Minute of Meeting of the North East Scotland Transport Partnership Board

Aberdeen, Wednesday, 25 September 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 Miranda Radley, Councillor Glen Reid and Councillor Ian Yuill; and Gerry Donald.

In Attendance: Rab Dickson, Paul Finch, Jon Barron, Jenny Anderson, Adam Kench, Lucy Johnston, Caroline Hood and Tricia Howden (Nestrans); Ewan Wallace and Tina Wight (Aberdeenshire Council); David Dunne, Kirsty Chalmers, Fiona Closs, and Karen Finch (Aberdeen City Council) and Andrew Wallace and Angela Pieri (Grant Thornton UK);

Apologies: 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.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND TRANSPARENCY STATEMENTS

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

MINUTE OF BOARD MEETING FROM 26 JUNE 2024

2. The Board had before it the minute of its previous meeting of 26 June 2024, for approval.

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

CONSTITUTION AND STANDING ORDERS

3. With reference to article 3 of the minute of its previous meeting of 26 June 2024, the Board had before it a report by the Director which provided Members with an opportunity to consider the proposed changes to the Partnership's Constitution and Standing Orders.

The report attached as appendix 1, the proposed amendments to the Constitution and Standing Orders.

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The report recommended:-
that the Board –
(a) approve the suggested changes contained in the appendix to the report; and
(b) adopt the revised Constitution and Standing Orders.

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

The Board resolved:-
(i) to instruct the Director to make appropriate amendments to the numerical running order of the appendix; and
(ii) to otherwise approve the recommendations contained in the report.

ANNUAL ACCOUNTS 2023/24 AND THE REPORT ON THE 2023/24 AUDIT BY EXTERNAL AUDITOR

4. The Board had before it a report which provided details on the audited Annual Accounts for 2023/24 and the external auditor's report on the audit.

The report recommended:-
that the Board –
(a) approve for signature the audited Annual Accounts for 2023/24;
(b) consider the External Auditor's Report;
(c) approve the management response to the action plan recommendations; and
(d) note that the Accounts can be accessed and downloaded free of charge from the Nestrans website.

The Board heard from Tina Wight and Angela Pieri on the key information from the report and audit. Tina advised that new guidance had been received in relation to Pensions information which would require an adjustment to the accounts.

The Board resolved:-
(i) following a change to national guidance, agree to delegate authority to the Director of Nestrans, following consultation with the Nestrans Board Chair and the Treasurer, to sign off the Annual Accounts for 2023/24 without further reference to the Nestrans Board;
(ii) to approve recommendations (c) and (d); and
(iii) to note the External Auditor's Report.

2024/25 BUDGET MATTERS

5. The Board had before it a report which provided an update on the Partnership's 2024/25 budget monitoring and forecast outturn position and which sought consideration of any budget or monitoring issues that may arise.

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The report recommended:-
that the Board –
(a) note the monitoring position and forecast presented in Appendix 1;
(b) note the monitoring position and forecast for the People and Place projects presented in Appendix 2;
(c) approve the allocation of STF monies set out in Appendix 3; and
(d) approve the virements set out in Appendix 4.

The Board heard from Jenny Anderson who provided an overview of the report and answered Members' questions.

The Board resolved:-
to approve the recommendations contained in the report.

FIVE-YEAR PLAN

6. The Board had before it a report which presented the proposed Five-Year Plan, indicating intentions and budget forecasts, providing a framework for future budgeting and implementation of Nestrans' Regional Transport Strategy.

The report recommended:-
that the Board –
(a) consider the contents of this report and Appendix;
(b) note the implications of the ongoing budget situation;
(c) instruct officers to bring back a more detailed Delivery Plan to a future meeting; and
(d) approve Appendix A as Nestrans' Five-Year Plan.

The Director provided a summary of the report and the content of the five-year plan and answered questions from Members.

The Board resolved:-
to approve the recommendations contained in the report.

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:-

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- Meeting and Visit by Transport Scotland Interim Chief Executive, Aberdeen on 15 August 2024; and
- RTP Chairs meeting at Balbirnie House, Markinch on 3/4 September 2024.

During the discussion, a request was made that consideration be given to Board Members going on site visits to see the projects that Nestrans were involved in.

The Board resolved:-
(i) to note the Director would consider the feasibility of site visits for members and report back to a future meeting; and
(ii) to otherwise approve the recommendation contained in the report.

PUBLIC SERVICES REFORM - INFORMATION PUBLICATION

8. The Board had before it a report which sought consideration of the information which was to be published for 2023/24 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 2023/24 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 contained in the report.

REGIONAL TRANSPORT NETWORK CLIMATE RESILIENCE AND ADAPTATION

9. The Board had before it a report which provided an update on national and local engagement that officers had undertaken on climate resilience and adaption in relation to the regional strategic transport network.

The report recommended:-
that the Board –
(a) note the content of the report;
(b) note recent engagement undertaken by Nestrans officers;
(c) support our ongoing work with local and national partners including Aberdeen Adapts, Climate Ready Aberdeenshire, and the national Climate Ready Infrastructure Forum; and
(d) Support opportunities to work jointly with other local, regional and national stakeholders to progress regional risk mapping, and adaptation plans, focussing on the strategic regional transport network.

Paul Finch provided a summary of the report.

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The Board resolved:-
to approve the recommendations contained in the report.

MONITORING REPORT DASHBOARD

10. The Board had before it a report presenting a proposed dashboard which summarised the indicators from Nestrans' Annual Monitoring Report and sought comment and opinion on the presentation.

The report recommended:-
that the Board –
(a) note the contents of the proposed dashboard at Appendix A;
(b) provide any feedback or suggestions on the presentation; and
(c) approve the dashboard for release through Nestrans' website and social media.

The Director provided a summary of the report making reference to the dashboard focussing on the 21 key indicators that supported the Nestrans Regional Transport Strategy.

The Board resolved:-
to approve the recommendations contained in the report.

ACTIVE TRAVEL ACTION PLAN UPDATE

11. The Board had before it a report which presented a draft regional Active Travel Action Plan (AcTrAP) for consideration and comment by the Nestrans Board. The input from the Board would be used to help finalise the drafting of the document prior to approval and publication.

The report advised that the AcTrAP provided prioritised actions to fulfil the active travel elements of the Regional Transport Strategy, responding to national and local policy agenda and local requirements.

The report recommended:-
that the Board –
(a) note the progression of the AcTrAP documentation as one part of the regional active travel development framework;
(b) provide comments and feedback on the AcTrAP summary documentation; and
(c) instruct the Director to present the finalised AcTrAP to a subsequent meeting of the Nestrans Board.

Paul Finch provided a summary of the report.

During the discussion, Members provided feedback on the content of the summary document.

The Board resolved:-
to approve the recommendations contained in the report.

REGIONAL ACTIVE TRAVEL NETWORK - OUTCOMES FROM THE CONSULTATION AND FINAL NETWORK

12. The Board had before it a report which presented the work completed to date on the development of a Regional Active Travel Network, for consideration and comment, with the input from the Board being used in the next stages of the progression and prioritisation of the network by the two local authority partners.

The report recommended:-
that the Board –
(a) note the progression of the Regional Active Travel Network and associated consultation;
(b) approve the technical documentation and network plan for publication on the Nestrans website;
(c) support the adoption of the plan for both partner Local Authorities, as part of their respective Local Transport Strategy and Active Travel Delivery planning, subject to further prioritisation and phasing considerations as appropriate; and
(d) support the maintenance of the plan as a 'live' document, such that it can be regularly reviewed and updated in the light of wider developments.

Paul Finch provided a summary of the report, in particular the Executive summary document at Appendix A.

During the discussion, members highlighted the following:
- the requirement for a simplified map to include the current routes to assist cyclists to plan journeys;
- routes to be made clearer with the current position or planned timescales for completion to be included; and
- further review of some of the information was required to ensure there is no inaccurate data.

The Board resolved:-
(i) to approve recommendations (a), (c) and (d); and
(ii) to approve recommendation (b) subject to review of the points discussed ahead of publication.

PEOPLE AND PLACE UPDATE

13. The Board had before it a report which presented the up-to-date position on the People and Place Programme.

The report recommended:-
that the Board -

(a) note the ongoing work that has taken place, and is still ongoing, around building the People and Place Programme 2024-25;
(b) note the intention to host a Nestrans People and Place Programme online event later this year with an in-person event to follow in March 2025; and
(c) note the supported Community Project Transition Fund projects.

The Board heard from Jon Barron, who outlined the key information from the report, making reference to the People and Place Programme 2024-25, Programme Development and the Community Projects Transition Fund.

The Board resolved:-
to approve the recommendations contained in the report.

RAIL ACTION PLAN UPDATE

14. 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 Laurencekirk Multi-Modal Corridor Study;
- Buchan Sustainable Transport Study;
- Scotrail InterCity High Speed Train Procurement;
- Aberdeen to Central Belt Enhancements Project;
- Aberdeen to Inverness; and
- Access for All Funding – Inverurie Station

The report recommended:-
that the Board –
(a) note progression of the appraisal of options for local rail stations (Cove and Newtonhill) as part of the Aberdeen-Laurencekirk corridor study;
(b) note that the Campaign for North East Rail have published the Executive Summary of their Just Transition Funded Buchan Sustainable Transport Study, which has identified three potential future rail alignments for future detailed appraisal;
(c) note that Transport Scotland have announced their intention to procure replacements for the existing fleet of InterCity High Speed Trains, which are due to be out of lease in 2030;
(d) note recent developments on the Aberdeen to Central Belt Enhancements study as noted in the report and from the verbal update to be provided at the meeting;
(e) support officers' work in jointly working with Hitrans regarding confirming the future ambition for the Aberdeen to Inverness route, to ensure that future strategic decisions on this route by Transport Scotland take account of this ambition; and
(f) note that Inverurie has been selected by Department for Transport to receive funding to support initial feasibility studies for Access for All improvements.

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

During the discussion it was noted that the Community Council Liaison Officer for Aberdeen City would work with Paul to progress engagement with Aberdeen City Community Councils.

The Board resolved:
(i) to note that a report in relation to the Insch Station Project would be submitted to Board members in due course; and
(ii) to otherwise approve the recommendations contained in the report.

NESTRANS GRANT SCHEMES REVIEW

15. The Board had before it a report which provided an update on the two Nestrans grant schemes, Sustainable Travel Grant and Community Sustainable Travel Grant and sought approval to relaunch the schemes.

The report recommended:-
that the Board –
(a) note the contents of this report; and
(b) approve the re-launch of both the Sustainable Travel Grant and Community Sustainable Travel Grant based on the proposed timeline.

Adam Kench provided a summary of the report.

The Board resolved:-
to approve the recommendations contained in the report.

ABERDEEN RAPID TRANSIT UPDATE

16. The Board had before it a report which sought approval to extend the current value of the Aberdeen Rapid Transit (ART) Strategic Business Case consultancy contract, which had been commissioned by Nestrans and was being fully funded through Aberdeen City Region Deal Strategic Transport Appraisal.

The report recommended:-
that the Board approve the extension to the value of the ART Strategic Business Case commission of £80,000 to allow additional work to be undertaken as part of the ART Business Case Development.

Kirsty Chalmers provided a summary of the key information from the report.

The Board resolved:-
to approve the recommendation contained in the report.

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At this point in the proceedings, Councillor Yuill advised that he had a connection in relation the following item of business by virtue of him being a member of Cycling Scotland and Cycling UK. He considered that the nature of his interest would not require him to leave the meeting prior to consideration of the item.

PROGRESS REPORT

17. 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.

PUBLICATIONS AND CONSULTATIONS

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

The report made reference to the following:-

- Aviation Statement and Key Priorities;
- Smart, Digital, Integrated Ticketing and Payments – Delivery Strategy 2024;
- Scotrail Peak Fares Removal Pilot – Final Evaluation Report; and
- In Reverse – A review of the Scottish Government's performance on its sustainable transport commitments

The report recommended:-
that the Board note the publication of the documents outlined in the report.

Adam Kench provided a summary of the report.

The Board resolved:-
to approve the recommendation contained in the report.

INFORMATION BULLETIN

19. 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 within the report:-

- Getabout; and

- National Monitoring Framework

The Board resolved:-
to approve the recommendation contained in the report.

CONFERENCES AND PRESENTATIONS

20. The Board had before it a list of recent and forthcoming conferences, training and presentations that may be of interest to Board Members.

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

The Board resolved:-
to approve the recommendation contained in the report.

PENDING BUSINESS AND REPORTS FOR FUTURE MEETINGS

21. The Board had before it a report which (1) provided information on the progress on pending business and major reports scheduled for forthcoming Board meetings; and (2) provided the opportunity for the Board 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 contained in the report.

DETERMINATION OF EXEMPT BUSINESS

22. The Chairperson proposed that the Board consider item 23 (Board Membership) with the press and public excluded from the meeting.

The Board resolved:-
in terms of Section 50A(4) of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973, to exclude the press and public from the meeting during consideration of the above item so as to avoid disclosure of information of the classes described in paragraph 1 of Schedule 7(A) to the Act.

In accordance with the decision taken at Article 22 of this minute, the following items were considered with the press and public excluded. Non-Council Board Members left the meeting before consideration of the next item of business.

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BOARD MEMBERSHIP

23. The Board had before it a report which presented the upcoming changes to the membership of the Board and provided the opportunity for members to discuss the options moving forward.

The report recommended:-
that the board consider the options outlined in the report in respect of appointment or re-appointment of its Non-Councillor Board Members.

Members discussed at length the various options available to them for the appointment of Non-Council Board Members.

The Board resolved:-
to re-appoint the current members for a further period of five years.

- **COUNCILLOR ALAN TURNER, Chairperson**