Minute of Meeting of the North East Scotland Transport Partnership Board

Aberdeen, Wednesday, 10 April 2024

Present: Councillor Alan Turner (Chairperson); Councillor Michael Hutchison and Dr Margaret Bochel (Vice Chairs); Councillor John Cox, Councillor Isobel Davidson, Councillor Sandra Macdonald, Councillor Alexander McLellan (as substitute for Councillor Miranda Radley) and Councillor Christian Allard (as substitute for Councillor Ian Yuill); and Colin Allanach.

In Attendance: Rab Dickson, Paul Finch, Jon Barron, Jenny Anderson, Adam Kench and Tricia Howden (Nestrans); Ewan Wallace and Tina Wight (Aberdeenshire Council); David Dunne, Vicki Johnstone and Mark Masson (Aberdeen City Council) and Agela Pieri and Andrew Wallace (Grant Thornton UK).

Apologies: Councillors Miranda Radley, Glen Reid and Ian Yuill; and Gerry Donald, Ian Ross, Alan Wood and Martin Hall.

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.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND TRANSPARENCY STATEMENTS

1. There were no declarations of interest or transparency statements intimated.

MINUTE OF BOARD MEETING, OF 14 FEBRUARY 2024, FOR APPROVAL

2. The Board had before it the minute of its previous meeting of 14 February 2024, for approval.

The Board resolved:-
to approve the minute as a correct record.

CONSTITUTION AND STANDING ORDERS

3. The Board had before it a report which sought approval to consult on a number of amendments to the Partnership's Constitution and Standing Orders.

The report recommended:-
that the Board –

(a) agree the suggested amendments to the Standing Orders and Constitution for the purposes of consultation;
(b) instruct the Director to liaise with colleagues in other Partnerships and with officers of Transport Scotland on these matters; and
(c) present a subsequent paper to Board on a finalised set of Standing Orders and Constitution.

The Director provided an overview of the report and responded to questions from members.

During discussion, the following was raised:-

- at 2.9(1) - further consideration would be required in relation to the quorum, specifically regarding those who are eligible to vote on the budget – for instance, would the quorum for a vote be one third of the 8 elected members i.e. 3 rounded up;
- noted that the four non elected members were due for re-appointment in October 2024; and
- noted that the two Advisers to the Board were required to be re-appointed.

The Board resolved:-
(i) to approve the recommendations; and
(ii) to agree that a workshop be established to review the structure and membership of the Board, and consider any other possible changes to the constitution/standing orders as they deem appropriate.

2023/24 BUDGET MATTERS

4. The Board had before it a report which provided an update on the Partnership's 2023/24 budget 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) approve the continuation of funding to next financial year to complete approved projects presented in Appendix 3;
(d) note the update on projects for which Nestrans can claim external grant funding; and
(e) note the Strategic Transport Fund position.

The Board heard from Jenny Anderson who highlighted the key information from the report.

The Board resolved:-
(i) to approve the recommendations; and

(ii) to note that the Director would be liaising with legal colleagues and the Chief Officer – Strategic Place Planning, Aberdeen City Council, following which, a report on the Strategic Transport Fund would be submitted to the next meeting of the Board.

2024/25 BUDGET UPDATE

5. The Board had before it a report which provided information on funding allocations to Nestrans for 2024/25 that have been confirmed to date and sought consideration of any budget issues arising from this.

The report recommended:-
that the Board –
(a) note the funding awards to Nestrans that have been confirmed for 2024/25;
(b) note that the additional funding for People and Places has yet to be confirmed and is discussed in a separate report on the agenda; and
(c) agree to usage of funds from the General Reserves to address the current shortfall in the Coordination and Project Development Budget that was approved in February.

The Board heard from Jenny Anderson who highlighted the key information from the report.

The Board resolved:-
to approve the recommendations.

ANNUAL AUDIT PLAN 2023/24

6. The Board had before it a report which provided details of the 2023/24 Annual Audit Plan provided by the External Auditor, Grant Thornton, which set out the audit work to be undertaken to provide an opinion on the Partnership's financial statements.

The report recommended:-
that the Board –
(a) note the audit plan provided by the external auditor; and
(b) note the responses given to the Informing the Risk Assessment document.

The Board heard from Angela Pieri and Andrew Wallace who highlighted the key information from the report.

The Board resolved:-
to approve the recommendations.

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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:-

- HTAP Steering Group held on 20 February 2024 – noting that it was Gerry Donald's last meeting as Chair of the Group and that Lynsey Martin (NHS Grampian - Public Health) would be replacing him; and
- North East Bus Alliance Board held on 22 February 2024.

The Director suggested that Lynsey Martin be invited to a future meeting of the Board.

The Board resolved:-
(i) to approve the recommendation; and
(ii) to invite Lynsey Martin to a future meeting of the Board.

ELECTED MEMBERS' WORKSHOP: 8 MARCH 2024

8. The Board had before it a report which provided an update on the Workshop to which all elected members of both Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire Councils were invited, to receive updates on the developing Regional Active Travel Network and on potential routeing considerations for Aberdeen Rapid Transit proposals.

The report recommended:-
that the Board –
(a) note the contents of this report and Appendices; and
(b) seek further reports on the projects as these progress.

During discussion, it was noted that the Workshop was an in-person meeting only and that some members were unable to participate as they had assumed that there was a hybrid option, therefore it was suggested that a short separate virtual session be organised. In response the Director advised that a virtual session had been organised with the Consultants to be held on Monday, 15 April at 4pm.

The Board resolved:-
(i) to approve the recommendations; and
(ii) to note that a separate virtual session would be held on Monday, 15 April at 4pm and that it would be recorded so that members could view it at a later date if they were unable to attend the session.

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ACTIVE TRAVEL UPDATE

9. The Board had before it a report which provided updates across a range of aspects relating to the co-ordination of active travel activities across the region.

The report made reference to the following:-

- Regional Funding for Active Travel;
- Policy – Active Travel Action Plan;
- Regional Active Travel Network Plan;
- Pipeline of Projects;
- Governance; and
- Resources;

The report recommended:-
that the Board –

(a) endorse the revised People and Places submission submitted to Transport Scotland on Thursday 14 March, and detailed in Appendix 1;
(b) note the updates on the different Active Travel funding streams detailed in Section 2 of the report;
(c) note the progress on developing a revised Regional Active Travel Action Plan (AcTrAP) detailed in Section 3 of the report;
(d) note the progress on developing a Regional Active Travel Network plan, and the intention to issue this for public and stakeholder consultation for a six-week period in April 2024;
(e) note the progress on developing a Regional Active Travel Pipeline of key projects either in construction/design, option appraisal, or otherwise supported for development;
(f) note the progress in establishing a Regional Active Travel Governance structure, and note the inclusion of Minutes of the initial Core Group meetings in Appendices 2 and 3; and
(g) endorse the intention to continue to procure consultancy support from AECOM in Financial Year 24/25 as a call-off from the Excel Engineering Services Framework, in order to progress to completion the Active Travel Action Plan, and publication of the Active Travel Pipeline, utilising budget identified for this purpose.

The Board heard from Paul Finch who highlighted the key information from the Report and provided an update relating to the Banff Active Travel Bridge in response to a question from Councillor Cox.

The Director advised that the Craigshaw Drive Cycle Route project construction works were very close to completion and a press release and launch would be held in due course.

The Board resolved:-
to approve the recommendations.

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RAIL MATTERS UPDATE

10. The Board had before it a report which provided updates on a range of aspects relating to the development of rail services and infrastructure across the region.

The report made reference to the following:-

- Aberdeen to Central Belt Upgrade;
- Network Rail Climate Resilience;
- Insch Station Accessibility Project; and
- Campaign for North East Rail/Aberdeen & Grampian Chamber of Commerce Buchan Sustainable Transport Study.

The report recommended:-
that the Board –

(a) note the developments that have been communicated on the Aberdeen to Central Belt Rail Upgrade Project;
(b) request a subsequent Board Paper on Network Rail's Climate Resilience Plan; and
(c) note the status of Insch Station project and the study considering appraisal of rail line options to Buchan.

The Board heard from Paul Finch who highlighted the key information from the report and responded to questions from members.

During discussion, it was noted that a letter from Councillor Stirling, Chair of Aberdeen City Region Deal Joint Committee (ACRDJC) had been sent to the Cabinet Secretary for Transport, Net Zero and Just Transition in relation to the Aberdeen to Central Belt Upgrade, specifically on a recent Scottish Government announcement regarding budget allocations which would ultimately delay finalisation of the project.

It was suggested that a similar letter be issued to the Cabinet Secretary by the Chair of the Board emphasising the importance of the project for the North East, however it was acknowledged that it would be best to await a response to the letter from the Chair of ACRDJC, prior to deciding whether a further letter was required.

The Board resolved:-

(i) to approve the recommendations; and
(ii) to instruct the Director to write to Joanne Maguire, Interim Managing Director of ScotRail inviting her to a future meeting of the Board.

PROGRESS REPORT

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

The Board resolved:-
to note the content of the progress report.

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PUBLICATIONS AND CONSULTATIONS

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

The report made reference to the following:-

- Fair Fares Review;
- Islands Connectivity Plan;
- Guidance on Inclusive Design for Town Centres and Busy Streets;
- Draft Scottish National Adaptation Plan (2024 – 2029);
- Local Outcome Improvement Plan – Community Planning Aberdeen;
- HGV Decarbonisation Pathway; and
- Proposed Changes to Legislation for Electrically Assisted Pedal Cycles (EAPCs).

The report recommended:-
that the Board –

(a) note the publication of the Fair Fares Review and supporting documents outlined in the report and approves the attached letter to the Cabinet Secretary, contained in Appendix 1;
(b) note the publication of the Islands Connectivity Plan and agrees the submission of Appendix 2 as Nestrans' response to the consultation;
(c) note the publication of the Guidance on Inclusive Design for Town Centres and Busy Streets and endorses the submission contained as Appendix 3 as Nestrans' response to the consultation;
(d) note the Draft National Adaptation Plan and authorises officers to formulate a response;
(e) note the publication of Community Planning Aberdeen's refreshed Local Outcome Improvement Plan;
(f) note the publication of Transport Scotland's Pathway for HGV Decarbonisation; and
(g) note DfT proposals to ease restrictions on Electrically Assisted Pedal Cycles (EAPCs) and instructs officers to respond expressing concern regarding the impact that this change could have.

Adam Kench provided a summary of the report.

the Board resolved:-
to approve the recommendations.

INFORMATION BULLETIN

13. 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 Director made reference to the following:-

- Getabout; and
- Scottish Transport Awards to be held on Thursday, 20 June 2024.

The Board resolved:-
to approve the recommendation.

CONFERENCES AND PRESENTATIONS

14. The Board had before it a report which provided information on conferences, training and presentations which may be of interest to Board members or for members to seek feedback on events which had been held.

The report recommended:-
that the Board note the contents of Appendix 1.

The Director highlighted the following training to be undertaken by Jon Barron:-

- In-person training: Cycling by Design – 11 March 2024; and
- Cargo Bike Instructor Course - 15 April 2024.

He also indicated that Paul Finch would be attending the Climate Ready Infrastructure Scotland conference to be held on Thursday, 18 April 2024, in Edinburgh.

The Board resolved:-
to approve the recommendation.

PENDING BUSINESS AND REPORTS FOR FUTURE MEETINGS

15. 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 Board resolved:-
to approve the recommendation.

- COUNCILLOR ALAN TURNER, Chairperson