

REPORT TO INFRASTRUCTURE SERVICES COMMITTEE – 12 MARCH 2020

PUBLICATION OF NATIONAL TRANSPORT STRATEGY AND UPDATE ON REGIONAL AND LOCAL TRANSPORT STRATEGIES

1 Reason for Report/Summary

- 1.1 This report confirms the publication of a new National Transport Strategy, providing a summary of its key implications for Aberdeenshire Council, and also updating the Committee on progression of Regional and Local Transport Strategies.

2 Recommendations

The Committee is recommended to:

- 2.1 Note the publication of the finalised National Transport Strategy by Transport Scotland on 5 February 2020;**
- 2.2 Note the progression of Nestrans' Regional Transport Strategy, which is being supported by the City Region Deal funded Strategic Transport Appraisal; and**
- 2.3 Confirm ongoing support for the key principles embedded into Aberdeenshire's Local Transport Strategy.**

3 Purpose and Decision Making Route

- 3.1 Infrastructure Services Committee has a remit to consider policy relating to Transportation matters. The new National Transport Strategy establishes a revised national policy context, affecting the policy approach at a regional and local level.
- 3.2 A report on the consultative draft National Transport Strategy, and Aberdeenshire Council's proposed consultation response, was considered at its meeting on 3 October 2019 (Item 11). A final consultation response was subsequently sent to Transport Scotland on 18 October 2019 incorporating the comments from the Committee.
- 3.3 The new National Transport Strategy will be a material consideration in guiding the Strategic Transport Projects Review and will significantly influence decisions and the policy approach relating to regional and local transport provision, including the interface with land use planning, economic development, and social inclusion.

4 Discussion

Overview of Document

- 4.1 The link below provides access to the finalised National Transport Strategy, supporting documents, and impact assessments:

<https://www.transport.gov.scot/our-approach/national-transport-strategy/>

- 4.2 The Strategy is presented as a twenty year Strategy, which is intended to signal the future direction of transport and provide the context within which decisions, in Government and beyond, will need to be made. The National Transport Strategy is now a statutory document, by virtue of Part 1 of the Transport Scotland Act (2019) and was presented before the Scottish Parliament by Cabinet Secretary Michael Matheson on 5 February 2020.

- 4.3 A vision is established that “We will have sustainable, inclusive, safe and accessible transport system, helping deliver a healthier, fairer and more prosperous Scotland for communities, businesses and visitors”. The vision is supported by four priorities, and associated outcomes, presented below. In each instance, evidence is presented highlighting the extent of the current challenge for delivery of transport for each priority.

- a. Reduces inequalities
 - i. Will provide fair access to services we need;
 - ii. Will be easy to use for all; and
 - iii. Will be affordable for all.
- b. Tackles climate action
 - i. Will help deliver our net-zero target;
 - ii. Will adapt to the effects of climate change; and
 - iii. Will promote greener, cleaner choices.
- c. Helps deliver inclusive economic growth
 - i. Will get people and goods where they need to get to;
 - ii. Will be reliable, efficient and high quality; and
 - iii. Will use beneficial innovation.
- d. Improves health and wellbeing
 - i. Will be safe and secure for all;
 - ii. Will enable us to make healthy travel choices; and
 - iii. Will help make our communities great places to live.

- 4.4 The Strategy is relatively non-specific on policies, actions and identification of subsequent priorities, albeit there is a commitment to develop a Delivery Plan (to be updated annually), setting out how the Strategy will be delivered. The Strategy does reinforce the existing approach regarding the sustainable transport hierarchy (priority for walking, cycling, bus and lastly car). It also introduces a sustainable investment hierarchy that has been established to guide future funding decisions, with an emphasis on looking at maintenance of

the asset, and alternative approaches to make best use of existing capacity, prior to investment in new infrastructure. An ambition to phase out the need for new petrol/diesel cars and vans in Scotland by 2032 is also stated and that is now supported by a proposed ban by the UK Government by 2035.

- 4.5 The sections below explore some of the key themes and challenges that arise in the Strategy. Proposed responses to these challenges are also outlined below.

Key Theme 1 – Tackling Climate Change

- 4.6 The National Transport Strategy is clear in respect to the challenge of climate change, highlighting that the move to low and zero carbon transport is essential to our future well-being. It is recognised that transport is currently the largest contributor to Scottish emissions with 37% of total emissions in 2017. Of this, 40% are attributable to cars, 12.5% to vans, and 12.5% to HGVs. Key actions to meet this challenge are an ambition for phasing out the need for petrol and diesel vehicles by 2032 (an earlier date of 2025 for public sector cars and light commercial vehicles is stated); switching to sustainable modes for trips of less than 2kms; addressing the decline in bus use; and reviewing investment priorities.

Key Theme 2 - Relationship between Transport and Wider Societal Outcomes

- 4.7 A second theme that runs throughout the document is the exploration of the linkages between the current transport system, and issues such as inequalities, inclusive economic growth, and fair access to opportunities across different areas of Scotland. Within the text of the Strategy, the implication can be drawn that “more and better transport” will significantly resolve these issues.
- 4.8 Whilst enhancements to the transport system will undoubtedly contribute to the achievement of key outcomes, constraints on transport system delivery are not fully recognised within the narrative. This is particularly the case when considering the requirement for the commercial viability of bus services, or the alternative of increased levels of local authority revenue support. Officers consider that other strategies for tackling wider societal outcomes are also required, and that these can often be more effective and sustainable in the medium to long term.

Key Theme 3 – Different Needs Across Scotland

- 4.9 A third theme is a recurring narrative seeking to reconcile the different needs of different parts of Scotland. The Strategy commits to providing “Fair access to services we need”. Ensuring appropriate accessibility across the different areas of Aberdeenshire, across all sectors of society is a particular challenge within current funding and regulatory models.

Implementing a Sustainable Transport Hierarchy

- 4.10 In terms of the implementation of the National Transport Strategy, one challenge for the Aberdeenshire Council area will be the policy expectation for a reduction in overall travel demand, with increased proportions of trips being undertaken by active travel, and public transport. Whilst success has been achieved with the implementation of active travel measures across Aberdeenshire's towns, and the roll out of flexible working patterns/digital connectivity, many communities across Aberdeenshire will find such measures a major challenge. Thus, the ongoing reliance upon private vehicles (albeit they may be fuelled by a range of alternative means) will be maintained for many areas.

Sustainable Investment Hierarchy

- 4.11 A second challenge will be the implementation of the sustainable investment hierarchy, which prioritises: reducing the need to travel; then maintaining/safely operating the network; then making better use of existing capacity, prior to targeted infrastructure improvements. It is apparent that the arguments being promoted by Transport Scotland for strategic investment in key routes such as the A9 and A96 dualling, would also extend to the A90 north of Ellon, and other key regional routes such as the A947. The business cases for any future proposed investment will need to take full account of this revised policy approach, as well as consideration of any route or location specific safety issues.

Changing Transport Demands

- 4.12 It is appropriate to consider how changing travel patterns will continue to play out, such as increased internet shopping, flexible and home-based working patterns, and opportunities arising from new vehicle and communication technologies. Society's response to these changes can be hard to predict, although early lessons can be learned from different areas acting as pathfinders.

Sustainable Funding

- 4.13 There is also a current challenge with regards to Revenue and Capital funding of the transport network, including maintenance of existing assets (including structures), and maintaining existing levels of public transport revenue support. Legislation now provides Councils with opportunities to implement demand management options, including Workplace Parking Levy. This has the potential to provide a new revenue stream for investment in the transport system, although it is likely that regional consideration of such a measure may be more viable and deliverable than a scheme implemented on an Aberdeenshire wide basis by itself.

Development of Regional Transport Strategy

4.14 A revised Regional Transport Strategy is currently under preparation and is due to be subject to consultation during Spring/Summer 2020. The emerging draft reflects on many of the themes and challenges identified above. It has also been informed by parallel work on the City Region Deal funded Strategic Transport Appraisal. Elected Members and other key stakeholders are due to have an opportunity to input to this work, prior to publication of the draft Regional Transport Strategy.

4.15 Planning for Revised Local Transport Strategy

The finalisation of the National Transport Strategy, and development of the Regional Transport Strategy also heralds a requirement to consider options for the refresh or renewal of the Council's Local Transport Strategy, <https://www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/media/2374/2012finalts.pdf>. Following publication of the National Transport Strategy, officers have concluded that in many ways the current Local Transport Strategy from 2012 is very well placed to reflect the current policy environment, with its central messages of Travel Less, Travel more Actively, Travel more Effectively. Indeed, it could be said that the new National Transport Strategy has built on the Council's approach and Members are asked to support these principles as the start point of any reviewed approach to our Local Transport Strategy.

4.16 Other National Infrastructure Strategies

Following the publication of the National Transport Strategy, officers are aware of a raft of complementary strategies and initiatives across transport, land use planning, and economic development. It will be important to continue to develop and present a coherent and coordinated north east and Aberdeenshire message in respect of this work:

- a. Progression of Transport Scotland's second Strategic Transport Projects Review;
- b. Finalisation of work on the Infrastructure Commission for Scotland;
- c. Consultation on Aberdeen City's and Aberdeenshire's Local Development Plans;
- d. Development of National Planning Framework 4;
- e. Preparation of Regional Spatial Strategies; and
- f. Refresh of the Regional Economic Strategy.

4.17 In respect of the Infrastructure Commission for Scotland, the Key Findings report was published on 20 January 2020. **Appendix 1** of this report provides a summary of the key recommendations presented in this report, as it is considered that these will significantly influence national policy for infrastructure provision in the foreseeable future, particularly the Government's thinking around investment decision making and prioritisation.

5 Council Priorities, Implications and Risk

- 5.1 The report helps deliver Council Priority 1 – Support a strong, sustainable, diverse and successful economy.

The report helps deliver Council Priority 2 - Have the best possible transport and digital links across our communities.

The report helps deliver Council Priority 5 – Encourage active lifestyles and promote well-being with a focus on obesity and mental health.

The report helps deliver Council Priority 8 – Work to reduce poverty and inequalities within our community.

The report helps deliver Council Priority 11 – Protect our special environment, including tackling climate change by reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

- 5.2 The table below shows whether risks and implications apply if the recommendations are agreed.

Subject	Yes	No	N/A
Financial		X	
Staffing		X	
Equalities		X	
Fairer Scotland Duty		X	
Town Centre First		X	
Sustainability		X	
Children and Young People's Rights and Wellbeing		X	

- 5.3 An equality impact assessment is not required because this report updates the Committee on the publication of National Transport Strategy and does not have a differential impact on any of the protected characteristics. Impact assessments have been published alongside the National Transport Strategy by Transport Scotland.

- 5.4 The following Risk has been identified as relevant to this matter on a Corporate Level:

- ACORP002 – Changes in Government policy, legislation and regulation (including Education reforms and potential impact on integration of children's services, Brexit). Whilst the majority of the National Transport Strategy presents an evolution of existing policy, the revised Strategy has implications on future procurement of the public sector vehicle fleet, and an anticipation of significant changes in individual and society-wide travel behaviour. Impacts around public sector fleet will be mitigated through joint public sector working, and procurement strategies.

5.5 The following Risk has been identified as relevant to this matter on a Strategic Level:

- ISSR001 – Active Travel – The Council priority is to further embed the ability to travel actively within Aberdeenshire. The National Transport Strategy provides a supportive national policy context for this change, albeit stated risks around the availability of budgets, increased car ownership, changes in economy and lifestyles may challenge the full realisation of this priority.

6 Scheme of Governance

- 6.1 The Head of Finance and Monitoring Officer within Business Services have been consulted in the preparation of this report and their comments are incorporated within the report and are satisfied that the report complies with the Scheme of Governance and relevant legislation.
- 6.2 The Committee is able to consider and take a decision on this item in terms of Section F.1.1 of the List of Committee Powers in Part 2A of the Scheme of Governance as it relates to Transportation.

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Report prepared by Paul Finch, Strategic Transportation Manager
28 February 2020

Appendix 1 – Infrastructure Commission for Scotland Phase 1 Key Findings Report

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The Infrastructure Commission for Scotland published “Phase 1 Key Findings Report – a Blueprint for Scotland” on 20 January 2020.

<https://infrastructurecommission.scot/page/key-findings-report>.

Introduction

The Infrastructure Commission for Scotland was established in early 2019 to provide independent advice to Scottish Ministers on a 30 year vision (the “why and what”) of infrastructure for Scotland by the end of 2019, and to consider options for delivery (the “how”) by June 2020.

The Executive Summary to the report notes the following: *“During the past 12 months it has become clear that net zero carbon and inclusive economic growth are two key policy areas which have a significant bearing on infrastructure. Focussing infrastructure decisions on these areas of policy will lead to very different outcomes compared with past investment, and the nature, purpose and focus of infrastructure investment over the 30 year horizon is likely to change fundamentally as we aim for an inclusive net zero carbon economy.”* Heat and Transport are given a specific focus in relation to achieving a net zero carbon economy. Summary Recommendations are provided as below.

1. Leadership

To provide leadership and demonstrate intent, the Scottish Government should prioritise all new infrastructure investment decisions based on their contribution to the delivery of an inclusive net zero carbon economy.

2. Place

To achieve an inclusive net zero carbon economy, the Scottish Government should put “place” at the heart of coherent, infrastructure prioritisation and planning.

3. Making the Most of Existing Assets

Most of the underlying infrastructure that will be used in 30-years’ time already exists today. It is therefore essential that these assets are most effectively and efficiently utilised, maintained and enhanced to net zero carbon readiness.

4. Heat and Transport

Key priorities for Scotland in reaching net zero carbon over the next 30-years will be accelerating the decarbonisation of heat and transport.

Specific *recommendations for Transport* are:

14. The Scottish Government should ensure that its new National Transport Strategy and Strategic Transport Projects Review 2, which are due to be published during 2020, fully reflect the need to deliver an inclusive net zero carbon economy and consider the infrastructure and the use of it as a holistic system. This should include:
 - Aligning strategic investment decisions to address fully the requirement for demand management, a substantial increase in the proportion of journeys made by active travel, and opportunities for shared mobility as well as a much greater role for public transport.
 - For such roads investment that is made as part of the above, a presumption in favour of investment to future proof existing road infrastructure and to make it safer, resilient and more reliable rather than increase road capacity.
15. Investment decision making based on the above framework will require a significant change to investment guidance. Therefore, by the end of 2021, the Scottish Government and Transport Scotland should develop a new investment appraisal and decision-making process, incorporating necessary changes to the current Scottish Transport Appraisal Guidance (STAG) and Investment Decision Making Guidance.
16. To enable a managed transition to an inclusive net zero carbon economy road infrastructure, the Scottish and UK Governments should immediately commit to work together to establish a charging/payment regime alternative to the existing fuel and road taxation-based structure. The Scottish Government should also consider additional options that could provide a more stable long-term investment regime for the management and maintenance of road infrastructure to meet the priorities identified in 14 above.

5. **Regulation**

To incentivise investment at the necessary pace and scale to meet future infrastructure requirements for Scotland, regulation will be a critical component to the delivery of a 30-year inclusive net zero carbon economy vision.

6. **Digital and Technology**

Ensure every citizen, organisation and business in Scotland has the ability to access digital public services, to undertake trade and commerce and to participate in future global economic markets regardless of geographic location.

7. **The Role of the Public**

Much greater participation of the public needs to be incorporated as an integral part of infrastructure investment decision-making.

8. Independent long-term advice

To enable government, regulators and industry to make the transition to a long-term, coherent, systems wide approach to place-based infrastructure strategy and planning.

Next Steps

The report notes that “The Commission is 12 months into an 18 month programme of work and the recommendations set out in this report represent the findings of the first phase that has been focused on the “why and what” for infrastructure. As a result, a number of areas have yet to be considered by the Commission and will form the basis of the next phase of activity. The Phase 2 report will be aimed principally at the more downstream aspects of the work to date including the practical implications in relation to the “how” of infrastructure.”

