

ABERDEENSHIRE COUNCIL

INFRASTRUCTURE SERVICES COMMITTEE

SKYPE MEETING, 13 MAY, 2021

- Present:** Councillors P Argyle (Chair), J Cox (Vice Chair), W Agnew, D Aitchison, G Carr, M Ewenson (substitute for I Mollison), M Findlater (substitute for A Fakley), J Ingram, P Johnston, J Latham, G Reid, S Smith, and I Taylor.
- Apologies:** Councillors Fakley and Mollison.
- Officers:** Director of Infrastructure Services, Interim Head of Service (Economic Development & Planning), Head of Service (Transportation), Head of Service (Roads, Landscape Services and Waste Management), Planning Service Manager, (Planning & Environment, M Corley), Planning Service Manager (Planning & Environment, M Stewart), Strategic Development Officer (Roads, Landscape Services and Waste Management), Fleet Manager (Transportation), Service Manager (Economic Development & Protective Services), Team Manager (Economic Development & Protective Services, M Brebner), Team Manager (Economic Development & Protective Services, A Reid), Regeneration & Town Centres Manager (Economic Development & Protective Services), Business Partner (Finance), Principal Solicitor (Democratic Services) and Committee Officer (F Brown).

OPENING REMARKS BY THE CHAIR

- (1) The Chair, on behalf of the Committee, congratulated Alan Wood, Director of Infrastructure Services, following his recent appointment to that role on a permanent basis.
- (2) The Chair, on behalf of the Committee, recognised the recent retirement of Belinda Miller, the former Head of Service (Economic Development & Protective Services) who had retired since the last meeting of the Committee. The Chair wished to extend his thanks to her for her contribution to Economic Development during her time with Aberdeenshire Council and he wished her a long and happy retirement.

1. DECLARATION OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS

The Chair asked Members if they had any interests to declare in terms of the Councillors' Code of Conduct and the following interest was intimated. Councillor Johnston declared an interest in agenda **Item 9**, as a Director of Community Resources Network Scotland (CRNS). Having applied the objective test, Councillor Johnston concluded that the interest was remote and insignificant, and he would remain and participate for that item.

2A. PUBLIC SECTOR EQUALITY DUTY

In making decisions on the following items of business, the Committee **agreed**, in terms of Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010:-

- (1) to have due regard to the need to:-
 - (a) eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation;
 - (b) advance equality of opportunity between those who share a protected characteristic and persons who do not share it; and
 - (c) foster good relations between those who share a protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.
- (2) where an Equality Impact Assessment is provided, to consider its contents and take those into account when reaching a decision.

2B. EXEMPT INFORMATION

The Committee **agreed** in terms of Sections 50A (4) and (5) of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973, as amended, to exclude the public from the meeting during consideration of the item shown below, so as to avoid disclosure of exempt information of the class described in undernoted paragraphs of Part 1 of Schedule 7A of the Act.

Item No	Paragraph No of Schedule 7A
17	6
18	6 & 8

3. MINUTE OF MEETING OF THE INFRASTRUCTURE SERVICES COMMITTEE OF 11 MARCH, 2021.

The Committee had before them, and **approved** as a correct record, the Minute of Infrastructure Services Committee meeting of 11 March, 2021.

4. OUTSTANDING BUSINESS.

There was circulated a list of outstanding actions from previous meetings of the Infrastructure Services Committee, along with new items which had been deferred to future meetings of the Committee, as of 13 May 2021.

The Director introduced the report and the provided the Committee with a verbal update for each of the outstanding actions Items 1 to 7 below:

- Items 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and 7 would stay on the list.
- Item 6 was on the agenda and therefore could be removed from the list.

Having considered the list of outstanding actions, the Committee **agreed to note** the current position in respect of actions arising at previous meetings.

5. DEE CATCHMENT PARTNERSHIP - PARTNERSHIP REVIEW

With reference to the Minute of the Infrastructure Services Committee meeting of 16 May 2019 (Item 8), there was circulated a report, dated 19 April 2021, by the Director of Infrastructure Services, which provided the outcome of the Partnership Review for the Dee Catchment Partnership (DCP) as presented in Appendix 1 to the report and which sought the Committee's continued support and funding for the Partnership. The report also provided an update on the work of the DCP since the last Partnership Review which had taken place in 2019.

The Committee thanked Officers for presenting the report and requested that on behalf of the Committee, they extend their appreciation to the partnership, for all of the work that had been undertaken, which the Committee considered was extremely reassuring.

Having considered the content of the report, the Committee **agreed**:

- (1) to **approve** the continued support for the Dee Catchment Partnership; and
- (2) to **approve** the financial contribution of £3,000 per annum from the Planning and Environment Service, Environment, Payments to Agencies and Others and £6,000 per annum from Roads, Landscape Services and Waste, Flood Management, Payments to Agencies and Others.

6. NORTH EAST SCOTLAND BIODIVERSITY PARTNERSHIP – PARTNERSHIP REVIEW

With reference to the Minute of the Infrastructure Services Committee meeting of 16 May 2019 (Item 9), there was circulated a report, dated 19 April 2021, by the Director of Infrastructure Services, which provided the outcome of the Partnership Review for the North East Biodiversity Partnership (NESBiP) as presented in Appendix 1 to the report and which sought the Committee's continued support and funding for the Partnership. The report also provided an update on the work of the NESBiP since the last Partnership Review which had taken place in 2019.

The Committee thanked Officers for presenting the report and requested that on behalf of the Committee, they extend their appreciation to the partnership, for all of the work that had been undertaken, which the Committee considered was extremely reassuring.

Having considered the content of the report, the Committee **agreed**:

- (1) to **approve** the continued support for the North East Scotland Biodiversity Partnership; and
- (2) to **approve** the financial contribution of £7,500 per annum from the Planning and Environment Service, Environment Budget page, Payments to Agencies and Others budget line.

7. ABERDEENSHIRE LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2021 – DEVELOPMENT PLAN SCHEME 2021

With reference to the Minute of the Infrastructure Services Committee meeting of 14 May 2020 (Item 5), there was circulated a report, dated 26 March 2021, by the Director of Infrastructure Services, which sought consideration of the revised Development Plan Scheme (DPS) for 2021, as presented in Appendix 1 to the report, which it was reported was required to support the preparation of the Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan 2021.

The report explained that the DPS for 2021 continued to present the principles established in the DPS 2020, and the revised DPS continued to outline the programme predicted for Examination and Adoption of the new Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan by March 2022.

During discussion, the Committee commented that the Local Development Plan should be used as a tool to inform the public, to support public engagement within communities; to support community planning and to look at what other communities were doing. In preparation of the next Local Development Plan, Officers were asked to take forward those comments, for future reports being brought back to Committee.

Having considered the content of the report, the Committee **agreed**:

- (1) that they had **considered** and commented on the revised Development Plan Scheme 2021 (DPS);
- (2) to **note** the comments and recommendations of Area Committees on the content and substance of the revised Development Plan Scheme 2021; and
- (3) to **approve** the revised Development Plan Scheme 2021 for onward submission to the Scottish Ministers.

8. BRIDGE PRIORITISATION POLICY AND PROCEDURE

The Chair intimated that three requests to speak had been received, and the Committee **agreed** to hear from Mrs Anne Shearer, on behalf of Crathes, Drumoak, and Durris Community Council, Mr Alan Holmes, on behalf of Park Bridge Action Group and Mr Jim Stuart on behalf of Mearns Community Council.

With reference to the Minute of the Infrastructure Services Committee meeting of 21 January 2021 (Item 18), there was circulated a report dated 28 April 2021, by the Director of Infrastructure Services, which presented a formal Policy and Procedure for the prioritisation of bridge works which clearly demonstrated the methodology used to ensure that the allocated resources were invested in the bridge network in the most beneficial manner.

The report explained that detailed work has been undertaken to develop a formal policy in accordance with the Scheme of Governance Part 4 B – Policy Development and Review Framework and that had involved consultation with all Area Committees together with a public online engagement opportunity which concluded on 12 April 2021. The comments from Area Committees and a report detailing the outcome of the online engagement were presented in Appendix 1 and 2 to the report.

The Committee then heard from Ms Anne Shearer, on behalf of Crathes, Drumoak and Durris Community Council who addressed the Committee and asked them to consider the 386 responses of which 157 come from the community council area, with almost half, indicating how strong the community feeling was on this matter

Ms Shearer commented that it was difficult to see how the consultation with Area Committees and the public had been incorporated into the methodology as that had not been described. Ms Shearer stated that all the Area Committees had mentioned the need to consider social and economic impacts of bridge closures and that had not been addressed by the prioritisation methodology proposed, along with the impact of bridge closures on social cohesion and the rural economy even though they had been defined as priorities for the council.

Ms Shearer stated that Bridges which were already closed were significantly impacting local communities, incurring additional costs and the closure of rural bridges with the suggestion that active travel was an alternative would unfairly discriminate against those for whom active travel was not an option, particularly the elderly and those with physical disabilities. Those were two groups of people that society were duty bound to protect from strategies which may disadvantage them, and as such, bridges already closed should be given the highest priority with a score of 6.

The size/heritage factor which was proposed as an addition rather than a multiplier in the formula was also considered to be strange as that would make the size or heritage very under-weighted in comparison to the other factors and would lead to much lower prioritisation of heritage and large bridges. That effectively would make heritage and size almost irrelevant in comparison to the other factors included. The community cared deeply about its heritage bridges and there was no logical reason to give this factor such a low rating. The size/heritage factor came fourth in the priority list from the public consultation and should be a multiplier as well, giving equal weighting to all the factors and it should not be singled out, literally as an add-on to make it have far less significance as a factor in the prioritisation.

The Community Council finished by requesting that the council make two amendments to the proposed prioritisation formula:

- (i) for Bridge Alert Status, black bridges should be given the highest priority with a score of 6 as they are already impacting communities
- (ii) in line with the feedback from the public consultation, all factors should be given equal weighting with size/heritage as a multiplier and not simply an add-on.

The Chair then asked Ms Shearer whether she had been given a fair hearing and Ms Shearer confirmed that she had, although she was not sure if she had been heard.

The Committee then heard from Mr Alan Holmes, on behalf of the Park Bridge Action Group who wished to focus on the more technical aspects which he stated was his specialism. Mr Holmes stated that when talking about bridges, consideration should be given to risk factors and management. When considering risk factors, water risk was clearly significant as no one could control the weather, or the risks associated

with surface water damage. A fundamental change was required to understand those risks and a change of direction in terms of the maintenance of bridges.

When considering what could be controlled, Mr Holmes commented that management could be influenced, and the prioritisation model should consider the allocation and direction of resources; roads which had not been designed for modern traffic; basic maintenance on those structures and a fundamental change by those who understood risks and requirements.

The Chair then asked Mr Holmes whether he had been given a fair hearing and Mr Holmes confirmed that he had.

The Committee then heard from Mr Jim Stuart, on behalf of the Mearns Community Council who wished to voice their opinion and to convey their thoughts. Mr Stuart stated the bridges, at all levels, within the prioritisation were extremely important to communities as bridges were built for a reason and it was simply not acceptable to see them closed or removed without providing alternative routes that suit the needs of the users.

Mr Stuart stated that what had been evidenced from the survey was that certain areas in Aberdeenshire were of more concern than others and they were minded that failure to repair or replace bridges should be a priority. The impact of bridge closures would vary widely across Aberdeenshire and while some affect a few settlements, others affect many settlements. Diversion routes in some instances had meant residents having to travel further which resulted in additional costs related to time and money. That would make those areas less attractive to potential house buyers which would have an impact on communities and economic development; businesses would struggle to retain staff and customers; existing businesses may be inclined to relocate, and new businesses are likely to choose alternative areas.

Existing road infrastructure could not accommodate the increase in traffic; vehicle movements had increased in settlements and those settlements could not accommodate the escalation; planned improvements to major roads may in some instances be compromised by the uncertainty of the future of bridges in the locality and some bridge closures would affect diversion routes previously used in the event of road traffic incidents which was a major cause for concern; extra time for emergency responses should be considered and road safety for drivers, pedestrians and cyclists for roads previously seen as country roads which were now widely used by walkers, cyclists and horse riders are now little more than rat-runs with vehicles speeding and not giving way to anyone and more and more potholes which were appearing daily and road flooding was more and more common which intensifies

The Chair then asked Mr Stuart whether he had been given a fair hearing and Mr Stuart confirmed that he had.

During discussion the Committee welcomed the report and commended the Service for the huge amount of work which had been undertaken to bring forward the Bridges Prioritisation Policy and Procedure. The Committee recognised that the prioritisation of bridges was extremely challenging, considering those matters which could not be controlled such as climate change, more extreme weather, the weight and volume of traffic and the continual reduction of funding.

The Committee recognised the difficulties faced by communities and the inconvenience caused, however, it was considered that the Policy and Procedure was robust and had sought to find a balance of engineering priorities and bridge construction.

Having considered the content of the report, the Committee **agreed**:

- (1) to **note** the comments received from Area Committees, and feedback from the public engagement;
- (2) to **note** the revised Policy and Procedure; and
- (3) to **approve** the Bridge Prioritisation Policy and Procedure for immediate use.

9. EXTENDED PRODUCER RESPONSIBILITY CONSULTATION RESPONSE

There was circulated a report, dated 28 April 2021, by the Director of Infrastructure Services, which sought consideration of a Council response to the consultation being undertaken by the Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (DEFRA), on Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) proposals as presented in Appendix 1 to the report.

The report explained that DEFRA was consulting on the proposals to introduce an extended producer responsibility scheme for packaging, which intended, in line with the “Polluter Pays” principle, to make producers responsible for the full net cost of managing packaging they put on the market. It was reported that the consultation opened on 24 March 2021 for 10 weeks, with a closing date on 4 June 2021 and a copy of the consultation document was presented as Appendix 2 to the report.

During discussion, the Committee welcomed the report and the proposed consultation response, commenting that it was good to see that producers would be held responsible for the full net cost of managing packaging put on the market, and the changes would go a long way to meet the public’s expectations.

When considering the proposed consultation response, as presented in Appendix 1 to the report, the Committee requested that Officers include:

- (1) Consideration of plastics, the matrix should not just be based on tonnage but potential tonnage for CO2 emissions.
- (2) Factors such as packaging with mixed materials which cannot be recycled; and
- (3) Whether materials were recyclable within the carbon loop, using plant- based materials.

Having considered the content of the report, the Committee **agreed**:

- (1) that they had **reviewed** and **agreed** the draft consultation response enclosed as Appendix 1 to the report, subject to inclusion of the additional comments raised; and

- (2) to **instruct** the Head of Service (Roads, Landscape Services & Waste Management) to submit the final response to DEFRA.

10. STATUTORY HARBOUR AUTHORITY - OPTIONS

There was circulated a report, dated 30 April 2021, by the Director of Infrastructure Services, which updated the Committee on the management options for the Council's seven harbours.

The report explained that the seven harbours provided different roles within the portfolio and provided a different range of services to their Communities. Commercial services, pleasure craft facilities, leisure facilities and they were a focal community asset, particularly in the smaller settlements. The Harbours Service was responsible for ensuring that those assets were managed and developed in a way that would continue to support the growth of the economy, the local business community, and would be able to meet current and future economic challenges.

The report outlined consideration of several management options for the future of the harbour portfolio as set out in Section 4.10 to 4.43 to the report, and which recommended that the Committee support Option D (Empowered Users and Stakeholders) as the preferred option.

It was noted that robust development plans would need to be developed for each of the seven harbours, and external consultancy support would be required to support the production of those Development Plans. The Harbour Service would develop a draft Brief for that engagement and the development of the brief would include engagement as set out in paragraph 3.5 to the report, to ensure that views were accounted for.

Having considered the content of the report, the Committee **agreed**:

- (1) to **note** the management options for the Council's seven Harbours as set out in the report;
- (2) to **agree** that Option D - Empowered Users and Stakeholders would be the preferred option;
- (3) to **agree** that up to £100,000 to support the production of robust Development Plans for each Harbour would be initially identified from the Infrastructure Revenue Budget; and
- (4) to **instruct** the Head of Service (Roads, Landscape Services and Waste Management) to develop a draft Brief for the engagement of appropriate external support to produce robust development plans for each Harbour following consultation with the Harbours Sub-Committee and the Chair, Vice Chair, and the Opposition Spokesperson of the Infrastructure Services Committee.

11. FLEET SERVICES STRATEGIC PLAN (2020 - 2030) – UPDATE

With reference to the Minute of the Infrastructure Services Committee meeting of 23 January 2020 (Item 6), where Fleet Services had presented for approval their

Strategic Plan, which was subject to ongoing review and updates, there was circulated a report, dated 28 April 2021, by the Director of Infrastructure Services which presented an update on the Fleet Strategy along with developments and progress in decarbonising the Council's fleet.

The report explained that the Fleet Strategy was very much focussed on supporting front line Services through the transition from petrol and diesel vehicles and plant to a zero-emission fleet in a cost effective, efficient, and environmentally friendly way. Section 4.13 to the report presented how the Service would achieve the Government's commitment to phase out the need for any new petrol or diesel light commercial vehicles by 2025 and what the Service would do to achieve that.

During discussion, the Committee extended their appreciation to Paul Gray and his team of mechanics, who had continued to kept vehicles on the roads during extremely challenging times.

With regards to a more detailed report being brought back to Committee in the Autumn, the Committee requested that consideration should be given to:

- Charging points and bay blocking, if that was to be considered nationally, if it became a problem, the policy position may have to change.
- Managing the fleet, fuel element, to look at fuel supply that would be required as part of the strategy.
- Infrastructure to support transition to zero emissions, look at those suppliers, who have the technology to divert charges for energy to the Service for staff who take business vehicles home.

Having considered the content of the report, the Committee **agreed**:

- (1) to **note** the work required, as detailed in paragraph 4.13 to the report, and to **agree** that a further, more detailed report, to be brought to the Committee in Autumn for approval; and
- (2) to **note** the commitments as detailed in paragraph 4.25 and 4.26 to the report.

12. GRANT FUNDING AWARD - HUNTLY ACTIVE TRAVEL HUB

With reference to the Minute of the Marr Area Committee meeting of 21 August 2018 (Item 11), where the Area Committee had approved the Huntly Integrated Travel Town (ITT) Masterplan, there was circulated a report, dated 28 April 2021, by the Director of Infrastructure Services, which sought consideration of the provision of grant funding to Huntly and District Development Trust, to progress the development of an Active Travel Hub in Huntly as detailed in Appendix 1 to the report.

The Committee noted that the development of the Hub was in line with the action and objectives within Aberdeenshire Council's Huntly Integrated Travel Town Masterplan and the Huntly and District Development Trust were a key partner in delivering the ITT with the aims and objectives that meet and overlapped with many of Huntly and District Development Trust projects.

During discussion, the Committee requested that Officers look at the use of technology being used for Active Travel in Aberdeenshire, to develop platforms to make it as easy as possible for the public to access services.

Having considered the content of the report, the Committee **agreed** to **approve** the award of a total grant of up to £80,000 to Huntly and District Development Trust, which would be provided over a period until September 2022.

13. UPDATE ON COVID-19 BUSINESS GRANTS

With reference to the Minute of the Infrastructure Services Committee meeting of 21 January 2021 (Item 21), there was circulated a report, dated 12 April 2021, by the Director of Infrastructure Services, which updated the Committee on the business grants which had been delivered by Aberdeenshire Council during the Covid-19 pandemic and to notify the Committee of phases 2 and 3 of the Discretionary Business Fund.

The report explained that since the last report, the majority of Scottish Government schemes providing businesses with Covid-19 related financial support had closed. Aberdeenshire Council had administered several other schemes in the period January – May 2021, as referenced in Section 3.3 to the report, and the Scottish Government and COSLA had agreed an increase to the allocations of the Discretionary Business Fund in February 2021 with Aberdeenshire Council securing an award of an additional £6,388,331, taking the total available through the Discretionary Business Fund in Aberdeenshire to £8,162,867. That additional funding had to be used for direct grants to businesses related to loss of income from the pandemic and it could not be used for activity to support business recovery or non-direct grants (e.g., rates relief). The Council's Strategic Leadership Team (SLT) had considered proposals for the distribution of the additional funding in April 2021, and those were subsequently agreed by the Chairs, Vice-Chairs and Opposition spokespersons for Business Services Committee and Infrastructure Services Committee.

The Committee noted that the new scheme had been launched as Phase 2 of the Discretionary Fund on 19 April 2021 and Officers had estimated that Phase 2 of the Discretionary Business Fund may still not allocate all the funding available, and it was therefore proposed that the scheme should close for new applications on 21 May 2021 to allow for a review. Subject to funds still being available, proposals for a third phase would be put forward to Strategic Leadership Team (SLT) and relevant Committee representatives, with a view to the scheme being concluded by the end of July 2021.

Having considered the content of the report, the Committee **agreed**:

- (1) to **note** the updated statistics in terms of grants to businesses administered by Aberdeenshire Council on behalf of the Scottish Government; and
- (2) to **support** the Council's proposals for any third and final phase of the Discretionary Business Fund, subject to funds being available and associated dialogue with the Scottish Government.

14. CONTRIBUTION TO ONE – FOOD AND ACTIVITY BUDGET

There was circulated a report, dated 14 April 2021, by the Director of Infrastructure Services, which sought the Committee's consideration of a review of the work undertaken to support the food and drink sector in Aberdeenshire, and which sought approval for a contribution by Aberdeenshire Council towards total project costs for Food and Drink Activity undertaken by Opportunity North East (ONE).

The report explained that the activity undertaken by ONE in 2020-21 had been significantly affected by Coronavirus restrictions, and as a result Aberdeenshire Council's contribution to food and drink industry support was £18,500, against an approved figure of £47,000. The extent of possible activity and support to the sector in 2021-22 remained unclear, however, it was hoped, when possible, that face-to-face support and networking would restart. Reviews of activity would be undertaken throughout the year and improvements introduced as appropriate.

Having considered the content of the report, the Committee **agreed**:

- (1) to **endorse** the work undertaken to support the food and drink sector in Aberdeenshire; and
- (2) to **approve** a contribution of up to £37,900 by Aberdeenshire Council, towards total project costs for Food and Drink Activity of £213,850, undertaken by Opportunity North East (ONE).

15. SUBSIDY CONTROL CONSULTATION

There was circulated a report, dated 5 April 2021, by the Director of Infrastructure Services, which set out the Council response to a UK Government consultation on subsidy control, submitted under delegated powers to Officers, which had been launched by the UK Government's Department for Business, Energy, and Industrial Strategy (BEIS), on 3 February 2021 with a deadline response by 31 March 2021.

The report explained that the Council's European Member Officer Working Group (EMOWG) had discussed the submission of a Council response at their meeting on 3 March 2021, agreeing that the Group would be consulted via email prior to formal submission under delegated Officer powers. The EMOWG and the Chair and Vice Chair had been consulted prior to the formal response being submitted on 31 March 2021, as set out at Appendix 1 to the Report.

Having considered the content of the report, the Committee **agreed** to **note** the response submitted to the UK Government on proposals for a subsidy control regime.

16. SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT PLACE BASED INVESTMENT PROGRAMME

There was circulated a report, dated 12 May 2021, by the Director of Infrastructure Services, which presented details of funding from the Scottish Government Place Based Investment Programme, for distribution to Aberdeenshire's regeneration areas and town centres.

The report explained that the fund would contain a high-level criteria, similar to the Town Centre Fund, but would also cover place (regeneration), 20-minute neighbourhoods and Community Wealth Building with allocations likely to be announced at the end of April 2021.

The Committee were asked to note the urgency for allocating the 2021-22 fund as timescales would be extremely tight with funds being launched in May 2021 which would require projects to start, or contracts to be in place, by 31 March 2022 and if not used those funds would have to be returned to the Scottish Government.

During discussion, the Committee welcomed the funding, and commented that there should be an equitable spread of funding across Aberdeenshire and Area Committees should be involved and provided with regular updates on projects within their own area.

Having considered the content of the report, the Committee **agreed**:

- (1) to **agree** the criteria to be used for the distribution of the Scottish Government Place Based Investment Programme 2021/2022 as noted in point 4.2 to the report;
- (2) to **agree** the process for the distribution of fund, as noted in point 4.6 to the report;
- (3) to **delegate** authority to the Director of Infrastructure Services, to approve applications for funding from the Scottish Government Place Based Investment Programme 2021/22, following consultation with the Chair, Vice Chair and Opposition Spokesperson of Infrastructure Services Committee, the Council Leader, and the Chief Executive;
- (4) to **instruct** the Director of Infrastructure Services to report back to Committee, with details of applications approved under recommendation 2.3 to the report; and
- (5) to **agree** to align the remaining 5-year Place Based Investment Programme from 2022 onwards with a Place Strategy, which builds on the existing Regeneration Strategy.

17. EUROPEAN SOCIAL FUND (ESF) PHASE 1 UPDATE

With reference to the Minute of the Infrastructure Services Committee meeting of 1 October 2020 (Item 13), there was circulated a report, dated 6 April 2021, by the Director of Infrastructure Services, which updated the Committee on the closure of the Phase 1 Aberdeenshire European Social Fund (ESF) programme.

The report considered the funding which Aberdeenshire Council had been awarded by ESF; how much had been committed to date and the present status of each project as set out in Appendix 1 to the report.

Having considered the content of the report, the Committee **agreed**:

- (1) to **note** the updated position on the closure of ESF projects;

- (2) to **endorse** the continuation of work, with project sponsors to close Phase 1 ESF projects; and
- (3) to **instruct** Officers to present a report to Committee, by the end of 2021 to provide an update on closure of the Phase 1 projects.

18. GREENPORT PROPOSAL

There was circulated a report, dated 28 April 2021, by the Director of Infrastructure Services, which provided an update to the Committee on the outcome of the Feasibility Study into the potential benefits of delivering a North East Greenport as presented in Appendix 1 to the report, and to seek approval to proceed to the next stage (full development bid), should the stakeholders partners' intentions align, and to approve an appropriate financial contribution towards full bid development, should that be required.

The Interim Head of Planning and Environment introduced the report and provided the Committee with the background to the report, the headline outcomes of the feasibility study which had evaluated the benefits that the North East Greenport model could bring and the next steps in terms of Aberdeenshire Council continuing to be a key and active participant in the development of a full bid, subject to the Scottish Government issuing a formal prospectus and a call for bids which would be consistent with UK and Scottish Government information provided to date, which had formed the basis of the feasibility study.

The Committee were advised that since the report had been issued, there were now five stakeholders/partners, Aberdeen City, Aberdeenshire, Aberdeen Harbour Board, Peterhead Port Authority and Aberdeen Airport.

During discussion the Committee commented that the Buchan Area Committee should be updated regularly on the project and Officers should consider how to do that; Area Committees should be kept updated as appropriate by way of formal meetings, or briefing notes as part of the wider consultation and early discussions should include a carbon matrix.

Having considered the content of the report, the Committee **agreed**:

- (1) to **note** the high-level results of the Feasibility Study on a North East Greenport model;
- (2) to **note** that a decision on whether to bid would depend on the positions taken by the two port operators, based on the final prospectus guidance and the invitation to bid when those were published by the Scottish Government;
- (3) to **support** continued engagement in the next stage, by commissioning the development of a full bid proposal;
- (4) to **agree** that the anticipated costs for the next stage which would be split between the consortia partners and that Aberdeenshire's contribution would be funded from the Resilience and Recovery Fund Reserve; and

- (5) to **instruct** the Head of Service (Economic Development and Protective Services) to update the Infrastructure Services Committee on progress, and to obtain the Committee's approval for Council support for any eventual bid submission.

ITEMS FOR NOTING

- (A) Minute of the North East Scotland Fisheries Development Partnership Meeting of 13 November 2020. (**APPENDIX A**).
- (B) Minute of the North East Agricultural Advisory Group Meeting of 25 November 2020. (**APPENDIX B**).
- (C) Minute of the Northern Roads Collaboration Joint Committee Meeting of 27 November 2020. (**APPENDIX C**).

APPENDIX A

NORTH EAST SCOTLAND FISHERIES DEVELOPMENT PARTNERSHIP

WOODHILL HOUSE, ABERDEEN, 13 NOVEMBER, 2020

- Present:**
- Aberdeenshire Council** – Councillors J Cox (Chair), Cllrs J Gifford, K Adam (as a substitute for G Reynolds) D Beagrie, C Buchan and A Kille.
 - Aberdeen City Council** – Councillor C Allard
 - Lunar Fish Producers' Organisation** – R Stevenson
 - Moray Council** – Cllr M Macrae and Cllr S Warren
 - North and East Regional Inshore Fisheries Group** – J Mouat.
 - Peterhead Port Authority** – S Brebner, P Duncan and S Paterson
 - Scottish Enterprise** – I Garrett
 - Scottish Fishermen's Federation** - E Macdonald.
 - Scottish Pelagic Fishermen's Association** - I Gatt.
 - Scottish Seafood Association** – J Buchan and R Scatterty
 - Scottish White Fish Producers' Association Ltd** – M Park
 - Seafish** – H Duggan
 - Seafood Scotland** – D Fordyce.
 - Grampian Seafood Alliance** - M Clark and M Robertson.
 - Members of Parliament** – D Duguid (Banff and Buchan) and R Thomson (Gordon).
 - Members of the Scottish Parliament** – P Chapman and T Mason (North-East Scotland Region), S Stevenson (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) and M Watt (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine).
- Apologies:**
- Aberdeenshire Council** – Councillor G Reynolds.
 - Aberdeen City Council** – Councillor J Laing.
 - Aberdeen Fish Producers Organisation** – D Anderson
 - Scottish Enterprise** – G Ford
 - Scottish Maritime Academy (NESCoI)** – L Hope.
 - Marine Scotland Science** – C Needle.
 - Members of Parliament** – S Flynn (L Marwick as substitute).
 - Members of the Scottish Parliament** – G Dey, J FitzPatrick, L Macdonald, J Marra, G Martin (N Burns as substitute), M McDonald, S Robison and K Stewart.
- Officers:**
- J Savege, G Buchanan, J Harrold, D McDonald (Aberdeenshire Council); and J Grant (Moray Council).
- Also in attendance:** Dr C Black (NHS Grampian), K Findlay (Press and Journal), C Littlejohn (NHS Grampian) and N Miller (HSE).

1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The Chair asked members if they had any interests to declare, in terms of the Councillors' Code of Conduct. No interests were declared.

2. PUBLIC SECTOR EQUALITY DUTY

In taking decisions on the undernoted items of business, the Partnership **agreed**, in terms of Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010:-

- (1) to have due regard to the need to:-
 - (a) eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation;
 - (b) advance equality of opportunity between those who share a protected characteristic and persons who do not share it, and
 - (c) foster good relations between those who share a protected characteristic and persons who do not share it; and
- (2) to consider, where an equality impact assessment has been provided, its contents and to take those into consideration when reaching a decision.

***EMERGENCY ITEM*: HIGH INCIDENCE OF COVID-19 WITHIN THE NORTH EAST SEAFOOD PROCESSING SECTOR**

The Deputy Director of Public Health at NHS Grampian had requested the opportunity to brief members on the high incidence of Covid-19 within the local seafood processing sector as an emergency item on the agenda. The request was granted and taken before the scheduled business of the meeting. Chris Littlejohn (Deputy Director of Public Health, NHS Grampian), Dr Corri Black (Public Health Consultant, NHS Grampian) and Niall Miller (Principal Inspector, Health and Safety Executive, HSE) introduced themselves to members and presented information on confirmed CV-19 case numbers, distribution and key sectors affected, including the local seafood processing sector. Members were advised by Mr Littlejohn that a multi-agency Incident Management Team (IMT) had been convened to address concerns over the rising incidence of CV-19 cases associated with the seafood processing industry and the IMT was working closely with companies to put control measures in place. Dr Black advised that case numbers were relatively low and steady across Grampian, but that there had been a sharp rise in some parts of Aberdeenshire since 1 November 2020, principally in Fraserburgh and Peterhead, and strongly linked to seafood processing staff. The aim of the IMT was to work closely with industry to develop a better understanding of how the sector functions to help identify and manage transmission risks. Mr Miller (HSE) emphasised the importance of social distancing and urged compliance with recommended workplace control measures. After a question and answer session, the Chair thanked Mr Littlejohn, Mr Miller and Dr Black for their valuable contribution to the meeting and their efforts in support of the seafood sector.

Action Point 1: Send contact details for Scottish Seafood Association to IMT

3. MINUTE OF MEETING OF THE PARTNERSHIP OF 21 FEBRUARY, 2020

On consideration of the circulated Minute of Meeting of the Partnership of 21 February, 2020, members **approved** it as a correct record.

4. MATTERS ARISING

Three action points were carried forward and are addressed respectively in Items 8, 9 and 10 of the current Agenda.

5. PRESENTATION: BREXIT: THE LATEST BY ELSPETH MACDONALD, CHIEF EXECUTIVE, SFF

Members **noted** an oral update from Elspeth Macdonald (Chief Executive, Scottish Fishermen's Federation), which reviewed progress on numerous work strands related to Brexit including: the current state of fisheries negotiations between the EU and the UK, the operational readiness of the industry and the UK Fisheries Bill. Ms Macdonald noted that the UK has now signed framework fisheries agreements with Norway and Faroe but that bi-lateral and tri-lateral negotiations involving the UK, EU and Norway cannot commence until a post-Brexit trade deal has been agreed between the UK and EU. Ms Macdonald informed members that SFF, Seafish and Seafood Scotland are collating information as it emerges to provide advice to those within the wider fisheries industry. After a question and answer session, the Chair thanked Ms Macdonald for her contribution to the meeting.

6. PRESENTATION: THE SCOTTISH SEAFOOD SECTOR THROUGH THE PANDEMIC AND BEYOND BY DONNA FORDYCE, HEAD OF SEAFOOD SCOTLAND

Members **noted** a presentation by Donna Fordyce (Head of Seafood Scotland), which described the extensive range of work undertaken by Seafood Scotland during the CV-19 pandemic and to prepare for the end of the post-Brexit Transition Period. Seafood markets have been badly hit by the pandemic with many processors now experiencing declining sales again following the second wave of the virus. Key issues include the collapse of foodservice markets, transportation issues (reduced number of passenger flights has curtailed hold-sharing export capacity) and costs associated with making workplaces CV-19 safe, including PPE provision and regular deep cleaning. Distancing measures have led to declines in productivity and reduced profit margins. Seafood Scotland is supporting companies by providing weekly bulletins, covering Brexit preparations and CV-19, including reports from key export markets. Seafood Scotland has also organised promotional activities including online Supper Club and seafood 'MasterChef' initiatives and is embarking on a two-year project to exploit market opportunities in the UK retail sector as well as overseas. After a question and answer session, the Chair thanked Donna Fordyce for her contribution to the meeting.

Action point 2: Information to be presented at the next meeting on the industry impact of the closure of supermarket fish counters

Action point 3: Update to be presented at the next meeting on future fisheries funding programmes and eligibility criteria

7. PRESENTATION: UPDATE ON EXPORT HEALTH CERTIFICATION FOR SCOTTISH SEAFOOD BY JOHN GRANT, TEAM MANAGER (PUBLIC HEALTH), ABERDEENSHIRE COUNCIL

Members **noted** an oral update by Gordon Buchanan (Service Manager Environmental Health and Trading Standards, Aberdeenshire Council) on behalf of John Grant (Team Manager, Public Health, Aberdeenshire Council) regarding the council's preparations for seafood exports service provision post-Brexit and an overview of Export Hubs, which will be operated by logistics companies with certification services provided by Certifying Officers (Official Vets) from Food Standards Scotland. Aberdeenshire Council is working with Peterhead Port Authority to create a local certification centre (not an Export Hub) to enhance capacity and operational efficiency. Officers from the council's Environmental Health Service had already inspected over 250 fishing vessels (as food premises) to meet EU seafood supply chain quality requirements. Aberdeenshire Council is still trying to establish industry intentions and the likely level of local demand for export health certification services (ie non-Hub activity). Mr Buchanan encouraged vessel owners and all seafood businesses intending to use council certification services to make immediate contact with Environmental Health so that preparatory work (eg premises inspections for attestations) can be carried out, thereby minimising delay and disruption when the new arrangements for seafood exports come into effect on 1 January 2021. After a question and answer session, the Chair thanked Gordon Buchanan for his contribution to the meeting.

8. BULLETIN: FUTURE PROOFING THE SEAFOOD INDUSTRY STUDY AND THE ONE SEAFOOD TRANSFORMATION PROJECT

Members **noted** an oral update report by the Industry Sector Executive on the 'Future Proofing the Seafood Industry study and the ONE Seafood Transformation Project (STP). The former was officially launched on 30 October 2020. All NESFDP members were invited. 'Future Proofing' recommendations have been adopted by STP, a major initiative to secure >£75M investment. Further STP updates will be provided at future meetings.

9. BULLETIN: SCOTTISH SEAFOOD CENTRE OF EXCELLENCE (SSCE) PROJECT UPDATE

Members **noted** an oral update report by the Industry Sector Executive on the 'Scottish Seafood Centre of Excellence Project'. The SSCE Business Case is at an advanced stage and the current iteration has been shared with UK and Scottish Governments. The final version will require to be tailored to meet the criteria, once known, for the new UK structural funding programme for the fisheries/seafood sector.

10. BULLETIN: RESPONSIBLE FISHING SCHEME AND FISHING VESSEL INSPECTIONS

Members **noted** an oral update report by the Industry Sector Executive on the relationship between the 'Responsible Fishing Scheme' (RFS) and official (EU) fishing vessel inspections carried out by Environmental Health Officers (EHOs) as part of the seafood export supply chain.

Seafish, which created RFS, and the council's EH service had both confirmed that regardless of RFS membership, all vessels would be subject to the same statutory inspection, in accordance with EU food safety law (a more stringent test than RFS).

11. BULLETIN: FUTURE FISHERIES MANAGEMENT IN SCOTLAND

Members **noted** an oral update report by the Industry Sector Executive on future Fisheries Management in Scotland. Scottish Government carried out a consultation in March 2019, responses had been analysed and the Scottish Government's response to comments was published in the report.

12. INDUSTRY REPORTS AND ROUND TABLE ROUND-UP

The Partnership **noted** updates from Simon Brebner (CEO, Peterhead Port Authority), who described the many challenges in keeping the fish market operational during the CV-19 pandemic. The impact on tonnage has not been as detrimental as expected, however the adverse impact on value has been considerable – around 15%. The Partnership also considered comments from Cllr Charles Buchan (Aberdeenshire Council), who noted the imminent ending of funding from DEFRA and Scottish Government for KIMO and the 'Fishing for Litter' project. Cllr Buchan appealed to members from industry to support campaigns such projects which play a critical part in supporting the reputation of the industry. The Industry Support Executive offered his assistance but advised that securing grant funds at this time for the project's continuation would be challenging - EMFF had ended, no details of the UK successor scheme were available and the Crown Estate allocation to the council for 2020/21 had been committed.

Action point 4: Support to be provided for KIMO Fishing for Litter project

13. A.O.C.B.

There was no further business for the Partnership to note.

14. PROPOSED MEETING DATES IN 2021

The Partnership **agreed** that future meetings should continue to take place virtually via Skype, unless otherwise specified on:

- Friday 19 February 2021 at 1pm,
- Friday 11 June 2021 at 1pm
- Friday 12 November 2021 at 1pm.

Action Point 1: Send contact details for Scottish Seafood Association to CV-19 Incident Management Team

Action point 2: Information to be presented at the next meeting on the industry impact of the closure of supermarket fish counters

Action point 3: Update to be presented at the next meeting on future fisheries funding programmes and eligibility criteria

Action point 4: Support to be provided for KIMO Fishing for Litter project

APPENDIX B

NORTH EAST SCOTLAND AGRICULTURE ADVISORY GROUP

VIRTUAL SKYPE MEETING

WEDNESDAY, 25 NOVEMBER, 2020

- Present:**
- Aberdeen Chamber of Commerce** – C Philips
 - Aberdeenshire Council** – Provost W Howatson (Chair),
Councillors S Duncan, J Ingram, D Robertson, I Taylor and J Whyte
 - Aberdeen City Council** – Councillor N MacGregor
 - Angus Council** - Councillors K Braes
 - Bank of Scotland** – P Reid
 - Food Standards Scotland** – P Smyth
 - Herd Advance Ltd** – J Grant
 - JHI** - K Thomson
 - LANTRA Scotland** – S Howden
 - Moray Council** – Councillor D Bremner
 - NFU Scotland** – C Adam and L Paterson
 - SAC Consulting** - D Ross
 - Scottish Agricultural Organisation Society** – T Bailey and J Booth
 - Scottish Forestry** – J Nott
 - Scottish Land and Estates** – F Van Aardt and D Fyffe
 - Scottish Rural College** – R Graham
 - SEPA** - P Wright
 - Visit Scotland** - J Robinson
- Apologies:**
- Aberdeen City Council** – A Scott
 - Aberdeenshire Council** – Cllr J Hutchison
 - Agriculture and Rural Economy Directorate** – J Stuart
 - Angus Council** - Cllr B Myles
 - JHI** – Prof D Roberts
 - Moray Council** – Councillor T Eagle
 - Scottish Enterprise** – G Ford
 - Strutt and Parker** – L Irwin
- Officers:**
- Aberdeenshire Council** - N David, Senior Committee Officer, J Harrold, Assistant Committee Officer and D McDonald, Industry Support Executive ED & PS (Aberdeenshire Council)

1. WELCOME, INTRODUCTIONS AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The Chair welcomed everyone present to the meeting. Members were asked if they had interests to declare. No declarations of interest were intimated.

APPENDIX B

2. PUBLIC SECTOR EQUALITY DUTY

In taking decisions on the undernoted items of business, the Partnership **agreed**, in terms of Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010:-

- (1) to have due regard to the need to:-
 - (a) eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation;
 - (b) advance equality and opportunity between those who share a protected characteristic and persons who do not share it, and
 - (c) foster good relations between those who share a protected characteristic and persons who do not share it; and
- (2) to consider, where an equality impact assessment had been provided, its contents and to take those into consideration when reaching a decision.

3. MINUTE OF MEETING OF 23 SEPTEMBER, 2020

The Minute of Meeting of 23 September, 2020 was circulated and **approved** as a correct record.

4. MATTERS ARISING

Derek expressed that there were three previous items to be reported on. The first, a visit to Glensaugh Farm which was to be arranged after the last meeting of the Group. Due to current Covid-19 restrictions, this will be arranged for as soon as the restrictions allow. Secondly, there was a request to contact the Dimbleby Team which has now been completed with no commitment to a representative attending a meeting as of yet. Thirdly, there was to be an update on the Internal Market Bill which will follow once the bill has completed its passage through the process.

5. PRESENTATION: FARM CO-OPERATION: MORE RELEVANT THAN EVER BY TIM BAILEY, CHIEF EXECUTIVE, SAOS

Members **noted** a presentation by Tim Bailey, Chief Executive of the Scottish Agricultural Organisation Society, which addressed the benefits of farm co-operation which included increased efficiency, productivity, and mitigation of risk. He provided members with an insight to how technology can help to align a business mission through providing the opportunity to increase scale and form a closer customer connection. Tim explained the barriers to a farm co-operation platform, including the perception that it is an outdated concept which aids the stagnant mindset in the agricultural industry. This concept has proven especially effective during the Covid-19 pandemic, a pulled knowledge and set of resources has allowed co-operatives to be agile and resistant. After a question and answer session, the Chair thanked Tim for an informative presentation and his contribution to the meeting.

APPENDIX B

6. PRESENTATION: EU EXIT – EXPORT UPDATE BY PAT SMYTH, HEAD OF IMPORTS/EXPORTS, FOOD STANDARDS SCOTLAND

. Members **noted** a presentation by Pat Smyth, Head of Imports & Exports for Food Standards Scotland in which the impending EU Exit and what this may mean for exports in the agricultural industry was discussed. Pat has been working on Food Standards Scotland's Brexit negotiations for the last three years and has noted several assumptions to illustrate the possible outcomes that Brexit will bring in terms of trade. Pat then discussed (1) the UK National Listing, (2) the EU Traces System, (3) the need for certification for Export, (4) charging for Export Health Certificates and (5) the Heath and ID mark on packaging. After a question and answer session, the Chair thanked Pat for an informative presentation and his contribution to the meeting.

7. PRESENTATION: THE HERD ADVANCE STOCKMAN SYSTEM BY JILLY GRANT AND MURDOCH DUNCAN, HERD ADVANCE LTD

Members **noted** a presentation by Jilly Grant, Grant and Murdoch Duncan, Herd Advance Ltd, which discussed current industry challenges and limitations, industry drives and focus, staffing shortages and new marketing opportunities. Jilly went on to discuss their new technology, the Herd Advance Stockman System and explained the benefits of using a system such as this, the industry traction and the route to market. After a question and answer session, the Chair thanked Jilly for an informative presentation and his contribution to the meeting.

8. BULLETIN: UK AGRICULTURE BILL

Members **noted** an oral update report by the Industry Sector Executive on the UK Agriculture Bill, which passed into law on 11 November 2020 and although it primarily affects England it will have implications for how agriculture in Scotland is supported. This Bill will influence trade deals that will inevitably affect Scotland's agricultural sector and the importance of international trade will be highlighted.

9. BULLETIN: POST BREXIT POTATO EXPORTS

Members **noted** an oral update report by the Industry Sector Executive on Post Brexit Potato Exports, which detailed the importance on potato exports in the North East. A NESAAG Seed Study revealed that Angus has 31% of the national potato area, with the importance of seed potatoes is rising with their value being higher. With Brexit looming, operators have been increasing their levels of import to ensure that exporting is certain before 1 January 2021.

10. A.O.C.B.

There was no further competent business to be discussed.

APPENDIX B

11. PROPOSED DATES OF 2021 MEETINGS

The proposed dates of the 2021 meetings of NESAAAG are 10am on Wednesday 28 April 2021, 10am on Wednesday 15 September 2021 and 10am on Wednesday 24 November 2021. All meetings will take place via Skype unless otherwise stated. These dates were **agreed** by the Group.

APPENDIX C

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