

Statement on Improving Efficiency, Effectiveness and Economy

Nestrans staff continued to work predominantly from home throughout the 2021/22 financial year as a result of the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic. The organisation continued to work collaboratively to develop the new Regional Transport Strategy to 2040 and to seek partner support in beginning to deliver the aims within the strategy. Every effort was also made to continue to secure additional external funding where available to deliver transport benefits for the North East.

Nestrans 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 £2,320 in 2021/22, whereas the administrative costs of clerking for the Board remained at £20,000.

Treasurer

Financial 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 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. The cost is based on the software, licensing and support costs per member of staff per annum and resulted in a charge of just over £6,300 in 2021/22.

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. 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 works two days per week solely for Nestrans, 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, arranging design work and preparing communications updates for Members. The Service Level Agreement was due for renewal in 2021 and it was suggested that Nestrans could get better value by directly employing the officer. Nestrans Board agreed to employ the officer directly and extend the cover from two to three days per week and this took effect from 1 January 2022 with the cost under the SLA until then being £13,846. Aberdeenshire Council have committed to providing support, including cover for urgent work and holiday/absence cover, if required.

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. In the past year the website and social media have continued to be used to provide latest transport advice in accordance with government guidance relating to the pandemic.

ACTtravelwise Membership

Nestrans again negotiated a group membership for all members of the Getabout partnership to ACTtravelwise for 2021/22 that resulted in a saving in comparison with the cost that individual memberships would otherwise have been and enabling partners to participate in online events.

Getabout Cycle Roadshow

Although the Getabout cycle roadshow has not been used throughout 2021/22 due to public events not being held, Nestrans has however funded further bikes, scooters and helmets to replenish the stock and make it available in future at events organised by the Getabout partners to encourage active travel. A number of bikes and helmets were also funded for Ibike and Bikeability training at schools to enable those that do not have a bike or helmet to still take part.

Liftshare

Nestrans has continued to fund the central data base for car sharing throughout the region under contract with Liftshare Ltd as this regional umbrella contract gave savings compared to each of the partners contracting individually and provided customers access to a larger database for potential matching of trips.

Although car sharing has not been recommended or promoted during covid travel restrictions, the contract was renewed for 2021/22 to ensure the details of members and those within the private groups that third parties pay for within the overall Getabout Liftshare umbrella were retained and so it would have been possible to promote car sharing again should restrictions have eased.

ASAM Regional Transport Model

The Aberdeen Sub Area Model (ASAM) is a multi-modal strategic model for the North East of Scotland, which is managed and maintained by Nestrans. Transport Scotland however provide administration support for requests to use the latest ASAM model via the LATIS website. In the last year, the model has been used by local authorities for future year demand predictions and strategic input to local micro simulation models for Aberdeen City Centre that is being used to develop options for a Low Emission Zone and to progress development of the City Centre Masterplan. Ongoing work for the Strategic Transport Projects Review (STPR2) on behalf of Transport Scotland will also have made use of ASAM14 as permission was previously granted for this. Developers have also been granted access to model and traffic survey information when undertaking Transport Assessments, thus ensuring that the local planning authorities' requirements are met using the best available means.

A further upgrade of ASAM to a 2019 base is ongoing and nearing completion. It has benefitted from methodologies developed for the Tay Cities Regional Transport Model and data shared by Transport Scotland from National models and under Scotland wide licences they have obtained.

East Coast Main Line Authorities

Nestrans continue to be partners in the consortium of East Coast Main Line Authorities (ECMA). 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.

Thistle Assistance Card

Nestrans again contributed along with other Regional Transport Partnerships to the cost of marketing, maintaining and updating the website and App for the Thistle Assistance cards that are used by people when using public transport. Sestrans manage this scheme thus providing efficiency and effectiveness benefits nationally. As well as fixed costs for management and marketing support there was a recharge for the leaflets printed and posted out to the Nestrans area of which there were 110 items posted in 2021/22.

Attracted Funding and Cost Savings

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. In 2021/22 a grant was awarded by Nestrans to Aberdeenshire Council, providing match funding of £2,204 for the installation of cycle parking at the Green, Portlethen.

Communities Sustainable Travel Grant Scheme

Nestrans approved the creation of a new grant that does not contain a requirement for 50% match funding that many community groups, smaller third sector organisations and social enterprises had struggled to find. An award was made to Strichen Community Park for a cycle repair station next to the Lodge Café, with the Community Park Company carrying out and meeting the costs of installing the repair station. A further award to Lumphanan Paths group for draining and clearing a local right of way from Lumphanan Old School to Milton of Auchenlove was supported via group funds and in-kind volunteer time to help with the project.

ASAM Regional Transport Model Update

The update of the Aberdeen Sub Area Model (ASAM) to a 2019 base year previously commissioned by Nestrans has been progressed to ensure it continues to provide a suitably robust basis for transport and land use appraisal and reflects any change in travel patterns following the opening of the Aberdeen Western Peripheral Route and Balmedie to Tippetty dualling that was completed in February 2019. It will also provide greater functionality by including active travel, city centre parking capacity and representation of LEZ compliant vehicles.

The data surveys commissioned specifically for the ASAM19 update have continued to be made available for a number of public and private sector studies following requests submitted to Transport Scotland via their Land Use and Transport Integrations in Scotland ([LATIS](#)) data service. The current strategic model (ASAM14) is also listed within the section on Regional Transport models on the LATIS website along with a copy of the model development report and Transport Scotland continued to administer the application process for access to the ASAM model or data via the LATIS website.

The ASAM19 update has also benefited from the sharing of methodologies developed for other regional strategic models and input from the national suite of models. Although Nestrans manages ASAM, the cost of the update is being met through the Aberdeen City Region Deal funding as the model will be used to appraise transport options. The cost recharged in 2021/22 for model development and audit work associated with ASAM19 amounted to £106,215. ASAM19 base model road and public transport matrices were made available to the consultants commissioned to develop options for the Aberdeen Rapid Transit scheme to provide high level demand flows within the study area for the purposes of the appraisal.

Sustrans Grants

Nestrans agreed in 2021 to make the cycling development officer post that had previously been appointed under a two-year contract, a full-time member of staff and rename the post as Active Travel Development Officer (ATDO). Sustrans continued to provide a capital contribution of up to £100,000 per annum to Nestrans as a result of funding this post. The award for 2020/21 for additional pedestrian and cycle counters was carried forward to 2021/22 following discussion by the ATDO with Cycling Scotland and Sustrans that brokered an agreement for Cycling Scotland to install the counters and for information to feed into Cycling Scotland's Active Travel Open Data portal that previously had no information for the Nestrans area. The Sustrans Grant funded counters at 12 locations across the region, with Cycling Scotland funding an

additional 9 sites as well as the installation costs, a 5-year warranty, data hosting and site maintenance support for all 21 sites.

The ATDO grant for 2021/22 was used to fund a cycle network data review and gap analysis for Aberdeen and health check survey on the Deeside Way and Formartine & Buchan Way, followed by a number of minor upgrades on both routes. The final grant claimed by the deadline of the end of the financial year amounted to £46,939 due to both consultancy studies both being cheaper than the agreed budget and difficulty in procuring more of the suggested upgrades due to Council and external resources being allocated to other priorities.

Due to the impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic, Sustrans agreed that the timescale for claiming the grant offered through the National Cycle Network Development fund in 2020/21 for improvements on the Deeside Way could be extended until summer 2021. As a result, officers at Aberdeenshire Council were able to complete further works amounting to £68,075 for path improvements between Milton of Crathes to Birkenbaud and a section near Drumoak as well as some snagging to address drainage issues near Ballater.

RTP Active Travel Grant

The remaining 2020/21 grant award of £180,375 could continue to be claimed until end June 2021 due to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic. This enabled a sum of £157,567 to be claimed to complete work on the A944 Westhill to Kingswells Cycle Route study and resurfacing of the Ellon Viaduct and phase 1 of path improvements in this area. The Scottish Government again offered an Active Travel Grant to Regional Transport Partnerships in 2021/22 with Nestrans being awarded up to £274,000. The grant was used in full to fund phase 2 of further path improvements in the Ellon area, to undertake a review of the Core Path networks in Aberdeen and to continue the bridge repair/replacement works on the Formartine and Buchan Way. As any capital works being funded required a 30% contribution, Nestrans provided £50,000 towards the cost of installing four timber bridges previously purchased and this also attracted funding from and was organised by Aberdeenshire Council, who also met the additional costs for completing the phase 2 path improvements in the Ellon area and provided extra funding to increase the number of bridges purchased in 2021/22 for the Formartine & Buchan Way to five.

Local Rail Development Fund

Nestrans was previously successful in applying to Transport Scotland's Local Rail Development Fund in August 2019 for £80,000 to undertake a multi-modal STAG appraisal between Aberdeen and Laurencekirk. A sum of £30,700 had been claimed in 2020/21 for works on the case for change and Transport Scotland agreed to increase the grant by £15,321 to undertake further consultation to inform the case for change, which was completed and submitted. The deadline for claiming the remaining grant was extended until 30 June 2022 due to the ongoing pandemic.

Scottish Stations Fund Grant

In 2016 the Minister for Transport approved an award of 60% for Kintore Railway Station. The new station opened in October 2020 and the final costs and previous costs met by Nestrans and Aberdeenshire Council that were fundamental to the

subsequent design and delivery and in acquiring land have been agreed with Transport Scotland, who managed the overall delivery of the scheme. The final share of the 40% to be met by Aberdeenshire Council and Nestrans following the deduction of the agreed costs that had previously been incurred has now been agreed and was invoiced in March 2022. As a result Nestrans met around 24.3% of the total cost of this project, Aberdeenshire Council funded 15.7% and Scottish Government funded 60%.

Bus Partnership Fund Grant

Nestrans funded consultancy support to assist the North East Bus Alliance to prepare a bid to the Scottish Government's Bus Partnership Fund. The bid was submitted by Aberdeen City Council on behalf of the Bus Alliance and an award made of £12,030,000. Several of the multi modal corridor studies that were previously being funded by Nestrans have been progressed since August 2021 via the BPF award and Nestrans funding was reallocated to deliver further walking and cycling projects.

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 2021/22.

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 and continued to provide an excellent service to residents of Grampian during the pandemic by giving travel advice and co-ordination of information from multiple transport providers across the region, including private operators contracted by NHSG, community/voluntary transport organisations and Councils, for getting to/from Test Centres, treatment and Vaccination Centres.

Aberdeen Low Emission Zone Development

Nestrans contributed to the cost of developing a Low Emission Zone (LEZ) within Aberdeen and participated in the client group for this project. Aberdeen City Council received grant from Transport Scotland for the development and appraisal of options for the LEZ and Nestrans funding was used to expand the appraisal to consider the City Centre Master Plan schemes previously approved by the Council alongside the LEZ options to ensure that they were complementary and to identify any necessary mitigation measures.

Procurement Activity

Scotland Excel Engineering and Technical Consultancy Services Framework Agreement (0820)

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. Usage of the framework enables a compliant, best value and efficient method to procure technical services for Nestrans. In 2021/22 Nestrans either held mini competitions or placed direct awards through the framework for the following projects:

- Aberdeen City Region Deal Scoping of Live Lab Proposals
- Further Covid-19 travel attitude and behaviour surveys
- Strategic Transport Appraisal/RTS2040 Strategic Environmental Assessment – Post Adoption Statement
- Union Street Public Realm consultancy work
- Ellon Traffic Survey Analysis
- Aberdeen to Laurencekirk multi-modal study - additional Case for Change work
- Core Path Network Survey – Aberdeen City Council Area
- North East Scotland Bus Partnership Fund – Aberdeen Rapid Transit – Options Appraisal
- Fabrication of Timber Bridge Kits for the Formartine & Buchan Way