Minute of Meeting of the North East Scotland Transport Partnership Board

Aberdeen, Wednesday, 23 April 2025

Present: Councillor Michael Hutchison (Chairperson); Councillor Alan Turner and Dr Margaret Bochel (Vice Chairs); Councillor Dawn Black, Councillor John Cox, Councillor Isobel Davidson, Councillor Martin Greig (as substitute for Councillor Ian Yuill), Councillor Sandra Macdonald and Councillor Miranda Radley; and Colin Allanach, Gerry Donald and Ian Ross .

In Attendance: Paul Finch, Jenny Anderson, Jon Barron, Caroline Hood, Tricia Howden, Lucy Johnston, Adam Kench, and Claudia Stuerck (Nestrans); Ewan Wallace and Tina Wight (Aberdeenshire Council); David Dunne, Kirsty Chalmers, Lisa Christie and Mark Masson (Aberdeen City Council).

Apologies: Councillor Ian Yuill.

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 at this time.

MINUTE OF PREVIOUS BOARD MEETING OF 19 FEBRUARY 2025

2. The Board had before it the minute of its previous meeting of 19 February 2025, for approval.

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

2024/25 BUDGET MATTERS

3. The Board had before it a report which provided an update on the Partnership's 2024/25 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) note the monitoring position and forecast for the People & Place projects presented in Appendix 2;
(c) note the additional grant funding for the 2024/25 People & Place Programme; and
(d) approve the continuation of funding to next financial year to complete approved projects presented in Appendix 3.

The Board heard from Jenny Anderson who provided an overview of the report.

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

2025/26 BUDGET UPDATE

4. The Board had before it a report which provided details on the funding allocations to Nestrans for 2025/26 that had 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 2025/26;
(b) approve the proposed projects for use of the additional £572,000 allocated by Aberdeenshire Council;
(c) agree to proposals to profile usage of funds from the General Reserves over a period of 4-5 years and to the allocation of £200,000 in 2025/26 for the suggested projects; and
(d) note the grant funding amount that has been advised will be awarded in 2025/26 through the People & Place Programme and the proposals submitted for consideration as shown within Appendix A.

Jenny Anderson advised that at the time of writing, a formal offer of grant had still to be received, but it had been indicated that the total capital and revenue amounts allocated to Nestrans and used to develop the submitted proposals as shown in Appendix A had been agreed. She intimated that the grant offer letter had been received yesterday, although the resource allocation had been slightly reduced nationally. The reduction to Nestrans allocation was therefore £4,620 lower, which was less than a 1% reduction and not considered significant to review the proposed Programme as shown in Appendix A at this stage.

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

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DIRECTOR'S REPORT

5. 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 interim Director provided an update in relation to the People and Place Leadership Group meeting held on 22 April 2025.

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

TRANSPARENCY STATEMENT

During discussion of the following item, Councillor Radley advised that she had a connection by virtue of her being a Council appointed member of the Aberdeen City Region Deal Joint Committee. Having applied the objective test, she did not consider that she had an interest and would not be withdrawing from the meeting.

2025/26 BUSINESS PLAN

6. The Board had before it a report which presented a draft Business Plan for Nestrans for the forthcoming financial year 2025/26.

The report recommended:-
that the Board –
(a) approve the Business Plan for financial year 2025/26; and
(b) approve its publication on the Nestrans website.

The interim Director provided information relating to Insch Station and the Bus network in Aberdeenshire and also outlined five key priorities to progress.

The Board resolved:-
to approve the recommendations contained within the report, subject to the interim Director adding a separate document outlining the five key priorities to take forward.

RTS MONITORING REPORT

7. The Board had before it a report which presented the third Monitoring Report for the Regional Transport Strategy (RTS) – Nestrans 2040, with the fourth report produced as part of the agreed Monitoring Framework for the RTS.

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The report recommended:-
that the Board –
(a) note the content of this report;
(b) approve the RTS Monitoring Report attached as Appendix 1, and
(c) approve the publication of the Monitoring Report on the Nestrans website, and wider dissemination of the findings.

Caroline Hood provided a summary of the report.

The Board resolved:-
to approve the recommendations.

EQUALITIES DUTY OUTCOMES AND REPORTING

8. The Board had before it a report which (1) provided an update about the responsibilities being placed on Nestrans as a public body in respect of duties in relation to the Equality Act (Specific Duties)(Scotland) Regulations 2012; and (2) appended a draft Mainstreaming the Equalities Duty Report and Equalities Outcomes Report for approval and publication.

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 2024 indicated above; and
(c) approve the draft Mainstreaming the Equality Duty Report and Equalities Outcomes Report presented in Appendix A, and the subsequent publication of this Report on the Nestrans website.

The Board resolved:-
to approve the recommendations.

PEOPLE AND PLACE PROGRAMME UPDATE - 2024/25 QUARTER 4 REPORTING AND 2025/26 UPDATE

9. With reference to article 11 of the minute of the previous meeting of 19 February 2025, the Board had before it a report which presented the up-to-date position on both the 2024/25 and 2025/26 People and Place Programmes.

The report recommended:-
that the Board –
(a) note the ongoing quarterly reporting for the 2024/25 People and Place Programme to Transport Scotland, and the intention to provide, once the projects are completed, a thorough evaluation report;

(b) note the successful showcase event held in Huntly on 12th March 2025 to celebrate the programme and the hard work and efforts of Nestrans' partner organisations; and
(c) note that planning is well underway for the launch of the 2025/26 People and Place Programme, including a further public request for applications to the Community Project Fund.

Jon Barron summarised the report, making reference to quarterly reporting, the evaluation and showcase event held in Huntly on 12 March 2025 and the 2025/26 Programme.

The Board resolved:-
to approve the recommendations.

RAIL MATTERS UPDATE

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

The report recommended:-
that the Board –
(a) note updates related to the Aberdeen to Laurencekirk Multi-Modal Corridor Study and the next steps, including proposals for a Members' Briefing;
(b) note updates related to the Aberdeen to Central Belt Services Improvement Project;
(c) note the assistance given to Network Rail in progressing the Access for All project in Inverurie;
(d) note the engagement of officers with ScotRail in relation to a second ticket vending machine at Stonehaven Station; and
(e) note the information on ScotRail's wider economic impact across Scotland and in particular the economic impact across the North East of Scotland.

In response to questions from members, the interim Director advised that details relating to the development of local Rail Station opportunities at Cove and Newtonhill and timescales for other Rail Station improvements would be included within a future report to the Board.

The Board resolved:-
to approve the recommendations.

BUS ACTION PLAN

11. With reference to article 18 of the minute of the previous meeting of 19 February 2025, the Board had before it a report which provided details of the draft final version of the North East Bus Alliance Bus Action Plan.

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The report recommended:-
that the Board –
(a) note the updated draft summary Bus Action Plan, as provided in Appendix A, noting that the North East Bus Alliance will approve the publication of the full version to the Nestrans website at its meeting on 1st May 2025;
(b) note the next steps identified regarding the North East Bus Alliance entering into a Bus Services Improvement Partnership and the forthcoming plans for a refreshed Bus Action Plan;
(c) note the update provided on Aberdeen Rapid Transit, as provided in Appendix B;
(d) note the progress on the Bus Infrastructure Fund and the £2 Fare Cap Trial; and
(e) note the findings of the Your Bus Journey survey carried out by Transport Focus during 2024, as provided in Appendix C.

The Board heard from Adam Kench who provided a summary of the report.

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

PROGRESS REPORT

12. 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.

DRAFT JUST TRANSITION PLAN FOR TRANSPORT

13. The Board had before it a report which provided details of the publication of the Draft Just Transition Plan for Transport and included a draft consultation response for consideration at Appendix A.

The report recommended:-
that the Board approve for submission, the proposed consultation response on the Scottish Government's Just Transition Plan for Transport.

Claudia Stuerck highlighted the key information from the report.

The Board resolved:-
to approve the recommendation.

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PUBLICATIONS AND CONSULTATIONS

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

The report made reference to the following:-

- Climate Change Duties – Draft Statutory Guidance for Public Bodies: Consultation;
- Scottish Government's Consultation on Draft Rural Delivery Plan;
- Aberdeen City Council Consultation on "Your Place, Your Plans, Your Future";
- Transport Scotland, Guidance on Inclusive Design for Town Centres and Busy Streets;
- Transform Scotland, Life in the Bus Lane;
- Sustrans Children's Walking and Cycling Index 2024 – Scotland report;
- Active Travel Infrastructure Investment Report 2023-24; and
- Emergency Preparedness, Response, & Recovery – UK Roads Leadership Group.

The report recommended:-
that the Board –
(a) approve the draft response attached as Appendix A to the consultation on Climate Changes Duties – Draft Statutory Guidance for Public Bodies;
(b) note Nestrans' response attached as Appendix B to the Draft Rural Delivery Plan; and
(c) note the publication of the other documents outlined in this report.

The Board resolved:-
to approve the recommendations.

INFORMATION BULLETIN

15. The Board had before it a report which provided information and updates on a number of matters.

The report made reference to the following:-

- Getabout;
- Climate Ready Scotland – Infrastructure Forum;
- European Funded Hydrogen Projects; and
- Aberdeen University – MSc Student Support.

The report recommended:-
that the Board –
(a) note the recent press and communications activity related to Nestrans;
(b) note planned activities associated with Getabout partnership including the Cycling Festival at Seaton on 26 April;

(c) note the support for the Climate Ready Scotland Infrastructure Forum and their Memorandum of Understanding;
(d) note Nestrans' support for EU Small Hydrogen Valley projects that have been submitted in the region; and
(e) note ongoing support for Nestrans' support for Aberdeen University's MSc Sustainable Transitions course.

The Board resolved:-
to approve the recommendations.

CONFERENCES AND PRESENTATIONS

16. The Board had before it a report on recent and forthcoming conferences, training and presentations, which may be of interest and sought feedback on events which had been held, presented in an appendix.

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

The Board resolved:-
to approve the recommendation.

PENDING BUSINESS AND REPORTS FOR FUTURE MEETINGS

17. 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 –
(a) note the report on pending business; and
(b) note the intention to hold the next Board meeting at Formartine House, Ellon, supported with a short tour of sites of interest prior to the meeting.

The Board resolved:-
to approve the recommendations.

- COUNCILLOR MICHAEL HUTCHISON, Chairperson