

# Sustainable Economic Growth Statement 2017/18 – 2018/19

## Introduction

Section 32(1)(a) of the Public Services Reform (Scotland) Act 2010 provides that as soon as reasonably practicable after the end of each financial year each listed public body must publish a statement of the steps it has taken during the financial year to promote and increase sustainable growth through the exercise of its functions. Nestrans is a listed body within the Act.

This statement is intended to fulfil the requirement of the Act in relation to Sustainable Economic Growth. This statement should be read in conjunction with the statement on Efficiency, Effectiveness and Economy and the financial information provided on the Nestrans website that are also required by the Act.

## Government purpose and performance framework

The purpose of the Scottish Government is to focus government and public services on creating a more successful country, with opportunities for all of Scotland to flourish, through increasing sustainable economic growth. The approach to delivering this Purpose is set out in the Scotland's Economic Strategy published in March 2015 which combines work to boost economic growth and increase competitiveness with a drive to tackle inequality. The updated Strategy has four priorities, namely:

- **Investing** in people and infrastructure in a sustainable way;
- Fostering a culture of **innovation** and research and development;
- Promoting **inclusive growth** and creating opportunity through a fair and inclusive jobs market and regional cohesion; and,
- Promoting Scotland on the **international** stage to boost our trade and investment, influence and networks.

Progress towards the Purpose is being measured through a range of Purpose Targets and National Indicators in the National Performance Framework that was updated in March 2016. Five additional indicators were added to reduce underemployment, the proportion of employees earning less than the Living Wage and the pay gap and to improve access to local greenspace and increase natural capital. The Government's Purpose along with the Strategic Objectives and National Outcomes remain unchanged.

## **Aligning to the Purpose and National Objectives**

The Nestrans [Regional Transport Strategy](#), approved by Scottish Ministers in 2008, includes, at page 102, an Appendix outlining how the Regional Transport Strategy objectives align with the National Objectives.

The objectives of the RTS were retained within the refresh of the strategy in 2014.

## **Regional Transport Strategy**

Nestrans' primary function is to produce and implement a Regional Transport Strategy.

Transport has long been recognised as a significant contributor to sustainable economic growth. The Nestrans Regional Transport Strategy was developed in conjunction with the Aberdeen City and Shire Economic Future (ACSEF) Economic Manifesto that set out a vision for the economic growth of the North East region of Scotland and the Strategic Development Planning Authority (SDPA) Structure Plan, which sets out the spatial strategy for achieving that growth. The Regional Transport Strategy examines how the growth can be achieved without increasing congestion levels. A refresh of the RTS was undertaken in 2013 when the SDPA were developing a Strategic Development Plan (SDP) for the North East to 2035 to ensure the RTS took account of current policies and to better align it with the SDP timeline and the transport implications of this plan. The refresh gained Ministerial approval in January 2014. It builds on the original RTS and should be taken as an addendum to the original strategy document.

The principal ethos in setting and determining the Regional Transport Strategy and subsequent refresh has therefore been to encourage and permit sustainable economic growth.

## **Achievements in 2017/18 to 2018/19**

### Action Plans

Nestrans has five Action Plans intended to assist in the implementation of the Regional and Local Transport Strategies.

- **Health and Transport Action Plan**

Working with NHS Grampian, our two Councils and the Scottish Ambulance Service we have continued to contribute to a co-ordinator post and focus on the two themes within the refreshed Action Plan:

- Transport and Public Health – Active and sustainable travel has continued to be promoted under the Getabout brand, including advertising, events and the cycling roadshow. A travel plan for the new Health and Care Hub in Inverurie was developed and lessons learned from piloting this helped to produce a guidance paper on travel planning for health and care developments. NHSG has trialled five fuel cell cars to help reduce transport related pollution as part of a trial through the wider H2 Aberdeen initiative

- Access to Health and Social Care – Nestrans again contributed to the Transport to Healthcare Information Centre (THInC) service and for promotional material for the service. A grant was provided to extend the Mid Deeside Hospital Transport pilot and Volunteer Transport Awards were held. A social transport study was undertaken that helped secure funding towards transporting the elderly and infirm to health and care appointments. A refresh of the Travel to Aberdeen Royal Infirmary guide was produced and distributed.
- **Bus Action Plan**

A draft North East Bus Alliance and voluntary Quality Partnership Agreement were developed that established a new Bus Alliance Board. Nestrans contributed to a national bus passenger satisfaction study. A promotional campaign was again undertaken during the festive period to provide information about and encourage use of public transport options to Aberdeen City Centre. Nestrans contributed to marketing for the Grasshopper multi-operator smart card and for the distribution and advertising of Thistle cards. A contribution was also made to the maintenance costs of the regional real time information system and further upgrades to bus stop infrastructure and information throughout the region were implemented.
- **Freight Action Plan**

Nestrans is lead partner in the freight elements of the Civitas Portis project. Baseline reports on freight and potential for freight consolidation have been published. A freight adviser has been appointed and is assisting with development of a distribution strategy and developing relationships with businesses in the freight industry. Opportunities to develop a freight app are being progressed.
- **Rail Action Plan**

Nestrans has continued to work with Transport Scotland, ScotRail and Network Rail to ensure that the aspirations of the North East are taken into account in developing our railways. The new rail station at Kintore is being progressed along with the Aberdeen to Inverness Rail line upgrade. Extra parking spaces were added at Inverurie Station. Nestrans continues to be a member of the East Coast Mainline Authorities grouping, who aim to highlight the economic importance of the line and need for investment. Local Rail Development Funding has been secured for a study into improving accessibility at Insch Station. Sensitivity tests were undertaken to review the business case for a new rail line from Dyce to Ellon and a car parking capacity study undertaken for stations south of Aberdeen.
- **Active Travel Action Plan**

Nestrans continues to employ a Cycling Development Officer in partnership with Sustrans, which attracts capital grant funding from the Sustrans of up to £100,000 per annum. Nestrans has contributed funding towards feasibility studies and the development and construction of a number of pedestrian and cyclist improvements over the last two years. The Sustainable Travel Grant scheme provided match grant funding to support implementation of several sustainable transport proposals. The Getabout partnership continues to

promote active and sustainable travel throughout the north east and Grampian Cycle Partnership was formed. In 2018 a direct active travel grant was offered to Regional Transport Partnerships from the Scottish Government.

## Planning

Although the statutory guidance developed as part of the Strategic Development Plan (2014) that came into force in August 2015 to provide a framework for assessing developer contributions towards improvements to the strategic transport network was quashed in April 2016, an appeal against the decision was progressed by the Strategic Development Planning Authority. It was heard by the Supreme Court on 13 June 2017 in Edinburgh and on 25 October 2017 the Supreme Court decision was published, quashing the Supplementary Guidance. At that time agreements in principle relating to the Strategic Transport Fund had been signed totalling £23,686,635 and the sum of contributions held by Nestrans stood at £1,839,338. Contractors have since started requesting repayment of this money, and by end March 2019 a sum of £1,345,056 had been returned leaving a balance of £502,393, excluding the interest to be accrued for in 2018/19, which is payable in relation to 17 developments.

In the absence of a Strategic Transport Fund, as offered through existing planning policy, both councils will continue to require developers to undertake their own Transport Assessments, to demonstrate that they can mitigate any strategic and local transport issues caused by their developments. The level of mitigation achieved by this approach is however likely to be considerably lower than would have been under the STF. In summary, only a proportion of the direct impacts will be mitigated by this approach and not the cumulative impacts which the STF was designed to address.

While the STF itself has been quashed, the evidence base upon which it was built, the Cumulative Transport Appraisal, which was commissioned by Nestrans and the SDPA in 2009, has not been challenged throughout this process. As a consequence, it can still be used to inform assessments and discussions with developers in helping to identify the impacts of developments and the required mitigation.

An updated Cumulative Transport Appraisal has been commissioned by Nestrans in partnership with the Councils and the SDPA to support the development of the next Strategic Development Plan. Systra was appointed in August 2017 to use the new ASAM14 version of the strategic model to identify the impacts on the transport network resulting from the proposed Strategic Development Plan and to identify what additional infrastructure would be required to facilitate the scale of development. The CTA report was prepared as supporting documentation.

## Projects

In 2017/2018 Nestrans funded the following:

### Strategic Investment Programme

- Rail  
Kintore Station – Progress works for new station, including car park and access roads and land purchase
- Strategic Roads – Capacity  
Strategic network monitoring –Phase 3 of deployment of internet protocol closed-circuit TV equipment at traffic signals along strategic transport corridors.  
AWPR Signage in Aberdeenshire
- Strategic Roads - Safety  
Further A947 road safety improvements  
Road studs on various strategic routes  
A93 Nether Knox embankment reconstruction (gabions)  
B9119 Queen’s Cross pedestrian crossing upgrades
- Strategic prioritised maintenance  
A947 Mill of Kingoodie Bends Phase 2 resurfacing  
A947 Lower Woodton to Birkenhills resurfacing  
A93 Bridge of Canny to Sluie surface dressing
- Bus Improvements  
Ellon Park & Ride detailed design of car park extension, bus turning circle upgrade and improved waiting facilities  
Bus stop information initiatives  
A93 Crathes mini-hub design and land negotiation  
Oldmeldrum Interchange Hub design and land negotiation  
Interface to region wide real time information system of ticketing hardware for small operators
- Pedestrian/Cycle infrastructure:  
A96 Inverurie to Kintore  
Parkway Extension (Balgownie – Diamond Bridge path at Gordons Brae)  
Middlefield and Northfield Active Travel Project – contribution to active travel improvements including improving ped/cycle crossings and directional signage  
Balgownie ramps cycling project - Contribution to the cost of relocating a Scottish Water main to enable path construction
- Pedestrian/Cycle feasibility and design  
Feasibility and design of future cycleway schemes in 5 Integrated Travel Towns in Aberdeenshire  
Long Distance Path Development  
River Don Paths – Farburn, formalising and widening dust path and replacing bridge over the Farburn

River Don Paths – Mugiemooss Link, formalising and widening of track to link between the river Don path and NCN 1

Seaton Park Entrances, creation of a new ped/cycle entrance

River Don Paths – Arjo Wiggins, new ped/cycle link to link Stoneywood and existing river Don path

Riverside path from Bridge of Dee to RGU feasibility and design

Wellheads Drive cycle link – completion of design of an extension to the Wellheads cycle route to Farburn Terrace

Junction alterations to 'lock in the benefits of AWPR' for active travel – detailed design of options at junction of Lang Stracht with Anderson Dr

Anderson Drive design and development of shared use route between Deeside Way and river Dee riverside route

Craigshaw cycle route – further development and design of options for a cycle link

Appraisal of the transport options for the Union Terrace Project

- Carbon Reduction and Air Quality

Contribution towards two hydrogen fuel cell vans

Further contribution to Aberdeen City Hydrogen Energy Storage facility at Cove

- Various

Fraserburgh and Peterhead to Aberdeen Strategic Transport Study –Stag Part 2

Variable Message Signs Phase 3 – to capture decision points for routing onto AWPR and advertise Park & Ride locations

### Co-ordination & Project Development Programme

- Project Feasibility and Design

Bridge of Dee – Stag Part 2

Cross City Connections Study – Stag Part 2

Wellington Road multi-modal corridor study – Stag Part 1

- Travel Planning

Sustainable Travel Grant Scheme

Getabout active travel promotion and travel planning support

In 2018/2019 Nestrans funded the following:

### Strategic Investment Programme

- Rail  
Kintore Station – Progress works for new station, including car park and access roads and land purchase  
Insch Station Accessibility Feasibility Study  
Southern Stations Car Park Study
- Strategic Roads – Capacity Improvements  
Traffic Signal Monitoring and Control Upgrade  
Queen's Road SCOOT Corridor  
Digital Communications Migration  
AWPR Signage in Aberdeenshire
- Strategic Roads – Safety  
Further A947 road safety improvements  
Road studs on various strategic routes
- Strategic prioritised maintenance  
A947 Newmachar Gateway North surface dressing  
A944 Craigenlow East surface dressing  
B9119 Garlogie footway repairs due to erosion by HGV's  
Great Northern Road resurfacing  
Union Street Bus Lanes – partial reconstruction
- Bus Improvements  
Ellon Park & Ride site clearance and survey work for car park extension  
Bus stop information initiatives  
A93 Crathes mini-hub design and land negotiation  
Oldmeldrum Interchange Hub design and land negotiation  
New e-scheduling system for AC Public Transport Unit  
Bus stop improvements in Aberdeen, comprising installation of raised kerbs and replacement bus shelters on key strategic corridors
- Walking and Cycling:  
A96 Inverurie to Kintore  
Feasibility and design of future cycleway schemes in 5 Integrated Travel Towns in Aberdeenshire  
Footway reconstruction – A98 Seafield St, Portsoy; A98 Shore St, Macduff and A98 Skene St, Macduff  
Seaton Park Entrances – further development towards creation of a new ped/cycle entrance  
Riverside path from Bridge of Dee to RGU feasibility and design  
Wellheads Drive cycle link – completion of design of an extension to the Wellheads cycle route to Farburn Terrace  
Detailed design of options for alterations to Westburn/Lang Stracht /Anderson Drive junction with a focus on improvements for Active travel  
Craigshaw cycle route – further development and design of options for a cycle link

Middlefield and Northfield Active Travel Project  
Schoolhill public realm stage 1 improvements contribution  
Formartine & Buchan Way Generic Bridge Design  
A944 Cycle Path Feasibility and Design

- Carbon Reduction and Air Quality  
Further contribution towards two hydrogen fuel cell vans
- Various  
Fraserburgh and Peterhead to Aberdeen Strategic Transport Study further rail investigation: Ellon sensitivity testing and NW stations engineering review  
Variable Message Signs Phase 3  
North East Roads Hierarchy Review

#### Co-ordination & Project Development Programme

- General  
Cumulative Transport Appraisal
- Project Feasibility and Design  
Cross City Connections Study – Stag Part 2  
Wellington Road multi-modal corridor study – Stag Part 1 and Part 2
- Travel Planning  
Sustainable Travel Grant Scheme  
Getabout active travel promotion and travel planning support