberdeen City at Aberdeen and Dyce; five in Aberdeenshire at Stonehaven, Portlethen, Inverurie, Huntly and Insch)
	Monitor 2009: 8 stations – as above plus Laurencekirk Station which opened in May 2009.
Target: To open a new railway station in the north east every three years, to a total of 12 by 2021.	

Indicator 2. Number of rail services per week (with typical journey time) from Aberdeen to key destinations	Baseline 2007: 19 to London per week (7hours 2mins) 7 Sleeper services (10hours 24mins) 124 to Edinburgh (2hours 25mins) 102 to Glasgow (2hours 33mins) 232 to Dundee (1hour 11mins) 59 to Inverness (2hours 15mins) 95 to Inverurie (25mins) <i>Source: Rail timetables, 2007</i>
	Monitor 2009: 21 to London per week (7hours 2mins) 7 Sleeper services (10hours 24mins) 117 to Edinburgh (2hours 20mins) 102 to Glasgow (2hours 33mins) 219 to Dundee (1hour 11mins) 71 to Inverness (2hours 15mins) 179 to Inverurie (25mins) <i>Source: Rail timetables, April 2009</i>
Target: To increase the number of services to key destinations by 10% every five years, and to have shorter journey times to key destinations, reduced by 10% by 2021.	

Indicator 3. Number of passengers per year through north east stations (and ranking within Scotland for those in top 100)

Baseline 2004/05: (passengers to or from)

Aberdeen	1,932,000 (5th busiest in Scotland)
Stonehaven	364,000 (67 th)
Dyce	269,000 (92 nd)
Inverurie	127,779
Huntly	69,533
Insch	62,261
Portlethen	10,722

Source: Office of Rail Regulator and Scottish Transport Statistics, 2006

Monitor 2005/06: (passengers to or from)

Aberdeen	2,108,000 (5th busiest, +9.1% on 2004-05)
Stonehaven	397,000 (66 th , up one place +9.1%)
Dyce	335,000 (81 st , up 11 places + 24.5%)
Inverurie	154,103 (+20.6%)
Huntly	70,430 (+1.3%)
Insch	66,432 (+6.7%)
Portlethen	14,887 (+38.8%)

Source: Office of Rail Regulator and Scottish Transport Statistics, 2007

Monitor 2006/07: (passengers to or from)

Aberdeen	2,279,000 (5 th busiest, +8% on 2005/06)
Stonehaven	419,000 (65 th , +6%)
Dyce	401,000 (69 th , +20%)
Inverurie	175,934 (+14%)
Huntly	75,708 (+7%)
Insch	65,823 (-1%)
Portlethen	21,073 (+42%)

Source: Office of Rail Regulator and Scottish Transport Statistics, 2008

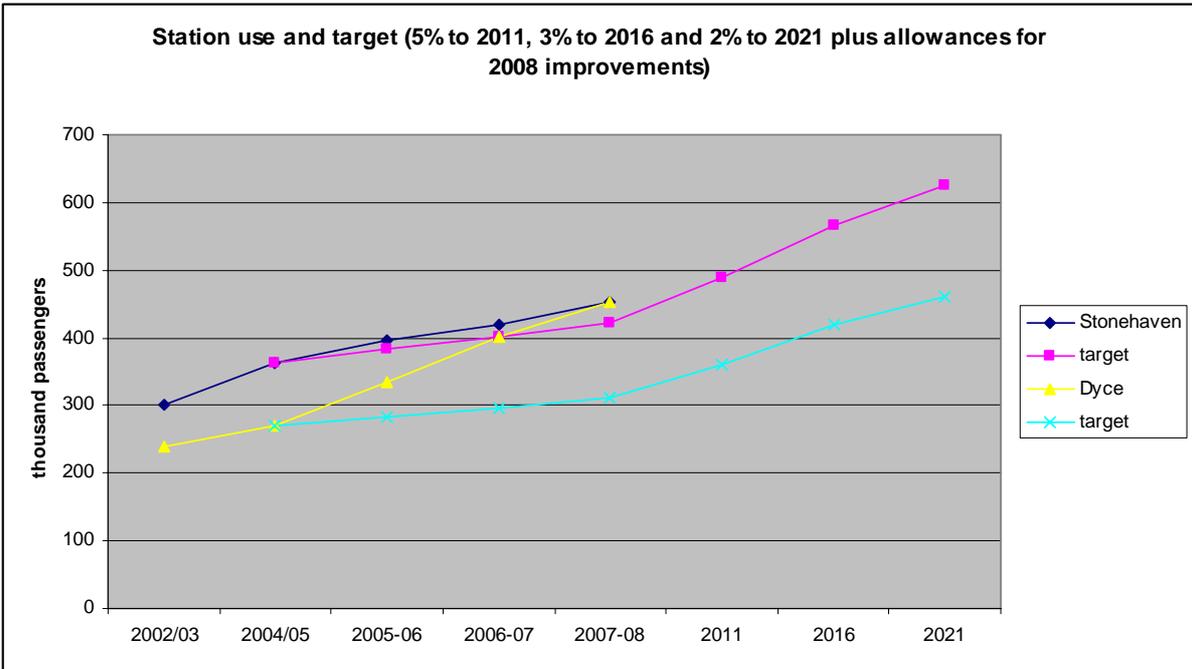
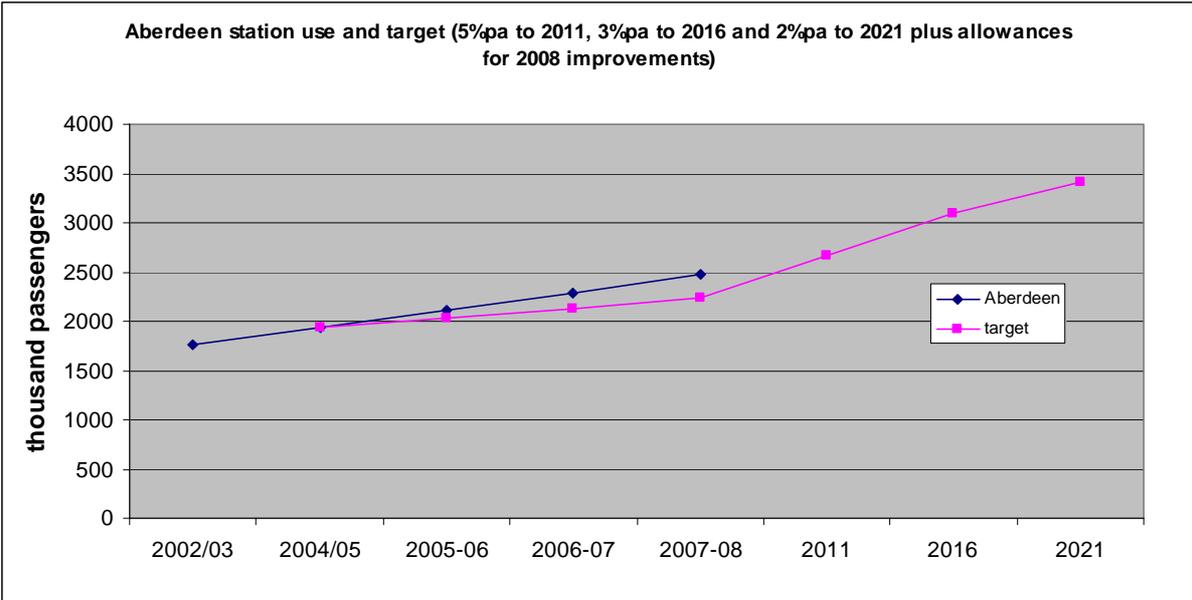
Monitor 2007/08

(passengers to or from)

Aberdeen	2,470,270 (5 th busiest +8% on 2006/07)
Stonehaven	452,596 (64 th +9%)
Dyce	453,634 (62 nd +13%)
Inverurie	195,138 (+11%)
Huntly	84,223 (+11%)
Insch	72,644 (+10%)
Portlethen	22,055 (+5%)

Source: Office of Rail Regulator and Scottish Transport Statistics, 2009

Target: to increase passenger numbers through the north east's busiest railway stations to 3,400,000 through Aberdeen in 2020/21 (2,700,000 in 2010/11); 624,000 through Stonehaven in 2020/21 (488,000 in 2010/11) and 462,000 through Dyce in 2020/21 (361,000 in 2010/11) and by 2.5% per year for other stations.



Indicator 4. Number of Passenger miles travelled to/from/within north east by rail (for journeys wholly within Scotland).	<p>Baseline 2004/05: It is estimated that 1.653million passengers travelled 151million miles to/from/within the north east by rail. <i>Source: extrapolated from Scottish Transport Statistics 2006</i></p>
	<p>Monitor 2005/06: It is estimated that 1.785million passengers travelled 159million miles to/from/within the north east by rail (increases of 8% and 5.4% on 2004/05 base). <i>Source: extrapolated from Scottish Transport Statistics 2007</i></p>
	<p>Monitor 2006/07: It is estimated that 1.9 million passengers travelled 168 million miles to/from/within the north east by rail (increases of 6% and 5.7% on 2005/06 figures). <i>Source: extrapolated from Scottish Transport Statistics 2008</i></p>
	<p>Monitor 2007/08: It is estimated that 2.07 million passengers travelled 181 million miles to/from/within the north east by rail (increases of 9% and 8.3% on 2006/07 figures). <i>Source: extrapolated from Scottish Transport Statistics 2009</i></p>
	<p>Target: To increase the number of rail passengers travelling within Scotland through north east stations to 2.9million passengers by 2020/21 (2.25million in 2010/11), and the miles travelled to 260million miles by 2020/21 (200 million miles by 2010/11).</p>

