Minute of Meeting of the North East Scotland Transport Partnership Board

Formartine House, Ellon, Wednesday, 25 June 2025

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

In Attendance: Paul Finch, Jon Barron, Caroline Hood, Claudia Stuerck, Adam Kench, Jenny Anderson, Lucy Johnston and Tricia Howden (Nestrans); Ewan Wallace, Martin Hall, Tina Wight, Joanna Stewart, Sally Weightman and Robert McGregor (Aberdeenshire Council); Kirsty Chalmers, Jane Obi, James Watt, Laura McGhee and Mark Masson (Aberdeen City Council).

Apologies: Councillor John Cox, Gerry Donald and Angela Pieri.

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. Members were requested to intimate any declarations of interest or transparency statements in respect of the items on today's agenda, thereafter the following was intimated:-

(1) Councillor Yuill advised that he had a connection in relation to item 4.4 (Health and Transport Action Plan Update) by virtue of him being a Council appointed NHS Grampian Board Member. He considered that the nature of his interest would not require him to leave the meeting prior to consideration of the item;

(2) Councillor Turner (Vice Chair) advised that he had a connection in relation to item 6.1 (Rail Matters Update) by virtue of him being a Ward member for the location where a Railway Station was referred to within the report. He considered that the nature of his interest would not require him to leave the meeting prior to consideration of the item; and

(3) Councillor Black advised that she had a connection in relation to item 6.1 (Rail Matters Update) by virtue of her being a Ward member for the location where the Railway Station was referred to within the report. She considered that the nature of her interest would not require her to leave the meeting prior to consideration of the item.

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MINUTE OF PREVIOUS BOARD MEETING OF 23 APRIL 2025

2. The Board had before it the minute of its previous meeting of 23 April 2025, for approval.

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

MINUTES OF MEETINGS OF NESTRANS APPOINTMENT COMMITTEE OF 13 AND 27 MAY 2025

3. The Board had before it the minutes of meetings of the Nestrans Appointment Committee of 13 and 27 May 2025, for approval.

The Board resolved:-
to approve the minutes.

PRESENTATION: ELLON AND AREA ACTIVE TRAVEL, ABERDEENSHIRE COUNCIL

4. The Board received a presentation from Joanna Stewart and Sally Weightman, Aberdeenshire Council in relation to Ellon and Area Active Travel.

Joanna Stewart provided background information regarding Ellon Integrated Travel Town; detailed the infrastructure and the five projects delivered to date; showed (before and after) photographs from some of the routes and outlined the schemes in development, including the Deer Park Link and MacDonald Park.

The Board heard from Sally Weightman on behavioural change which was underpinned with marketing including Aberdeenshire Bothy April to June 2025 statistics, maps and treasure trails since 2018, the Love to Ride cycle challenge website in partnership with Aberdeen City Council which commenced in April 2025, the e-bike hire scheme and monitoring activities including cycle counters and mobile Network data using GPS.

Joanna and Sally responded to questions from members regarding future maintenance and funding and data monitoring.

The Board resolved:-
(i) to thank Joanna Stewart and Sally Weightman for their informative presentation; and
(ii) to note that Martin Hall would circulate details to Councillor Davidson in relation to the pedestrian crossing on Craig Road, Ellon.

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UNAUDITED ANNUAL ACCOUNTS FOR 2024/25

5. The Board had before it a report which provided details in relation to the unaudited annual accounts for 2024/25 and sought approval of the final continuation of funding for 2024/25.

The report recommended:-
that the Board –
(a) consider the Unaudited Annual Accounts for 2024/25 and approve their issue to the external Auditor and the Controller of Audit as per Appendix 1;
(b) note the budget monitoring statement as per Appendix 2; and
(c) approve the final continuation of funding for 2024/25 as per Appendix 3.

The Board heard Tina Wight provide a summary of the report.

The Board resolved:-
to approve the recommendations.

2025/26 BUDGET MATTERS

6. The Board had before it a report which provided an update on the Partnership's 2025/26 budget monitoring to end May 2025 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 funding award to Nestrans from the Scottish Government that has been confirmed for 2025/26;
(b) note the monitoring position and forecast presented in Appendix 1;
(c) note the monitoring position and forecast for the 2025/26 People & Place projects presented in Appendix 2;
(d) note the final amount claimed against the 2024/25 People & Place grant; and
(e) note the grant funding contribution to the Ballater mobility hub project awarded by Cairngorms National Park Authority.

Jenny Anderson provided a summary of the report.

The Board resolved:-
to approve the recommendations.

PROCUREMENT - USE OF FRAMEWORKS

7. The Board had before it a report which sought approval to utilise alternative frameworks whilst the Scotland Excel Framework for the supply of Engineering and Technical Consultancy Services was undergoing a re-tendering exercise.

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The report recommended:-
that the Board –
(a) note the update on the Scotland Excel Framework for Engineering and Technical Consulting Services; and
(b) approve Nestrans making use of the SCAPE Scotland framework, provided that this expenditure is incurred and approved in accordance with the adopted Financial Regulations and in consultation with Commercial and Procurement Services.

The Board resolved:-
to approve the recommendations.

DIRECTOR'S REPORT

8. The Board had before it a report which provided an update on strategic issues not otherwise covered in the agenda, including liaison with other Regional Transport Partnerships (RTPs), with Transport Scotland and the Scottish Government.

The report recommended:-
that the Board –
(a) note progress on liaison arrangements with other RTPs, the Scottish Government and others;
(b) approve the proposed updates to the Nestrans 2025/26 Business Plan in terms of target outcomes;
(c) approve proposals for a Board Workshop to be held in August 2025 to consider short and medium term priorities, following the appointment of the new Partnership Director and new Chair; and
(d) note the current planned programme of conference attendance, and presentations by Nestrans officers.

In summarising the report, the Director made reference to the following:-

- Transport Scotland meeting attended by the Director called by the Minister for Agriculture and Connectivity on 12 June 2025 in Edinburgh;
- RTP Leads and Chairs Meeting held in Inverness on 4 June 2025 with representatives from Transport Scotland and SCOTS also participating;
- SCOTS AGM and Conference held at Pitlochry on 8/9 May 2025;
- Community Planning, Aberdeenshire - Partnership Board meeting on 4 June attended by officers, which considered updates on Place Planning, Reducing Poverty, revised Governance, and making Aberdeenshire a Living Wage Place;
- Community Planning, Aberdeen City - the Director attended the Community Planning Management Group meeting held on 21 May 2025;
- Bus Alliance Board meeting held on 1 May 2025; and
- Road Safety North East Scotland meeting held on 12 May 2025.

The Director also provided details in relation to the Nestrans Business Plan 2025/26 and also a proposal to hold a Board Workshop in August 2025.

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The Director indicated that he would consider a suggestion to invite Transport Scotland to the Workshop, however it was acknowledged that this may not be an appropriate forum.

The Board resolved:-
to approve the recommendations.

APPOINTMENT OF NON COUNCILLOR BOARD MEMBER

9. At the commencement of this item, the Chair advised that Dr Maggie Bochel would be stepping down as a Non Councillor Member and Vice Chair of the Nestrans Board following the meeting in September 2025. He acknowledged her work as Vice Chair in particular and her contribution as member over the past 19 years.

The Board had before it a report which notified members of the resignation of Dr Maggie Bochel and provided information on the process for the recruitment and appointment of a replacement Non Councillor Board Member.

The report recommended:-
that the Board –
(a) note the intention of Dr Maggie Bochel to resign from the Nestrans Board, following the September Board Meeting;
(b) agree to recruit a replacement for Dr Maggie Bochel;
(c) agree the proposals outlined for the recruitment of a new External Board Member;
(d) appoint a Councillor from each of Aberdeen City Council and Aberdeenshire Council to sit with the Chair and Vice Chair on the Appointments Committee, as well as a non-councillor Board Member; and
(e) seek nominations for the role of Non Councillor Vice Chair at the Board Meeting of 12 November 2025.

The Director summarised the report and provided details on the practical recruitment mechanisms for the replacement of a Non Councillor Board Member.

The Board resolved:-
(i) to note that Councillors Macdonald and Black had volunteered to sit on the Appointments Committee along with the Chair and Vice Chair;
(ii) to note that Colin Allanach had volunteered to sit on the Appointments Committee, however he would liaise with Gerry Donald and confirm this in due course; and
(iii) to agree that the advertisement for the post would be circulated to all Board Members.

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NESTRANS RISK REGISTER REVIEW

10. With reference to article 12 of the minute of meeting of 26 June 2024, the Board had before it a report which sought consideration of the recent review of the Nestrans' Risk Register to ensure significant risks were identified, evaluated and controlled.

The report advised that a number of the normal business risks had been largely mitigated as many of the services Nestrans needed to function, namely ICT, Finance, Legal and Personnel were provided by our two constituent Local Authorities. Each Authority had risk management systems in place and Nestrans' use of these systems fell into that consideration.

Appended to the report were the key to the scoring chart adopted within the risk register and the proposed revised risk register.

The report recommended:-
that the Board consider the risk register and approve its implementation.

The Committee resolved:-
to approve the recommendation.

HEALTH AND TRANSPORT ACTION PLAN UPDATE

11. The Board had before it a report which provided an update on the revised Terms of Reference and Governance Framework for the Heath and Transport Action Plan (HTAP), noting that The HTAP Steering Group had adopted this approach in principle on 28 May 2025.

The report advised (1) that the revised plan supported coordination between transport providers and health and social care services; and (2) that the updated document reflected the changing health and transport priorities following the COVID-19 pandemic and set out a five-year plan.

The report recommended:-
that the Board –
(a) note the contents of this report and the ongoing work of HTAP partners on the new HTAP; and
(b) support the delivery of actions agreed by the HTAP Steering Group.

The Board resolved:-
to approve the recommendations.

ABERDEEN RAPID TRANSIT - STRATEGIC BUSINESS CASE

12. The Board had before it a report which presented the Strategic Business Case for the Aberdeen Rapid Transit project and advised that this work commissioned by Nestrans

and managed by Aberdeen City Council was fully funded through the Aberdeen City Region Deal Strategic Transport Appraisal.

The report recommended:-
that the Board –
(a) note the progress of the Aberdeen Rapid Transit project;
(b) note the decisions of Aberdeen City Council's Net Zero, Environment and Transport Committee (section 2.3 of the report - item 11.1) and Aberdeenshire Council's Infrastructure Services Committee (section 2.3 of the report - item 14) in relation to their respective Aberdeen Rapid Transit reports;
(c) endorse the progression of options 5 and 5A to a programme level Outline Business Case phase, funded through the City Region Deal;
(d) note the current Nestrans management of the Strategic Business Case will conclude upon commencement of the Outline Business Case with Aberdeen City Council to assume responsibility to progress the commission; and
(e) officers will continue to support the future development of Aberdeen Rapid Transit project.

The Board heard from Kirsty Chalmers, Programme Manager - Bus Partnership Fund, Aberdeen City Council, who provided a summary of the report making reference to the range of options identified within the strategic business case, the cost implications, endorsement of the project from both Councils, communications and engagement, Partnership Strategy and the risks and uncertainties which had been identified.

During discussion, it was acknowledged that public engagement and awareness of the project was crucial and multi-year funding was required for substantial bus improvements.

The Board resolved:-
(i) to approve the recommendations; and
(ii) to instruct officers to submit regular reports to the Board on the progress of the project.

ABERDEEN TO LAURENCEKIRK MULTI-MODAL STUDY

13. With reference to article 8 of the minute of meeting of 14 February 2024, the Board had before it a report which provided an update on findings from the Detailed Options Appraisal of the Aberdeen to Laurencekirk multi-modal corridor study.

The report (1) advised that the study aimed to improve transport connectivity and accessibility along the corridor through a range of strategic multimodal interventions; (2) indicated that five option packages were assessed in detail, including proposals for active travel infrastructure, a mobility hub package, bus priority package and new rail stations at Newtonhill and Cove; and (3) explained that following a thorough appraisal process, including public and stakeholder engagement, the study recommended continued development of the key option packages.

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The report recommended:-
that the Board –
(a) note the outcomes Detailed Options Appraisal for the Aberdeen to Laurencekirk Multi-Modal Corridor Study;
(b) approve the publication of the Detailed Options Appraisal Report and Appendices on the Nestrans website;
(c) approve formal consultation with Aberdeen City Council and Aberdeenshire Council on the findings of the work through their relevant committees, with a further report to brought back to the Nestrans Board on the outcomes of this;
(d) approve continued development of the local rail station elements of the Detailed Appraisal Report to a Strategic Business Case in order to address comments made by Transport Scotland; and
(e) requests the Director, in conjunction with Aberdeenshire Council, to develop proposals for assessing options for local connectivity enhancements in the south of the corridor, inclusive of Stonehaven and Laurencekirk.

The Director highlighted the key information from the report and responded to questions from members in relation to A92 ongoing works and the costs for Kintore Station.

The Board resolved:-
to approve the recommendations.

PEOPLE & PLACE PROGRAMME UPDATE

14. The Board had before it a report which provided an 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 progress made during the 2024/25 People and Place Programme to Transport Scotland, and the intention to provide, once all the projects are completed, a thorough evaluation report;
(b) note the allocation of funding to 2025/26 Community Fund projects; and
(c) note the successful assessment and onboarding that has taken place in respect of the 2025/26 People and Place Programme.

Caroline Hood provided a summary of the report.

The Board resolved:-
to approve the recommendations.

RAIL MATTERS UPDATE

15. 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.

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The report recommended:-
that the Board –
(a) note the update of recent North East Rail stakeholder meeting held by the Aberdeen and Grampian Chamber of Commerce earlier this month; and
(b) authorise officers to enter into further conversations with ScotRail to determine the full scope and cost of installation of a second Ticket Vending Machine at Stonehaven Station, and to report back to the Board with options for next steps.

Claudia Stuerck provided a summary of the report.

It was acknowledged that due to the accessibility issues at Stonehaven Railway Station and given it was the second busiest station in the North East, it was imperative that a second ticket vending machine was installed.

The Board resolved:-
to approve the recommendations.

PROGRESS REPORT

16. 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 regarding the A92 Murcar North project, Kirsty Chalmers advised that the detailed design works would likely commence in August and could be completed by end of the financial year, with a forecast that that there may be an underspend of the budget allocated.

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

PUBLICATIONS AND CONSULTATIONS

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

The report made reference to the following:-
- Aberdeen City Council Consultation on “Your Place, Your Plans, Your Future”;
- Community Wealth Building Consultation;
- Programme for Government 2025/26 – Scottish Government;
- Scotland’s Carbon Budgets – Climate Change Committee;
- A Just Transition for Aberdeen and the North East;
- Development Planning Transport Appraisal Guidance;
- Key Reported Road Casualty Statistics 2024;
- Bus Open Data Consultation – Transport Scotland; and

- Achieving Car Use Reduction in Scotland.

The report recommended:-
that the Board –
(a) note the response and annex attached as Appendix A to the Aberdeen City Council Consultation on "Your Place, Your Plans, Your Future";
(b) note the response attached as Appendix B to the Community Wealth Building consultation;
(c) note the response attached as Appendix C to the Development Planning Transport Appraisal Guidance (DPTAG) consultation; and
(d) note the publication of the other documents outlined in this report.

The Board resolved:-
to approve the recommendations.

PRESS AND COMMUNICATIONS UPDATE

18. The Board had before it a report which provided information and updates for the Board on recent press and communications activities related to Nestrans.

The report recommended:-
that the Board –
(a) note the recent press and communications activity related to Nestrans; and
(b) note previous and planned activities associated with the Getabout partnership.

Councillor Radley referred to the press reports relating to the Den Burn Restoration project and advised that a report would be submitted to the meeting of Aberdeen City Council's Net Zero, Environment and Transport Committee in August 2025 and it was hopeful that funding could be found for the project.

The Board resolved:-
to approve the recommendations.
- **COUNCILLOR MICHAEL HUTCHISON, Chairperson**