

# Sustainable Economic Growth Statement

## 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](#) (NPF) that was revised in 2018. The goals of the NPF align with the aims of the United Nations Global Sustainable Development Goals all countries are trying to achieve by 2030. The NPF Purpose, Values and 11 National Outcomes are shown in the diagram below and there are 81 National Indicators to help track progress.

## National Performance Framework Our Purpose, Values and National Outcomes



### 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, albeit that a further objective of “Our people are able to maintain their independence as they get older and are able to access appropriate support when they need it” has since been added to the National Objectives.

The four strategic objectives of the RTS relating to Economy; Accessibility, Safety and Social Inclusion; Environment and Spatial Planning were retained within the refresh of the strategy in 2014 and are supportive of many of the National Outcomes.

### 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.

One of the key principals in setting and determining the Regional Transport Strategy and subsequent refresh has therefore been to encourage and permit sustainable economic growth.

## **Achievements in 2019/20**

### 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, which was supplemented through the purchase of an accessible bike. A faculty of public health event was arranged and held in May 2019.
- 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. Grants were provided to extend the Mid Deeside Hospital Transport pilot and to Buchan Dial-A-Community Bus for the Be-LinkD pilot project to provide healthcare and socially necessary transport to residents in Maud.

- **Bus Action Plan**

A 'state of the network' report was prepared to provide the baseline from which to identify priorities and develop corridor specific action plans to achieve the objectives set out in the Bus Alliance Quality Partnership Agreement. 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. 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 including the funding of E-paper bus stop information displays along the A96 corridor.

- **Freight Action Plan**

Nestrans is lead partner in the freight elements of the Civitas Portis project. The freight adviser previously appointed has continued to assist with development of a distribution strategy and developing relationships with businesses in the freight industry. Opportunities to develop a freight app continued to be considered.

- **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. 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. The feasibility study into options for improving accessibility at Inch Station has been progressed using funding from Nestrans and a grant via the Local Rail Development Fund (LRDF). A bid was submitted to a further round of the LRDF for funding to undertake a study to investigate local rail options to the south of Aberdeen and £80,000 was awarded to undertake a multi-modal STAG appraisal between Aberdeen and Laurencekirk. A bid has also been submitted in partnership with Aberdeenshire Council to the ScotRail Station Travel Planning grant to improve the signposting and wayfinding to Stonehaven Railway Station.

- **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 again received a grant from Scottish Government in 2019/20 offered to Regional Transport Partnerships towards active travel and the £220,000 award this year was used on the A944 pedestrian/cycle path feasibility study and Formartine & Buchan Way bridge design and purchase of 4 timber kit bridges. Nestrans has again contributed funding towards feasibility studies and the development and construction of a number of pedestrian and cyclist improvements. A Sustainable Travel Grant scheme continued to be offered, which provides match grant funding to support implementation of successful applications for sustainable transport schemes. The Getabout partnership continues to promote active and sustainable travel throughout the North East and a number of measures were delivered to promote and progress travel planning and active travel through the European Civitas Portis project.

## Planning

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 and this decision was upheld by following the subsequent appeal to the Supreme Court, whose decision was published on 25 October 2017. 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 2020 the balance stood at £483,198, which has still to be claimed in relation to 16 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 commissioned by Nestrans in partnership with the Councils and the SDPA was prepared as a supporting document for the Aberdeen City and Shire Strategic Development Proposed Plan submitted to the Scottish Ministers for Examination in Public on 22 April 2019. Supplementary appraisal was then undertaken to consider amendments to the level of development content contained in the final Proposed SDP and to understand how a range of transport intervention proposals would mitigate predicted impacts to facilitate the delivery of the Proposed Plan. The potential mitigation options identified within this supplementary appraisal can now be considered alongside the options being developed through the Strategic Transport Appraisal being funded by the City Region Deal and feed into the Strategic Transport Projects Review (STPR2) where appropriate. The outcomes will also help inform the development of the next Regional Transport Strategy, which will set future regional transport policy and may therefore influence the predicted outcomes.

## Projects

In 2019/2020 Nestrans funded the following:

### Strategic Investment Programme

- Rail  
Kintore Station – Further progress works for new station, including car park and access roads, with construction ongoing  
Insch Accessibility Study – Nestrans contribution to study being part funded via a Local Rail Development Grant.
- Strategic Roads – Capacity  
Traffic Signal Monitoring and Control Upgrade – Procurement and installation of equipment

Digital Communications Migration – Completion of the final stage of the UTC communication upgrades

AWPR Signage in Aberdeenshire - Amendment or replacement of signs if necessary following completion of AWPR not included in main contract.

- Strategic Roads - Safety

Further A947 minor road safety improvements such as signage, hazard marker replacements and texture remediation works

Road studs on various strategic routes

Motorcycle initiatives - Installation of interactive warning sites and signage and lining works, including chevrons, along the NE250 corridor.

- Strategic prioritised maintenance

Union Street bus lanes – partial reconstruction

- Bus Improvements

Ellon Park & Ride - completing the specification for the tender process for construction of car park extension, bus turning circle upgrade and improved waiting facilities

Bus stop information initiatives - Reactive programme resulting for bus stop changes through the year and any remedial works identified through inspections

A93 Crathes mini-hub – further design and land negotiation

Oldmeldrum Interchange Hub – Planning approval granted and completing design and land negotiation

New e-scheduling system for AC Public Transport Unit – System purchase and implementation

Bus stop improvements in Aberdeen - Installation of raised kerbs and replacement bus shelters on key strategic corridors.

- Walking and Cycling:

A98 Shore St, Macduff Ph2 - Footway reconstruction

Maconochie Rd, Fraserburgh – Construction of a Shared Use Footway / Cycleway between Fraserburgh Community & Sports Centre to Seaforth Street

Sauchen/Cluny - Construction of a Shared Use Cycleway / Footway

Westburn/Lang Stracht /Anderson Drive junction - Detailed design of options for alterations with a focus on improvements for Active travel

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

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

RTP Active Travel Grant:

Schoolhill public realm - Stage 1 improvements contribution

Union Terrace Gardens - Contribution to design and development

Formartine & Buchan Way - Further generic bridge design and purchase of four timber kit bridges

A944 Cycle Path – Ongoing study into option feasibility and design.

Sustrans Cycle Development Officer Grant:

Deeside Way path improvements between Mills of Drum and Crathes and from Aboyne to Dinnet.

- Carbon Reduction and Air Quality  
EV charge points in Aberdeenshire – Installation of EV chargers at Westhill library and Banchory Community Campus.
- Various  
Fraserburgh and Peterhead to Aberdeen Strategic Transport Study further rail investigation - Completion of Ellon sensitivity testing and NW stations engineering review  
North East Roads Hierarchy Review – Completion of consultancy study, preparation of documentation for process of formal road reclassifications, revalidation of SCOOT on A92 and A956(N) corridors and commissioning of A944/B9119 multi-modal corridor study.

### Co-ordination & Project Development Programme

- General  
Cumulative Transport Appraisal
- Project Feasibility and Design  
Wellington Road multi-modal corridor study – Stag Part 2  
City Gateway Paramics Modelling (Ellon)  
AWPR impact survey data collection and analysis.
- Travel Planning  
Sustainable Travel Grant Scheme and cycle parking grant  
Getabout active travel promotion and travel planning support  
Dyce Travel Planning contribution.