REPORT TO INFRASTRUCTURE SERVICES COMMITTEE – 22 AUGUST 2013

STRATEGIC TRANSPORT UPDATE

1 Recommendations

The Committee is asked to:

1.1 Endorse the progress and developments taken through NESTRANS and acknowledge the activities and developments being taken forward by external agencies and stakeholders as outlined in the report;

1.2 Agree to publication of this and subsequent reports on to the Aberdeenshire Council website;

1.3 Agree to accept further updates on the progress of both the implementation and delivery of the Aberdeenshire Local Transport Strategy (LTS) as appropriate;

1.4 Approve member and officer attendance at the National Transport Awards Ceremony in London on 17 October 2013.

2 Discussion

2.1 Attached to this report as Appendix 1 is the Local Transport Strategy (LTS) Action update covering May to July 2013 and this shows progress made against the identified categories, i.e. Travel Less, Travel Actively etc. Supplementing documents to the update are attached as Appendices 2, 3 and 4.

2.2 It is intended to publish this document on the Aberdeenshire Council website at: [http://www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/transportation/lts/index.asp](http://www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/transportation/lts/index.asp) and to disseminate the updates to internal and external stakeholder contacts.

2.3 Since the last report to this Committee, the NESTRANS Board met on 12 June 2013. The approved minutes of the previous Board meeting of 17 April 2013 can be accessed at [http://www.nestrans.org.uk/db_docs/File/Board_Meeting_17_April_2013/170413__Nestrans_minute_-_Approved.pdf](http://www.nestrans.org.uk/db_docs/File/Board_Meeting_17_April_2013/170413__Nestrans_minute_-_Approved.pdf). The next meeting of the NESTRANS Board is scheduled for 28 August 2013.

2.4 At the 2013 Scottish Transport Awards, Aberdeenshire Council was awarded the Scottish **Achievements in Cycling** award for the Peterhead Cycle Demonstration Town project. The project has also been shortlisted in **Category 7 - Achievements in Cycling** of the 2013 National Transport Awards. The National Transport Awards Ceremony is to be held in London on Thursday 17 October 2013. It is proposed that the Chair of Infrastructure Services Committee (or his substitute) and one other Councillor attend along with up to two officers.
2.5 In October 2013, after a two-year consultation process, the European Commission published a new proposal for the development of the Trans-European Transport Network (TEN-T). The new policy assumes that the TEN-T network will consist of two intermodal layers: a core network (to be completed by 2030) and a comprehensive network (to be completed by 2050). In order to facilitate the implementation of the core network, a ‘corridor approach’ is being used and 10 multimodal corridors have been established.

2.6 With funding support from the European INTERREG IVB Programme, Aberdeenshire Council will be leading on one of the projects linked with the implementation of TEN-T. TEN-T and the North Sea Region (TEN-TaNS) will look at the implications for local authorities in the North Sea Region on a regional level and how they can efficiently support and coordinate corridor development plans. In one of the key working packages the focus under TEN-TaNS will be on freight transport.

2.7 Work is progressing on a proposal to develop mini-interchange hubs on the A947 corridor at Fyvie, Oldmeldrum and Newmachar. This project seeks to address the need for rural communities to have improved access to sustainable modes of transport, by providing convenient, high profile locations where customers can access and interchange onto mainline corridor bus services. Each mini-interchange hub will consist of a small car park, bus shelters, cycle storage facilities and conventional and electronic information displays. An application for funding for the project from the Scottish Government’s Bus Investment Fund has been successful at the first stage and a second stage application has been submitted.

2.8 The Head of Finance and Monitoring Officer within Corporate Services have been consulted and are in agreement with the contents of the report.

3 Equalities, Staffing and Financial Implications

3.1 An equality assessment is not required as there will be no differential impact, as a result of this report, on people with protected characteristics. All of the specific interventions, strategies, projects and policies referred to in the report will be separately assessed against the relevant legislation.

3.2 Costs of elected Member attendance at the National Transport Awards, of around £175 per delegate, plus travel and subsistence, will be met from the approved Revenue Budget provision for Members’ Expenses (page 126, lines 6 and 11 refer).
The National Planning Framework (NPF3) sets the context for development planning in Scotland and provides a framework for the spatial development of Scotland as a whole. Included in the Scottish Government’s National Planning Framework consultation, Aberdeenshire Council has submitted a consultation response on a proposed “national walking and cycling network”.

NESTRANS consultation response is attached as Appendix 2.

Working in partnership with officers from across the Council, the preparation of a Travel Plan for the new council offices in Peterhead is being progressed by the Transport Strategy Team with consideration being given to the new Liftshare ‘MyPTP’ resource, an innovative web-based tool, designed to provide personalised travel plans to individuals.

This tool is currently being tested by our GetAbout partners at Aberdeen University and Robert Gordon University.

Users will input individual’s journey information and in return will receive clear information on all transport options available to them, including maps, local provision options such as community transport, and any incentives the organisation has put in place to change their travel behaviour e.g. a week’s free bus pass.

A survey which will inform the further development of the plan will be launched shortly. Further information will be available on Arcadia.

The annual Staff Travel Survey to inform the implementation and further development of the Council’s Travel Plan closed 17 May 2013 with 927 responses. Some of the main findings from the 2013 survey have included:

- The main reason for staff driving to work is that their car is required to perform their job.
- The majority of respondents driving to their main work place live within a 2 mile radius.
- 44% of staff spend all days of their working week at their main workplace but 38% work from home one day a week.
• Staff who work from multiple locations reported that there would be no other option if their normal mode of transport was not available.

Every year, during a week in September, children across Scotland are asked how they travel to school, as part of Sustrans' annual Hands Up Scotland Survey. The survey is the largest and most comprehensive survey of travel-to-school behaviour.

The information gathered from the survey is invaluable in ensuring that Sustrans and Aberdeenshire’s School Travel Plan Coordinator can continue to effectively tackle the school run by supporting young people to walk and cycle to school.

The Hands Up Scotland 2013 Survey will take place in the week commencing 9 September 2013. Results from 2012 showed that:

Walking - The number of children who are walking to school has increased from 41.4% in 2006 to 43% in 2012.

Cycling - The number of children who cycle/ scoot to school has increased from 2.3% in 2006 to 5% in 2012.

Park and Stride - The number of pupils who ‘Park and stride’ (where you are driven some of the way and walk the rest of the journey) has increased from 3.1% to 6%.

Driven - Driving rates have fallen from 24.2% in 2006 to 21% in 2012.

Bus/ Taxi - The total number of pupils who arrive to school by bus or taxi has decreased from 28% in 2006 to 25% in 2012.
## Travel Actively

### Walking

In partnership with NHS Public Health Coordinators, Aberdeenshire Council launched the **Fraserburgh Health Walk map ‘Positive Steps’** on 31 May 2013. The map shows a range of short walking routes around the town. A web page is currently being developed by Officers for the Positive Steps series of maps with the intention that all maps will be available for download. The Fraserburgh map will be going on line within next couple of weeks.

The development of Health Walk Maps for both Kintore and Banchory has been progressing with walking routes being assessed and reviewed for inclusion. It is anticipated that the Banchory Health Walk map will be launched in late summer 2013.

Adding to the Health Walk Map, the Banchory District Initiative is currently looking to develop a map aimed at tourists of the area. The map will be showing leisure walks for tourists and the same map template will be used.

### Cycling

The Scottish Government launched the **refreshed Cycling Action Plan for Scotland (CAPS) 2013** on 19 June 2013. CAPS 2013 downgrades the target that 10% of all journeys to be made by bike by 2020 in Scotland to a shared vision and encourages all stakeholders to play their part in promoting cycling and active travel.

Members will recall Aberdeenshire Council’s written response to the consultation from February 2013, stressing the need for strong political leadership from Scottish Government and the provision of consistent and substantial funding for active travel and, indeed, cycling. Unfortunately, the refreshed CAPS does not offer either but places the main responsibilities for delivery with the local authorities.

According to CAPS 2013, Transport Scotland will invest £27M in cycling infrastructure improvements during this spending review (2012–2015). This will be mostly allocated through grant-funding to Sustrans for partnership work with local authorities. In addition, £20M will be allocated through the Cycling, Walking and Safer Streets grants made to local authorities. These, however, are funds already allocated; the only new awards appear to be £34k for Cycling Scotland to set up the first Pedal for Scotland Aberdeen Bike Ride, which will take place in the autumn 2013.

While Aberdeenshire Council recognises that any sustained improvements will require local authorities working in partnership with Scottish Government and others, Aberdeenshire Council strongly believes that there is more to leadership than setting an ambitious national target for cycling.
Following the launched CAPS 2013 Aberdeenshire Council Officers have started to develop a draft Cycling Strategy to provide a clear long term vision for cycling in Aberdeenshire. The document will be brought to a future ISC for discussion.

Cycling Scotland launched the **Give Me Cycle Space** campaign in Fraserburgh on 22 April 2013. Anecdotal evidence suggests that the campaign has been well received with post project research from Cycling Scotland expected in due course.

As part of the **Peterhead Cycle Demonstration Town (CDT)** project, Phase 1 of the **Meathill Road scheme** is now complete.

A £45K funding bid to Sustrans’ Community Links Fund has been successful, ensuring that the Peterhead CDT **A90 Missing Link scheme** will be implemented and completed by March 2014.

The postponed **Aden Bike Challenge** took place on 2 June 2013 along the Formartine and Buchan Way. Some 250 participants attended the event with 55% of participants coming from the AB42 postcode Peterhead area.

The event was widely advertised and received considerable coverage in the local press, such as the Buchan Observer as well as other papers. The feedback received was genuinely positive and all involved, participants and partners alike, agreed that it has been a great opportunity to raise the profile of cycling.

Funds raised for Chest Heart Stroke Scotland came to £2258.

The **Aberdeenshire Cycle Challenge** was launched at the beginning of June. Four weeks into the challenge, employees from the seven organisations, including Aberdeenshire Council, taking part had cycled just under 4,500 miles and saved 2,155 kg of CO$_2$.

The challenge was extended and runs until the 31 July 2013.

**Bikes on Buses** was launched in Aberdeenshire in 2010. Initially introduced on vehicles along Royal Deeside between Aberdeen and Braemer, Aberdeenshire Council has continued to work in partnership with Stagecoach Bluebird to extend the service over the past years. Stagecoach Bluebird now also provides free carriage of bikes on the X7 Coastrider service which travels between Aberdeen and Dundee, Buchan Link services from Aberdeen to Peterhead and Fraserburgh and on services from Aberdeen to Inverness.
In May 2013 Cycling Scotland undertook a **National Assessment of local authority cycling policy**. Aberdeenshire Council has significantly improved since the 2008 National Assessment. There have been positive developments across all elements of cycle policy planning, action and monitoring. Of particular note since 2008 is the development of the Aberdeenshire Walking and Cycling Action Plan as well as the designation of Peterhead as Aberdeenshire’s Cycle Demonstration Town (CDT).

A report will be published by Cycling Scotland later this year. Until then, it is not possible to compare Aberdeenshire Council with other local authorities.

Officers have started to develop a draft Cycling Strategy to provide a clear long term vision for cycling in Aberdeenshire. The document will be brought to a future ISC for discussion.

### Active Lifestyles

Officers are continuing to liaise with Aberdeen City Council on **mitigating impacts** on access by means of active travel caused by the Aberdeen Western Peripheral Route (AWPR).

### Travel Effectively

**Passenger Transport**

In May 2013, initial discussions about the potential for advancing a private members **Bill to strengthen regulation in the Scottish bus industry** in response to the ongoing trend of declining passenger numbers and, indeed, bus miles across Scotland took place. The initial outline proposal for those discussions sets out aims to re-regulate local bus services and to give local authorities the basis to protect and specify local services by bundling profitable and non-profitable routes together for tendering. It also seeks to gather views on how legislation could encourage greater consideration of service modernisation, such as available free wifi, real-time electronic timetables, integrated ticketing etc.

The consultation is being launched in connection with the draft proposal which has been lodged as the first stage in the process of producing a Member’s Bill in the Scottish Parliament. NESTRANS has advised that they intend to initiate meetings with the Public Transport Units of both Aberdeenshire and Aberdeen City Council, aiming to ensure a consistent view from authorities in the north east. With the formal consultation period ending on 30 August 2013, a full report will be available for the next meeting of the NESTRANS Board in August 2013 for final consideration.
Effective Car Use

The Plugged in Places scheme has been running since 2009 across Scotland. With grant funding being awarded to the Aberdeenshire community Planning Partnership, Aberdeenshire has procured a Rapid Electric Vehicle Charger to be located at Laurencekirk and was commissioned in July 2013.

A set of questions is being developed for a future Citizens Panel survey, looking to seek views on both electric and hybrid electric vehicles.

With the Pay and Display machine replacement programme underway and all of the nineteen new solar powered machines now installed, Aberdeenshire Council will procure nine electric vehicle charging posts which will make use of the redundant power source available. The charging points will be operational by the end of this calendar year.

Motorcycles

To continue to support Operation Zenith, the Aberdeenshire Council 2013 STV campaign focussing on road safety of motorcyclists is running from April to September 2013. Once the campaign has come to an end, a review to determine coverage and monitor impacts will take place.

Towns

Following on from a hearing in March 2013 where Chief Officers from Aberdeenshire Council and NESTRANS presented the case for a grade separated junction at Laurencekirk (A937 and A90), a further meeting took place in April 2013 to further discuss the issues and raised during the evidence hearing and explore options to address them.

It was agreed that NESTRANS, on behalf of all the authorities, will employ a consultant to carry out the design and assessment works necessary to determine a preferred option for accessing Laurencekirk. This will take into account the current conditions, development aspirations for the A90 corridor and their impacts on the village itself. This work will be taken forward using the Scottish Transport Appraisal Guidance to create a robust case for the preferred option. It is expected that the work will be underway by the autumn of 2013.

Rail

At the NESTRANS Board meeting in June, members were provided with an update on the consultation process on the refresh of the Regional Transport Strategy (RTS) and a summary of the responses received. It was noted that the issue of a feasibility study into re-opening the rail link from Aberdeen to Fraserburgh was discussed at the last ISC as well as the Formartine Area Committee and that Aberdeenshire Council had formally requested that the refreshed RTS includes a specific commitment to a full...
investigation into the long term benefits of the provision of a rail line to Ellon, Peterhead and Fraserburgh, including a cost analysis.

NESTRANS have confirmed that they will be clarifying the commitment to a study on the railway options by adding a few words to satisfy the committee’s desire in the final RTS document. NESTRANS is looking to add the words underlined to read “NESTRANS will consider in the short-term the feasibility, costs and benefits of new railway lines to expand rail provision in the north east for longer-term implementation.”

The letter from NESTRANS is attached in Appendix 3.

The final refreshed RTS document will be available for the next meeting of the NESTRANS Board in August 2013 for final consideration.

Officers from NESTRANS, Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire Council attended a meeting with Transport Scotland on 13 May 2013, discussing current rail projects and future aspirations. Discussions included the rail links from Aberdeen to Inverness and the Central Belt as well as timetabling difficulties for travel between stations south of Aberdeen.

At the last Board meeting in June it was agreed that NESTRANS should write to the Minister for Transport setting out the Boards thoughts on the priority that could/ should be given to a new high speed rail link between Edinburgh and Glasgow.

A copy of the letter is attached as Appendix 4.

External Links

Cruise Gateway is an EU INTERREG IVB North Sea Region project set up to consider ways of encouraging and promoting sustainable cruise activities in the North Sea Region to find ways to develop the North Sea Region as cruise destination in its own right. In a programme of research, workshops and best practice visits, the project partners are considering a broad range of topics, including the creation of a regional maritime identity and innovative ideas for passenger excursions.

A best practice visit took place in Aberdeenshire on 27 and 28 May 2013 where the project partners sought more detail to build on their perception of this area as a best practice in the certification of the environmental sustainability of hinterland destinations amongst other things. Feedback received from delegates on the day was very positive.

In October 2013, after a two-year consultation process, the European Commission published a new proposal for the development of the Trans-European Transport Network (TEN-T). The new policy assumes that the TEN-T network will consist of two intermodal layers: a core network (to be
completed by 2030) and a comprehensive network (to be completed by 2050). In order to facilitate the implementation of the core network, a ‘corridor approach’ is being used and 10 multimodal corridors have been established.

With funding support from the European INTERREG IVB Programme, Aberdeenshire Council will be leading on one of the projects linked with the implementation of TEN-T. **TEN-T and the North Sea Region (TEN-TaNS)** will look at the implications for local authorities in the North Sea Region on a regional level and how they can efficiently support and coordinate corridor development plans. In one of the key working packages the focus under TEN-TaNS will be on freight transport.

A delegation from Aberdeenshire Council attended the **Joint North Sea Conference** in Halmstad (Sweden) from 11 to 13 June 2013. The conference featured interactive workshop sessions and plenary sessions with a strong focus on discussion and debate, enabling participants to share their experiences in view of the further development of the programme, as well as a series of themed study tours, including one focusing on improving connectivity based on public transport provision.

The conference is an annual event which brings together the INTERREG North Sea Region Programme and North Sea Commission (NSC) General Assembly. Aberdeenshire Council will be hosting the Joint Conference in June 2014.

The NSC Transport Group met parallel to the Joint Conference. Discussions focussed on the development of the **Trans-European Transport Network (TEN-T)** and ensuring peripheral maritime regions are well connected and have good access to both the core and comprehensive network, highlighting the need to include transport as a separate thematic objective in the next North Sea Region INTERREG programme as it the issue is not adequately addressed by the other thematic objectives.

Being a lead partner of one of the actions of the **North Sea Region Strategic Document 2020 (NSR 2020)** the group will focus on in the next two years, Aberdeenshire Council together with partners from Örebro region in Sweden are to progress their work on the development of supporting measures and incentives to promote clean transport. Work will draw on good practice examples from Europe.

London Heathrow Airport is operating to full capacity. Only maintaining quality access to Heathrow, however, offers the frequency and global connectivity that Aberdeen and the North East of Scotland needs to sustain its economic potential on a regional and, indeed, national level. NESTRANS will, therefore, continue to lobby for recognition of the difference between access to London (incl. London Gatwick, London Stansted and London City Airports) and London Heathrow as the UK’s only hub airport and the importance of the Heathrow link, all the more as Aberdeen Airport generates
a very high level of business travellers connecting to international long haul flights.

Following on from discussions in Brussels, the Head of Cabinet of Vice-President and Commissioner for Transport of the European Commission, Henrik Hololei, will be visiting the North East of Scotland. The visit will take place after the 2013 summer recess and there will be an opportunity for elected members to meet Mr. Hololei and discuss the access issues around London Heathrow for the north and north east of Scotland with him directly.

NESTRANS has also approached Simon Burns MP, Minister of State for Transport, with the aim to arrange a meeting with MPs from the north east of Scotland to take the discussions forward. It is anticipated that Michael Moore MP, Secretary of State for Scotland and the Chief Secretary to the Treasury will also be in attendance.

NESTRANS will be discussing the access to London and London Heathrow with the Department for Transport this summer. Among other points, NESTRANS will seek to highlight that improvements to (high speed) rail connections, while welcomed, are not suitable for business travellers due to the journey times involved.

**Monitoring, Reporting, Promoting**

The Aberdeenshire wide ‘Summer of Cycling’ campaign has been launched in Peterhead on 2 June 2013 and runs throughout the summer. As part of the campaign, people in Aberdeen are being urged to join the Aberdeenshire Cycle Challenge to get out on their bikes and enjoy more cycling. The campaign focuses on outdoor media in Peterhead (advertising at bus stops and bus backs) and will be supported with flyers and posters across the area.

As part of the seasonal advertising, the Be Seen Cycling campaign is currently being developed, highlighting the importance of being visible, especially when cycling in the winter months. The campaign is schedule to be launched in October and will focus on outdoor media. Advertising sites in Inverurie, Peterhead, Portlethen and Westhill are currently being secured.

Aberdeenshire Council have been working in partnership with Huntly Development Trust to support the 2nd Huntly Bike Week. Feedback received was positive.

At the 2013 Scottish Transport Awards. Aberdeenshire Council was awarded the Scottish Achievements in Cycling award for the Peterhead Cycle Demonstration Town project. Aberdeen City Council won the Award for the Scottish Transport Local Authority of the Year. Aberdeenshire Council would like to extend their Congratulations to our colleagues at Aberdeen City Council.
“Peterhead Cycle Demonstration Town” has also been shortlisted in Category 7 - Achievements in Cycling of the 2013 National Transport Awards.

Following on from success in previous years, including winning the Scottish Local Transport Authority of the Year title in 2008, 2009 and 2012, this represents another excellent achievement by the teams delivering the services.

The National Transport Awards Ceremony is to be held in London on Thursday 17 October 2013. It is proposed that the Chair of Infrastructure Services Committee and one other Councillor attend along with up to two officers.
8 July 2013

Our Ref

Your Ref

Caroline Fyfe
Policy & Advice Officer – Recreation and Access
Scottish Natural Heritage
Great Glen House
Leachkin Road
Inverness
IV3 8NW

Dear Ms Fyfe

Draft NPF3 Long Distance Routes project proposal

I have been passed a copy of your email regarding proposals for a network of long distance routes as a possible national development for inclusion within National Planning Framework 3 and would offer the following comments on your draft document.

Nestrans would be supportive of a network of long-distance routes covering Scotland, but would caution that this should not be to the detriment of other walking and cycling priorities. Long distance routes will primarily serve recreational and tourism demands, whereas the priority for expenditure on active travel should be on local trips – commuters, schools, workplaces and provision of facilities to make walking and cycling safer and more attractive for every day trips are crucial if we are to achieve mode shift and maximise the benefits of such development. It may be more apt to define the project as “Comprehensive Active Travel Network” rather than Long Distance Routes, to avoid confusion with other long distance routes such as rail and to increase emphasis on local opportunities.

The stated vision contained in section 3 could be improved by deleting the words “long distance” such that it reads “A world class, coherent and linked network of routes covering all of Scotland…..”

In section 4 the objective to deliver “even longer routes” should be deleted and replaced with a phrase such as “a more comprehensive network...”. It should not be the length of routes that is the key outcome but the effectiveness of connections and therefore a network of routes can be taken to prioritise investment where it would be most effective and can have the greatest impact on influencing travel choice.

The Network benefits section should include transport benefits such as improving mode choice, enhancing safety of the transport network and increasing accessibility – this would lead to a network of routes which included improving cycling opportunities such as adjacent to trunk roads, which could help to reduce the number of cyclists on unsuitable roads by offering alternative routes.
In the section on assumptions, it is stated that there should be "a balance of projects to deliver both recreation and active travel and to provide a geographic spread of benefits". It is our opinion that this has not been achieved – the proposals are unduly weighted towards long-distance recreational and tourist routes with insufficient focus on local high-demand opportunities which could offer significant benefits in terms of day-to-day cycling and walking. In terms of geographic spread, just one existing route includes the north east (NCN1 Newcastle to Shetland via Edinburgh), one Great Trail (Formartine & Buchan Way) and three other long distance routes (Aberdeenshire Coastal Path, Deeside Way and Gordon Way).

Collectively, these five routes form the basis of a north east strategic route network, but a number of gaps require investment to maximise their potential. In particular, there is no identified minimum standard for National Routes, so that although some routes exist in theory they may not be fit for purpose. NCN Route 1 for example varies from off-road routes to on-road sometimes with significant detours. Routes to fill gaps in the Aberdeen City and Shire area should include priority links between Stonehaven-Aberdeen and Aberdeen-Inverurie-Gordon Way. Strategic improvements within Aberdeen and the larger towns in Aberdeenshire as well as identifying gaps and substandard sections of existing routes should be prioritised ahead of developing new routes.

Annex 3 includes a proposal for Union Street in Aberdeen, which is incongruous (as are Leith Walk in Edinburgh and Great Western Road in Glasgow) and should be deleted.

I hope these comments are helpful and that you are able to take the points on board in your contribution to the National Planning Framework 3.

If you require any further information or wish to discuss any of the above, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely

Rab Dickson
Transport Strategy Manager
8 May 2013

Councillor Alan Buchan
Vice-Chair of Infrastructure Services Committee
Aberdeen City Council
Woodhill House
Westburn Road
Aberdeen
AB16 5GB

Dear Councillor Buchan

Feasibility of Reopening railway link from Aberdeen to Fraserburgh

Thank you for your letter dated 22 April addressed to the Chair of Nestrans, regarding discussion at the January meeting of ISC on the possibility of reopening the railway line to Peterhead and Fraserburgh.

Councillor Argyle has asked me to respond to the issues raised and ensure that the Regional Transport Strategy reflects your Committee’s aspirations.

The recently refreshed Regional Transport Strategy, which is currently the subject of formal consultation, refers to undertaking an assessment into reopening the line in the section Internal Connections 1 Rail: “Nestrans will consider the feasibility, costs and benefits of new railway lines to expand rail provision in the north east in the longer term. In relation to the Fraserburgh/Peterhead corridor, this would be done in the context of an all-modes study in line with the objectives of the Energetica project.”

I hope you will agree that this commitment fully satisfies the Committee’s request. I look forward to working with your staff in the assessment process.

Yours sincerely

Derick Murray
Director
Dear Minister,

**Edinburgh to Glasgow High Speed Rail**

As you will be aware Nestrans has supported the extension of High Speed Rail northwards from Manchester/Leeds to Edinburgh and Glasgow. We have participated in and continue to be a represented on the Scottish Partnership Group for High Speed Rail.

This proposal has the possibility of increasing the relative peripherality of the north of Scotland from markets in England and in particular London. However the Board has been of the view that these proposals will provide better access to trade opportunities between communities in both central Scotland and major conurbations in England, benefiting these regions. There will also be the additional possibility of benefits in reducing the number of flights between central Scotland and London, particularly Heathrow. We are hoping that this will help to reduce pressure on scarce landing slots at Heathrow therefore easing pressure on landing slots for necessary business flights between Aberdeen and the UK’s national hub airport.

The Board believe that, with support from central Scotland for maintaining the level and frequency of Aberdeen/Heathrow flights, the relative peripherality of our region may not be undermined to the extent it might otherwise have been and that this, alongside the benefits for central Scotland of High Speed Rail, mean that this is a project that can be supported.

The Board considered a report at their meeting in June which discussed the latest meeting of the Scottish Partnership Group. The Board were concerned with the extent to which the emphasis appears to have moved from High Speed Rail from London to Edinburgh/Glasgow to High Speed Rail between Edinburgh and Glasgow.

Whilst the Board would not object to preliminary assessment works on a project thought to have the possibility of delivering benefits, they do however have some concerns regarding how this project is being taken forward. There is an air of how, in some way, the Edinburgh to Glasgow scheme is being described as preliminary works required in any case for the bigger scheme for access to the south.
This “air” comes from a number of different areas including:

- The received wisdom that building Edinburgh to Glasgow High Speed Rail is somehow a precursor to the construction of Edinburgh to London
  - This is clearly not the case as:
    - Decisions have yet to be made on the routing of the Manchester/Leeds – Edinburgh/Glasgow sections
    - Whilst it would appear that large sections of the entry to either Edinburgh or Glasgow could be common to both proposals, should the west coast route be chosen for the London section a catenary section of new track would be required of around 3 - 14 km including appropriate signalling. This is not a section or a cost that is part of the Edinburgh/Glasgow – London section
    - The cost of the trains and the cost of operating the trains is also not part of the Edinburgh/Glasgow – London section
    - The cost of an Edinburgh to Glasgow section is therefore unknown at this time
  
- There is also a received wisdom that there will be substantial benefits to the conventional railway in the central belt and that this will lead to benefits for train travel from the central belt northwards.
  - This cannot be said at this time as:
    - Despite a number of discussions on this issue there has been no indication of what these perceived benefits may actually be
      - However the project is being described as a “quick win”
    - It is our understanding that the majority of passengers on the existing Edinburgh to Glasgow route (Queen St – Waverley) are not travelling the full route – rather they are passengers boarding the train at intermediate stations
      - To us this implies that the majority of trains on the existing network are likely to be retained for these passengers
    - There has been no indication of what level of journey reduction time may be achievable using a High Speed Rail route that travels a considerable distance to the south
    - We understand that there may be a desire to see a new station on the route to serve Winchburgh (c3000 new homes) and that this may only be achievable if pressure on keeping the journey time down between the termini is reduced
      - This is no different to say Newtonhill which could serve Chapelton of Elsick (c4,500 new homes)

This air of expectation is enhanced by the Main Issues Report for National Planning Framework 3 showing High Speed Rail between Edinburgh and Glasgow as a national priority even although the costs and benefits are not known.
The Nestrans Board are concerned that there is currently a major project underway to improve rail journeys between Edinburgh and Glasgow at a cost of c£650m. This will, we understand, provide an electrified route with a journey time of 39 minutes and a frequency of 15 minutes with adequate capacity.

The Board are therefore keen to ensure that should the study identify an affordable cost, an adequate return on investment (bearing in mind a loss of customers on the current £650m project) and benefits to the conventional railway then this should be considered alongside other projects already in the national plan including:

- Aberdeen to central belt journey time reduction
- Aberdeen to central belt electrification
- Highland Main Line upgrades

Priority for proven projects can then be set depending on perceived needs and benefits for the whole country rather than the current perception of introducing a new project, as yet undefined with undefined cost or benefits to the disbenefit in time for delivery of already proven priority projects.

Thank you for your consideration. The Board looks forward to your reply.

Yours