

NORTHERN ROADS COLLABORATION JOINT COMMITTEE

BY TEAMS, 27 NOVEMBER, 2020

Councillors: Councillors Rory Colville and Bobby Good, Argyll and Bute Council; Sandra Macdonald, Aberdeen City Council; Annouk Kloppert and Jim Gifford, Aberdeenshire Council; Brenda Durno, Angus Council; Gordon Cowie and Theresa Coull, Moray Council; Allan Henderson and Trish Robertson, The Highland Council; and Uisdean Robertson, Comhairle nan Eilean Siar.

Officers: Ruth O'Hare, Philip Leiper, Robert McGregor, Jan McRobbie, Mark Skilling, and Ewan Wallace, Aberdeenshire Council; Douglas Hill, Angus Council; Jim Smith, Argyll and Bute Council; Calum Mackenzie, Comhairle nan Eilean Siar; Mark Atherton, Moray Council; Mike Mitchell, Robin Pope, and Tracey Urry, The Highland Council; Angus Bodie and S Millar, The Improvement Service; and Rab Dickson, NESTRANS.

In Attendance: Derek Stewart, Director, Community Models Ltd.

Apologies: Councillors David Aitchison, Aberdeenshire Council; Michael Hutchison, Aberdeen City Council; Ron Sturrock, Angus Council; and Kenneth MacLeod, Comhairle nan Eilean Siar.

1. SEDERUNT AND DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

The Chair asked for declarations of interest. No interests were declared.

Prior to the commencement of the business of the meeting, the Chair, on behalf of the Joint Board welcomed new Members, Councillors Colville and Good of Argyll and Bute Council, and Councillor Jim Gifford of Aberdeenshire Council.

Tributes were paid to the former Chair of the Joint Committee, Councillor Ellen Morton, of Argyll and Bute, who had died after a long illness. The Joint Committee reflected with gratitude on the role Councillor Morton had paid in the creation and initial years of the partnership and expressed sympathy for her family in their loss.

2. STATEMENT OF EQUALITIES

The Joint Committee **agreed**, in line with its legal duty under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010, the Joint Committee, in making decisions on the attached reports, to have due regard to the need to:-

- (i) eliminate discrimination, harassment, and victimisation;

- (ii) advance equality of opportunity between those who share a protected characteristic and persons who do not share it; and
- (iii) foster good relations between those who share a protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.”

3. MINUTE OF MEETING OF 28 AUGUST, 2020

There had been circulated and was **approved** as a correct record the Minute of Meeting of 28 August, 2020.

Arising from discussion of the above, Item 10 (3) (d), the Joint Committee noted that the issue of electric vehicles would come to the next meeting, as the information required was not yet complete.

In respect of Item 10 (3) (c), the Joint Committee heard from Angus Bodie of a funding bid, made for further phases of the project regarding industrial and other damage to rural roads, which was scheduled to be considered pre-Christmas, with a determination made in early 2021. It was hoped that a pilot could be undertaken in Islay, in conjunction with Argyll and Bute Council, where the impact of particularly spirit vehicles, and other users, on very soft road conditions severely damaged the infrastructure. As distillery production was both a national issue, and already taxed by the Exchequer, any infrastructure related levy, if processed along similar lines to that of the aggregate charge for quarries, could garner substantial funds. There was discussion of other areas where intensive usage might be considered to extend the scope of the project, including the potential to have discussion with farmers about heavy agricultural machinery usage, the impact of marine aquaculture traffic on local roads, and seasonal pressures such as the Christmas Tree market, and the Joint Committee heard from officers of the potential to include appropriate road improvement conditions, or direct usage to a specific route, in planning applications.

The Joint Committee **agreed**:

- (1) to agree the extensions of phase 2 of the roads project to include discussions with agricultural road users and marine aquaculture usage; and
- (2) to note that the report on electric vehicles would come to the Spring meeting of the Joint Committee.

4. APPOINTMENT OF VICE CHAIR

With reference to the Minute of Meeting of 28 August, 2020, (Item 4), the Joint Committee heard from the Principal Solicitor (Governance) Aberdeenshire Council that there was a requirement to appoint a Vice Chair to the Joint Committee.

The Chair moved, seconded by Councillor Henderson, that Councillor Theresa Coull, Moray Council, be appointed Vice-Chair.

There were being no further nominations, the Joint Committee unanimously **agreed** that Councillor Coull be appointed Vice-Chair.

5. RESEARCH INTO THE VALUE OF THE LOCAL ROAD NETWORK – INITIAL OUTPUTS

With reference to the Minute of Meeting of 28 August, 2020, (Item 10 (3) (b), the Chair, on behalf of the Joint Committee, welcomed Derek Stewart, Director of Community Models Ltd to the meeting, which thereafter heard a presentation by Mr Stewart on the initial outcomes of the study into the value of rural roads.

Mr Stewart explained his background of previous work on infrastructure, and of the joint working done with Caledonian Economics and social value colleagues, with the Collaboration Roads Programme team under Angus Bodie, and with access to the officers of the Northern Roads Collaboration partnership.

The focus was to address the gap in current understanding of the value of roads, proving an evidence base and the creation of more consistent definitions. The particular focus was on the impact of roads on the communities and allow a more than intuitive judgement on infrastructure spend priorities.

The Joint Committee heard on the progress to date with Phase 2, out for modelling populated by information from all Scottish local authorities, enabling scenarios to be considered, and a funding bid for Phase 3 submitted for the further development, potentially to a more local level of interrogation, and for support for the roll out of the model.

There was discussion of the impact of lockdown on normal road usage, reducing it to a 1950s level, and its influence on the datasets being provided as a basis for the modelling; the frequency of refreshing of the various data; the potential benefits to local authorities in having investment considered in a different way; how infrastructure investment could be attained to generate social value; how the model related to reviews of international literature, especially the Scandinavian values and judgements, replicated, where appropriate, in the model as developed; and the awareness of “the last mile”, connecting to communities from the Scottish roads network, with its impact on equalities in various areas.

The Chair, on behalf of the Joint Committee, thanked Mr Stewart for an interesting and informative presentation.

The Joint Committee **agreed:-**

- (1) to welcome the presentation of the work to date and planned way forward;
- (2) noted that Aberdeenshire and Angus Councils were to test the model, with the national roll out in February/ March, 2021;
- (3) to welcome the flexibility of the model to reflect varying changes in data sets, such as the abnormally low road traffic usage;

- (4) to welcome the links to international studies and literature reviews; and
- (5) to await further reports on ongoing developments.

6. INFRASTRUCTURE INVESTMENT AND RESILIENCE

There had been circulated a report dated 20 November, 2020 by the Head of Transportation, in response to previously voiced concerns about on the fragile nature of critical transport infrastructure across in the seven collaboration partner areas, identifying the high-level issue about infrastructure resilience, setting out the context for future reporting, and requesting consideration of set of officer inputs to a Scottish Government consultation on their Infrastructure Investment Plan.

The Joint Committee heard further from Mr Wallace of the connections in this work to the previous presentation on how infrastructure investments might be considered in the light of the new modelling, and which had been reflected in the submission.

There was discussion of the points made in the report and the Joint Committee **agreed:-**

- (1) to endorse the officer response, as detailed in Appendix 1 to the report) to the draft Infrastructure Investment Plan Consultation;
- (2) that a network status and resilience report be prepared and presented to the Joint Committee in late Spring 2021, and annually thereafter; and
- (3) to note the national report from the Institute of Civil Engineers. Setting out the scale and challenge on infrastructure resilience and adaptation.

7. NATIONAL ROADS COLLABORATION UPDATE

There had been circulated a report dated 20 November, 2020 by the Head of Transportation, Aberdeenshire Council, providing an update in respect of the National Roads Collaboration, identifying the range of work achieved since 2014, and reporting the Improvement Service's decision to withdraw the direct support previously provided to host officers to support national collaboration.

Having noted that the work programme would be moved to the Society of Chief Officers of Transportation in Scotland (SCOTS) who were to identify a lead authority, and that the Joint Committee had a strong officer group in place to progress its work, the Chair, on behalf of the Committee, thanked Mr Bodie and his team, Shaun Miller, Allie Law, and Megan Brown, for the incredible support which had been provided to the collaboration from its earliest days, and wished them the best in their future career paths.

The Joint Committee **agreed:-**

- (1) to note the current position on Roads Collaboration nationally; and
- (2) to formally thank the officers of the Improvement Service (Angus Bodie, Shaun Millar, Megan Brown, and Allie Law) for their support since 2018, wishing them well in their future endeavours.

8. FUTURE MEETINGS

The Joint Committee **agreed**, the undernoted meeting dates for 2021, to be continued on a remote participation basis until current covid-19 related restrictions were eased appropriately:

Friday 5 March, 2021;
Friday 25 June, 2021;
Friday 10 September, 2021; and
Friday 26 November, 2021.

Councillor Durno
Chair