



Minute of Meeting of the North East Scotland Transport Partnership Board

Aberdeen, Wednesday, 20 September 2023

Present: Councillor Alan Turner (Chairperson); Councillor Michael Hutchison and Dr Margaret Bochel (Vice Chairs); Councillor Isobel Davidson, Councillor Glen Reid, Councillor Sandra Macdonald, Councillor Miranda Radley, Councillor Doreen Mair (as substitute for Councillor John Cox) and Councillor Alexander McLellan (as substitute for Councillor Ian Yuill); and Gerry Donald and Ian Ross.

In Attendance: Rab Dickson, Paul Finch, Kirsty Chalmers, Jenny Anderson, Kelly Wiltshire, Jon Barron, Adam Kench, and Lucy Johnston (Nestrans); Ewan Wallace, Martin Hall and Ella Stott (Aberdeenshire Council); David Dunne, Claire McArthur, Vicki Johnstone and Mark Masson (Aberdeen City Council); and Ewan Tait (ScotRail).

Apologies: Councillors John Cox and Ian Yuill; and Colin Allanach.

Please note that if any changes are made to this minute at the point of approval, these will be outlined in the subsequent minute and this document will not be retrospectively altered.

NESTRANS - MEMBERSHIP CHANGES

1. The Board had before it a note from the Clerk which advised that Councillor Alan Turner had replaced Councillor John Crawley as an Aberdeenshire Council appointed Board member representative from 4 July 2023.

On behalf of the Board, Councillor Hutchison, Vice Chair wished to express his gratitude for Councillor Crawley's work since becoming Chair of the Nestrans Board on 22 June 2022.

The Board resolved:-

to note the information provided and to concur with the Vice Chair.

APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR

2. With reference to article 1 of this minute, Councillor Hutchison, Vice Chair sought nominations for the position of Chairperson.

Councillor Alan Turner was nominated by Councillor Hutchison, which was seconded by Councillor Davidson.

The Board resolved:-

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to appoint Councillor Alan Turner as Chairperson of the Nestrans Board.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND TRANSPARENCY STATEMENTS

3. There were no Declarations of Interest or Transparency Statements intimated.

MINUTE OF PREVIOUS BOARD MEETING OF 21 JUNE 2023

4. The Board had before it the minute of its previous meeting of 21 June 2023 for approval.

The Board resolved:-

to approve the minute as a correct record.

PRESENTATIONS: SCOTRAIL UPDATE - EWAN TAIT, BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT EXECUTIVE

5. The Board received a presentation from Ewan Tait, Business Development Executive in relation to a ScotRail Service Update.

Ewan intimated that Transport Focus, an independent body, had undertaken a customer satisfaction survey recently which found that 91% of rail passengers were satisfied with ScotRail, an increase from 86% in the previous reporting period

Ewan Tait provided details in relation to passenger demand which indicated that the commuter/peak traveller numbers (1) between Aberdeen and the South were significantly down on those reported at pre-pandemic time, with levels of recovery less than those in other areas of Scotland, mainly due to fewer commuters and business people travelling less frequently to/from meetings; and (2) between Aberdeen and the North which showed that there was an increase in traveller numbers over the same period, although this is impacted by works in 2019/20.

Ewan provided information on the service/timetable changes due to take place from Sunday 10 December 2023. He explained that customer demand did not grow as quickly as they would have liked and that performance was not as good as it should have been, however they were working to improve the reliability of their inter-city and suburban diesel trains with the timetable change helping to mitigate performance impact. He intimated that the rationalisation of the timetable would be between Dundee and Inverurie with the focus being on protecting service frequency and direct journey opportunities rather than journey times.

Ewan provided details in relation to a six month trial on the lifting of peak time restrictions on off-peak tickets commencing on Monday, 2 October 2023 until Friday, 29 March 2024 with details of the new fare on their website (<http://www.scotrail.co.uk/off-peak-fares-all-day-long>).

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Ewan responded to a number of questions from members of the Board, and the following was noted:-

- that there would be no impact in relation to the Sunday timetable as a result of the changes and the Saturday timetable would be based around the Monday to Friday timetable;
- that there were no plans at a UK National Level to phase out the use of season tickets;
- that although there was a loss of Cross-Aberdeen connectivity as a result of the changes, ScotRail were looking to maintain local connectivity between Montrose, Stonehaven, Laurencekirk, Portlethen and Aberdeen;
- that a great deal of work had been undertaken by ScotRail to understand who their market was, particularly to investigate the reasons why people choose to travel by car instead of using trains;
- that the rail timetable changes from December 2023 would continue until the Aberdeen to Central Belt Enhancement Project was delivered;
- that detailed work on the timetable would be required if new train stations were built within the local area;
- that in terms of the Montrose to Aberdeen rail service, ScotRail acknowledged that there were challenges, particularly with the poor reliability and cancellations of the services, however work was being undertaken to improve inter-city reliability including the recruitment and training of more staff; and
- that ScotRail would be engaging with local bus operators in relation to the timetable changes.

The Board resolved:-

- (i) to note that Ewan Tait would circulate to members, information relating to the late night train weekend service timetable, specifically advising whether there would be any changes to the first/last times of the service; and
- (ii) to thank Ewan Tait for his attendance and informative presentation.

2023/24 BUDGET MATTERS

6. The Board had before it a report which provided an update on the Partnership's 2023/24 monitoring and forecast outturn position and sought consideration of any budget or monitoring issues that may arise.

The report recommended:-

that the Board –

- (a) note the monitoring position and forecast presented in Appendix 1;
- (b) approve the virements set out in Appendix 2;
- (c) note the update regarding completion of the Annual Accounts 2022/23;
- (d) note the update on the Pensions Discretions Policy; and
- (e) note the Strategic Transport Fund position.

The Board heard Ella Stott provide an overview of the report.

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The Board resolved:-

to approve the recommendations.

DIRECTOR'S REPORT

7. The Board had before it a report which provided an update on liaison with other Regional Transport Partnerships (RTPs), with the Scottish Government and other organisations.

The report recommended:-

that the Board note progress on liaison arrangements with other RTPs, the Scottish Government and others and arrangements for future meetings.

The Director made reference to the following meetings held recently (1) Aberdeen International Airport Consultative Committee on 7 July 2023; (2) RTP Chairs Meeting in Inverness on 6 September 2023; and (3) Health and Transport Action Plan Steering Group on 31 August 2023.

The Board resolved:-

- (i) to note that a report outlining the aims and objectives of the Health and Transport Action Plan would be submitted to a future meeting of the Board, which may coincide with the submission of the Annual Report in this regard; and
- (ii) to otherwise approve the recommendation.

EQUALITIES OUTCOMES AND MAINSTREAMING

8. The Board had before it a report which provided an update in relation to the responsibilities being placed on Nestrans as a public body in respect of their duties regarding the Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties) (Scotland) Regulations 2012.

The report recommended:-

that the Board –

- (a) note the report and the requirement for Nestrans to report on its activities and policies in respect of Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties) (Scotland) Regulations 2012;
- (b) approve the Equalities outcomes 2023 indicated within the report; and
- (c) note the Equalities Outcomes and Mainstreaming 2023 report in Appendix 1.

The Board heard Kelly Wiltshire provide a summary of the report making reference to the two Nestrans' Equality Outcomes, including the ongoing work with Grampian Regional Equalities Council, partners on the Health and Transport Action Plan and all relevant stakeholder groups.

The Board resolved:-

to approve the recommendations.

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DRAFT ANNUAL REPORT 2022/23

9. The Board had before it a report which presented the draft Nestrans Annual Report for 2022/23 and Business Plan for 2023/24.

The report recommended:-

that the Board –

- (a) consider the attached draft 2022/23 Annual Report and Business Plan 2023/24;
- (b) approve publication of this report on the Nestrans website once the design has been completed; and
- (c) instruct a link to the published report to be sent to Scottish Ministers and the Chief Executives at Aberdeen City Council and Aberdeenshire Council.

Jenny Anderson highlighted the key information from the report.

The Board resolved:-

to approve the recommendations.

PUBLIC SERVICES REFORM - INFORMATION PUBLICATION

10. The Board had before it a report which sought consideration of the information which was to be published for 2022/23 in accordance with the Public Services Reform (Scotland) Act 2010.

The report recommended:-

that the Board approve publication on the Nestrans website of the information for 2022/23 required under the Public Services Reform (Scotland) Act 2010.

The Board heard Jenny Anderson provide a summary of the report.

The Board resolved:-

to approve the recommendation.

FREIGHT ISSUES UPDATE

11. The Board had before it a report which provided an update on a variety of current issues relating to the movement of freight.

The report recommended:-

that the Board –

- (a) note the holding of the Freight Forum event on Thursday, 14 September and the verbal update provided by the Strategy Manger at the Board Meeting; and
- (b) welcome the opening of Port of Aberdeen's new South Harbour as a key contributor the region's wider freight and logistics offering.

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The Board heard from Paul Finch who provided a summary of the report and responded to questions from members.

Paul made reference to presentations by Port of Aberdeen, Peterhead Port Authority and Fraserburgh Harbour at the Freight Forum meeting; also a presentation on the work on the A90/A952 corridor, rail freight, and external links to Aberdeen South Harbour.

There was a suggestion that the Freight Forum collated presentation be shared with all elected members from Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire Councils.

The Board resolved:-

- (i) that arrangements be made for the Freight Forum collated presentation published on the Nestrans Website be highlighted to all Councillors from Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire Councils for their interest; and
- (ii) to otherwise approve the recommendations.

ART UPDATE

12. With reference to article 17 of the minute of the previous meeting of 21 June 2023, the Board had before it a report which provided an update on the Aberdeen Rapid Transport (ART) project, including confirmation of funding from the Bus Partnership Fund and an update on engagement, marketing and communications activities.

The report recommended:-

that the Board –

- (a) note the commencement of work to appraise the routing options for ART; and
- (b) note the ongoing stakeholder engagement work.

The Board heard Kirsty Chalmers provide a summary of the report, particularly referring to the range of activities and engagement events held in relation to the project, but noting that work would continue to promote awareness and the potential benefits of ART.

The Board resolved:-

to approve the recommendations.

ACTION PLANS: ACTIVE TRAVEL UPDATE

13. The Board had before it a report which provided an update on various active travel projects, including (1) the Active Travel Transformation Fund; (2) the work being carried out on route network planning across the north east, including the development of a signed on-road regional quiet route cycle network; (3) the study focusing on the creation of a Regional Active Travel Network; (4) initial work around reviewing Nestrans Active Travel Action Plan; and (5) Regional Active Travel Governance.

The report recommended:-

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that the Board –

- (a) note the intention of officers from both Councils and Nestrans to collaborate on future bids to the Active Travel Transformation Fund so that north east projects can be more likely to receive a fair proportion of the funding that will be available;
- (b) note the ongoing work by consultants, supported and informed by officers in relation to route network planning; both on the development of an on-road signed Quiet Route Cycle Network and the Regional Active Travel Network; and
- (c) note the progress made in regard to improved regional governance arrangements around active travel, including the initial review carried out on Nestrans' Active Travel Action Plan and the recommendations and suggested next steps contained within.

Jon Barron and Rab Dickson highlighted the key information from the report and responded to questions from members.

During discussion, the following was noted:-

- that Nestrans was collaborating with colleagues in Aberdeenshire Council regarding Quiet Route signage; and
- that the production of maps at a strategic level would be a key outcome of the work relating to the Nestrans' Active Travel Action Plan.

The Board resolved:-

- (i) to note that a further report would be submitted to the Board by the end of 2023; and
- (ii) to otherwise approve the recommendations.

PROGRESS REPORT

14. The Board had before it a progress report which outlined the status of various activities in support of the Regional Transport Strategy.

In response to a question relating to Bus Affordability and Accessibility, the Director emphasised that although Nestrans work with the two large bus operators within the region through the North East Bus Alliance, there were no discussions on commercial aspects of their businesses, including the setting of bus fares. He explained that the Bus Alliance would look at opportunities to improve public transportation and bus services across the City/Shire, they also look at promotion and infrastructure including funding for bus shelters.

Rab made reference to First Aberdeen's announcement of a fare reduction trial over the next three to six months which would be welcome and made reference to Stagecoach's issues regarding recruitment which had an effect on services in the region, however, he intimated that they were working on recruitment promotion to improve the situation.

The Board resolved:-

to note the information provided and the content of the progress report.

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PUBLICATIONS AND CONSULTATIONS

15. The Board had before it a report which provided information on recent publications and consultation responses.

The report recommended:-

that the Board –

- (a) note the publication of the documents outlined in the report;
- (b) authorise officers to continue to engage with partner organisations as these policy documents develop;
- (c) agree the draft response on the Just Transition Transport discussion paper, contained as Appendix C to this report, be submitted on behalf of the Chair.

The Board heard Adam Kench provide a summary of the report making reference to the following:-

- Cycling Scotland Strategy 2023-28;
- Road Safety and Cycling – What the evidence shows;
- Young Persons Free Bus Travel Scheme Evaluation - stakeholder survey;
- UK Parliament: Scottish Affairs Committee – Inquiry into Cost of Living in Rural Scotland;
- Scottish Government – Just Transition Discussion Papers;
- Scottish Parliament: Social Justice and Social Security Committee - Inquiry into Child Poverty and Parental Employment; and
- Women’s experience of travel and its cost.

The Board resolved:-

- (i) to approve recommendations (a) and (b); and
- (ii) that the Just Transition Transport discussion paper response include details relating to the Energy Transition Zone transport element, and that the draft response be circulated to Board members for approval prior to it being submitted to the Scottish Government.

INFORMATION BULLETIN

16. The Board had before it a report which provided information and updates on a number of matters not requiring decisions.

The report recommended:-

that the Board note the contents of the report.

The Board heard Kelly Wiltshire make reference to the following:-

- Getabout;
- Campaign for North East Rail / Aberdeen and Grampian Chamber of Commerce;
- Student Work placement / dissertation support;
- Big Issue E-bikes;

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- Verity House Agreement;

In addition, Kelly advised that a new radio advert had been created to promote the Transport to Healthcare Information Centre (THInC) telephone helpline which would help people to plan their travel to health and social care appointments. The advert was going live on Original 106 FM in the next two weeks.

The Board welcomed the news that in relation to the Big Issue E-bikes (BIEB), which was launched in Aberdeen on 9 November 2022, that (1) the fleet, available for use by hirers across Aberdeen, had increased since launch from 153 to a height of 213; (2) that the number of parking zones, where bikes were available for use, had also increased from 33 to 58; and (3) around 3.6FTE employment positions had been created by BIEB in Aberdeen.

The Board resolved:-

to approve the recommendation.

CONFERENCES AND PRESENTATIONS

17. The Board had before it a report which provided an update on conferences, training and presentations and sought feedback on events which had been held.

The report recommended:-

that the Board note the contents of Appendix 1.

The Director made reference to the following presentations undertaken by Paul Finch:-

- Inquiry into Child Poverty and Parental Employment, held in the Scottish Parliament on 7 September 2023; and
- Freight Forum, held in the Maritime Museum on 14 September 2023.

The Board resolved:-

to approve the recommendation.

PENDING BUSINESS AND REPORTS FOR FUTURE MEETINGS

18. The Board had before it a report which provided a progress update on pending business requested by the Board and major reports scheduled for forthcoming Board meetings and provided the opportunity for members to add to or amend the scheduling.

The report recommended:-

that the Board note the report on pending business.

The Director indicated that a report on a Comprehensive Travel Survey and Dates for 2024 Board Meetings would be submitted to the next meeting. He advised that an update on the Audited Annual Accounts 2022/23 would be provided.

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The Board resolved:-

to approve the recommendation.

- **COUNCILLOR ALAN TURNER, Chairperson**