

Statement on Improving Efficiency, Effectiveness and Economy 2017/18 – 2018/19

During 2017/18 and 2018/19 NESTRANS has continued to seek and implement initiatives to assist in improving the efficiency, effectiveness and economy of the services delivered. A brief overview of these initiatives has been included.

Shared Services

Legal, Administrative, Financial, ICT, HR and Public Relations Services

The activities of NESTRANS continue to be supported by partner Councils through the provision of specialist assistance and advice. These activities are governed by separate Service Level Agreements. The use of existing support staff is considered to be an efficient and economic use of an existing pool of specialist staff, the cost of which would be significantly higher if an external or dedicated in-house cadre of similarly qualified and experienced staff were to be used. Details of each support service are as follows:

Legal & Administrative Services

Legal Services etc are provided by Aberdeen City Council. Services include legal advice, contractual advice and provision of clerking for the Board and meetings. The cost of legal and contractual advice was £2,700 in 2017/18 and £3,270 in 2018/19, whereas the administrative costs of clerking for the Board remained at £20,000 each year.

Treasurer

Accountancy etc support is provided by Aberdeenshire Council. Services provided include invoice and payment processing, financial ledger, regular financial monitoring reporting to the Board, internal audit, liaising with external audit, assistance with budget preparation and control, final accounts preparation and pension fund management, general accountancy advice and treasury management. Since 2012/13 this has been extended to include financial services relating to the Strategic Transport Fund that was set up for developer contributions to strategic transport measures. The quality of support is considered to be excellent and the cost of this service has remained fixed at £21,100 per annum.

ICT Services

Aberdeen City Council provides and maintains quality Information and Communication Technology Services. This cost £5,000 in 2017/18, but a new pricing structure was introduced when the SLA was renewed that bases cost on the hardware, software and support costs per member of staff per annum, resulting in a charge of just under £6,500 in 2018/19.

HR Services

HR services are provided by Aberdeenshire Council. This includes drafting and review of HR policies and procedures, monitoring any changes in legislation, support in dealing with staff matters, offering advice on related matters and reporting to the Nestrans Board. In the last 2 years this also included assistance with the advertisement and appointment of the Cycling Development Officer

and Transport Officer posts and 2 further non-Councillor Members for the Nestrans Board. The cost of this service has remained at £15,900 per annum.

Public Relations Services

Since July 2016 public relations, marketing and event management services have been provided under a Service Level Agreement by Aberdeenshire Council. A dedicated Nestrans communications officer is located two days per week within the Nestrans office, with access to the wider team within the Council out with these days. The various duties provided include promoting Nestrans and Getabout, liaising with the media, arranging press releases, supporting events – including advising on and seeking of advertising and relevant promotional merchandise, attending Board meetings and preparing communications updates for Members. The cost of this service is £16,500 per annum.

Getabout Partnership

Nestrans is a key member of the Getabout Partnership that also consists of Aberdeen City Council, Aberdeenshire Council, NHS Grampian, Aberdeen University, Robert Gordon University, North East College, the James Hutton Institute and the Energy Savings Trust. The joint working of the partnership continues to provide increased efficiency and effectiveness when promoting sustainable travel throughout the region via a single brand. The partnership achieves economies through individual member organisations supporting Getabout events organised by others eg providing staffing, transport and promotional merchandise and attraction of Smarter Choices Smarter Places match funding for measures being funded by partners. In 2018/19 Nestrans also secured match funding through the Paths for All, Smarter Choices Smarter Places Open Fund towards a winter safety campaign in winter months using digital bus shelter adverts in Aberdeen city centre to encourage pedestrians and motorists to be aware.

ACTtravelwise Membership

Nestrans again negotiated a group membership for all members of the Getabout partnership to ACTtravelwise for 2017/18 and 2018/19 that resulted in a saving in comparison with the cost that individual memberships would otherwise have been.

Getabout Cycle Roadshow

The Getabout cycle roadshow consists of a range of bicycles, including novelty and disability accessible cycles. Locally based Adventure Aberdeen continue to hold and maintain them at agreed rates and supplement the roadshow with other bikes they own. Adventure Aberdeen also transports the bikes to events organised by the Getabout partners and provides tutors to assist with each event. The locally sourced and managed equipment dramatically reduces delivery mileage and carbon emissions in getting to events and is achieving considerable savings, whilst allowing priority booking by all Getabout members. This is of particular benefit during themed weeks such as Cycle to Work and European Mobility Week when privately hired bike events are usually fully booked. The full cycle roadshow and Getabout events kit, comprising of a Getabout branded marquee, feather flags, banners and bunting previously purchased by Nestrans is available for hire to private companies when not required by the partners, with any profit being used for the purchase of additional stock.

Liftshare

Nestrans provides a central data base for car sharing throughout the region under contract with Liftshare Ltd. The website address is getabout.liftshare.com to help identify it with the overall Getabout brand for sustainable and active travel in the North East. It operates with a number of sub-groups so that individual organisations can have their own section under the wider umbrella or be involved in the larger scheme. By contracting the licence and hosting costs on a regional basis there are significant savings compared to each of the partners contracting individually. In addition, there are benefits to the customers of being able to access a larger data base for potential matching of trips.

ASAM Regional Transport Model

Developed initially by Transport Scotland, the Aberdeen Sub Area Model (ASAM) is now managed and maintained by Nestrans. A contract for ASAM support was previously negotiated with Systra to allow Nestrans to obtain the same terms as Transport Scotland has been offered when they retendered the LATIS Commission on a consultancy framework basis. Following competitive tender in 2016, Systra was appointed to upgrade ASAM to ensure it remains a robust and effective tool in the development of future transport strategies and land use plans in the north east. In the past couple of years, the model has been used for further consideration of road and rail improvements as part of the Fraserburgh/ Peterhead to Aberdeen Strategic Transport study and for input to the Mearns Station Study and North East Roads Hierarchy Study. It has also been used for a further Cumulative Transport Appraisal to inform the development of the Aberdeen City and Shire Strategic Development Proposed Plan. It has also been used by local authorities for future year demand predictions and strategic input to local micro simulation models for Aberdeen city centre and for the Berryden corridor dualling work and to inform the Cross City Connections Study. The AWPR Managing Agent also used the updated model for undertaking AWPR scenario tests. Developers have also been granted access to model information when undertaking Transport Assessments, thus ensuring that the local planning authorities requirements are met using the best available means.

Traffic Signal Monitoring and Control Upgrade and Digital Communications Migration

Nestrans has approved funding for Aberdeen City Council to start to replace the Remote Monitoring System (RMS) that only allows for dial-up monitoring activities. Upgrading all the remaining sites on this architecture, 124 units in Aberdeen and 31 in Aberdeenshire, will allow for improved monitoring and fault finding to be carried out and give the ability to carry out alterations to the operation of the traffic signals in a more proactive manner. In addition it will provide the potential for corridors not currently operating under Urban Traffic Control/Split Cycle Offset Optimisation Technique (UTC/SCOOT) control to be brought under control to improve public transport operations and facilities for pedestrians and cyclists. Funding has also been provided to complete the final stage of the UTC communication upgrades to allow the removal of the obsolete Tele12 module from Woodhill House. This will align all UTC and SCOOT operated signals to current communication provision and enable them to be fit for future technologies.

East Coast Main Line Authorities

Nestrans are partners in the East Coast Main Line consortium. All partners contribute to the consortium, which is a grouping of local authorities and Regional Transport Partnerships that aim to work in partnership to promote the case for investment in the line to enable economic growth.

Bus Satisfaction Survey

Nestrans contributed along with bus operators towards a bus satisfaction survey that was undertaken in 2017/18 to boost the sample size. A contribution was again made in 2018/19 along with other Regional Transport Partnerships, Transport Scotland and bus operators towards the national bus satisfaction survey by Transport Focus that is undertaken on a biennial basis.

Attracted Funding

Sustainable Travel Grant Scheme

Nestrans provides a Sustainable Travel Grant Scheme, which can provide up to 50% match funding to organisations investing in measures to promote more sustainable travel by their employees or customers. There is an upper limit on any award of £10,000. In 2017/18 and 2018/19 the following grant awards (all for 50% of the final cost) were claimed:

- £1,380 to Mitchells Dairy in Inverurie as a contribution to e-bike and cycle racks (later refunded with only £295 retained for cycle racks)
- £1,115 to Lemon Tree in Aberdeen towards installation of a shower
- £403 to Grampian Transport Museum for cycle racks at the museum
- £7,205 to Cadherent Ltd towards installation of a shower and locker room
- £7,052 to RGU for Woolmanhill bike lockers
- £3,230 to Huntly Development Trust for e-bike lockers

ASAM Regional Transport Model Upgrade

An upgrade of the Aberdeen Sub Area Model (ASAM) was commissioned by Nestrans to ensure it provides a suitably robust basis for transport and land use appraisal. A steering group consisting of officers from Nestrans, Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire Councils and Transport Scotland was set up to manage the work, which was competitively tendered through the Scotland Excel framework to ensure best value. Although Nestrans manages ASAM, the cost of the upgrade is being met through the City Region Deal funding as the model will be used to appraise transport options.

Civitas Portis

The north east is included in a collaboration with four other European port cities that were awarded European funding under the Civitas banner for a project titled PORTIS to look at opportunities to enhance transport provision in and around port areas and to provide innovative and sustainable solutions to transport issues. Locally, the project is led by Aberdeen City Council, but also involves Nestrans, Robert Gordon University, Aberdeen Harbour Board and Aberdeenshire Council, with the University of Aberdeen involved in the assessment of the project. The project has been awarded almost €20million Euros grant funding over the four-year period from September 2016 – August 2020, giving around €1million Euros per annum for each port. Nestrans has already received half of the available award for our involvement over the four-year

period, which amounts to just over £133,000. Nestrans has directly used £32,080 of this funding in 2017/18 and a further £46,573 in 2018/19.

Grasshopper Advertising and Smart Ticketing for Small Bus Operators

The Grasshopper smart multi-operator ticket is available over 6 zones across the north east and permits travel on services from nine operators. Nestrans contributed just over £2,000 in 2017/18 and just under £2,000 in 2018/19 to major advertising campaigns in partnership with Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire Councils, First Aberdeen and Stagecoach bus operators to maximise awareness.

Nestrans previously provided budget to Aberdeenshire Council's public transport unit to arrange the replacement of ticketing machines and software for small operators to enable them to introduce smart ticketing and in 2017/18 funded a Siri interface to enable this to be included on the real time information system.

Cycle Infrastructure and Core Path Improvements

Nestrans continues to fund a cycling development officer post, with Sustrans providing a capital contribution of up to £100,000 per annum as match funding of this post and infrastructure measures funded by Nestrans that are not already being used by the Councils to match fund their bids to Sustrans. As the post was vacant for several months in 2017 the level of grant claimed in 2017/18 by the new officer appointed towards the end of 2017 amounted to around £21,000 for agreed cycle/pedestrian improvement works. In 2018/19 just over £1,000 was claimed towards inaugural event costs for Grampian Cycle Partnership and approval given to use the remaining grant for pedestrian cycle counters within the north east and to extend the period for claiming this grant until June 2019 as the tender was not issued until February 2019.

A significant amount of Nestrans funding towards cycle and core path improvements is also used by the Local Authorities each year as a basis to attract further match funding and add value for money.

RTP Active Travel Grant

In 2018 the Scottish Government offered an Active Travel Grant to Regional Transport Partnerships. Nestrans was awarded £133,400 for feasibility and design works for the A944 cycle and pedestrian path and generic design of replacement bridges on the Formartine & Buchan Way. Additional grant funding of £254,000 was offered on 29 March for usage by end June 2019 and every attempt will be made to maximise measures that support active travel using the available grant.

Local Rail Development Fund

Nestrans was successful in applying to Transport Scotland's Local Rail Development Fund in 2018 and following a tender exercise in January 2019, Aecom has been commissioned to undertake an option appraisal for improving access, particularly for passengers with mobility difficulties, at Insh station.

Smarter Choices Smarter Places Open Fund

In 2018/19 Nestrans also secured match funding through the Paths for All, Smarter Choices Smarter Places Open Fund towards a winter safety campaign in winter months using digital bus shelter adverts in Aberdeen city centre to encourage pedestrians and motorists to be aware.

Health and Transport Action Plan

Nestrans continued to fund 50% of the costs of a support manager for the Health and Transport Programme in partnership with NHS Grampian in 2017/18 and 2018/19.

Nestrans has also continued to contribute along with Aberdeen City, Aberdeenshire and Moray Councils and NHS Grampian to deliver the Transport to Healthcare Information Centre (THInC). The public transport unit within Aberdeenshire Council operates this dedicated telephone service to provide information on transport options for access to all NHS Grampian sites.

Procurement Activity

Scotland Excel Engineering and Technical Consultancy Services Framework Agreement

Nestrans continues to be an associate member of Scotland Excel and as such can acquire consultancy services under the above framework agreement. Nestrans can use the framework to appoint consultants for services that cannot be undertaken in-house or by neighbouring authorities, either due to a skill shortage, the specialist nature of the work, or due to other workload commitments.

Although there is no guarantee of work being awarded, any use of the framework significantly reduces the cost of procurement of services to Nestrans and the consultants. To award a work package there is the option of directly selecting a consultant within the relevant lot(s) or conducting a mini competition amongst relevant consultants. Work can be awarded on a priced contract (lump sum), target contract or time-based contract basis. In 2017/18 to 2018/19 Nestrans held mini competitions through the framework to award the following projects:

- Cumulative Transport Appraisal
- Social Transport Study
- Getabout Marketing Evaluation
- Park and Ride Market Research and Action Plan – Civitas
- Travel Planning for North Dee area - Civitas
- Mearns Station Car Park Review
- Roads Hierarchy
- Formartine & Buchan Way generic design of replacement bridges
- A944 cycling and walking path
- Pedestrian/cycle counters (no award made)
- Insch Railway Station Accessibility Options Study