

Meeting of Chairs of the Regional Transport Partnerships

Town Hall, Lerwick

9 January 2007

Note of Meeting

Present:	Cllr Jim Irvine	Chair, Shetland Transport Partnership (Chair)
	Michael Craigie	Shetland Transport Partnership
	Cllr Charles King	Chair, HITRANS
	Howard Brindley	HITRANS
	Cllr Alison McInnes	Chair, Nestrans
	Ben Kerfoot	Nestrans
	Cllr Russell Imrie	Chair, SEStran
	Alex Macaulay	SEStran
	Cllr Ivor Hyslop	Chair, South West Scotland Transport Partnership
	Alistair Speedie	South West Scotland Transport Partnership
	Cllr Alistair Watson	Chair, Strathclyde Partnership for Transport
	Ron Culley	Strathclyde Partnership for Transport
	Cllr Alan Livingstone	Chair, TACTRAN
	Eric Guthrie	TACTRAN

Apologies: Peter Cockhead Nestrans

As Shetland Transport Partnership was hosting the meeting Councillor Irvine took the Chair and welcomed everyone to Shetland.

1. Note of Last Meeting, 29 September 2006

The note of the meeting was agreed. One matter arising:

❖ **Item 2 – Note of Previous Meeting** – Councillor McInnes reported that a Dispensation Note had now been received from the Standards Commission which had resolved the issue discussed at the last meeting regarding the involvement of non-Councillor members in Board discussions. Councillor McInnes welcomed the flexibility which had been shown and the positive result.

2. Agenda and Arrangements for Meeting with the Minister for Transport, 9 January

Councillor Irvine referred to the Agenda which had been previously circulated for the meeting which was to follow with the Minister for Transport. Councillor Irvine advised that the Scottish Executive had since asked that the item they had requested on 'Enhanced Demand Responsive Transport Budget' be removed as the Minister had decided not to discuss this matter at the meeting. Councillor Watson requested that the issue of Demand Responsive Transport still be raised with the Minister. It was agreed that Councillor Irvine would refer to the issue in his introductory remarks to the Minister. The agenda was agreed and it was also agreed that each Chair would introduce a particular agenda item as proposed in the briefing note which had been previously circulated.

The following items for discussion with the Minister which did not otherwise appear on the agenda for this meeting were discussed:

Item 4 – Scottish Executive funding for RTPs for 2007-08 and beyond – Councillor McInnes noted that it would be important to seek assurance from the Minister on core funding for next year and the continuation of funding streams for development and implementation of Regional Transport Strategies. Councillor Hyslop suggested that the issue of how funding is provided in future to RTPs be raised, specifically whether GAE should be provided directly to the RTPs for transport services they are providing, rather than through requisition from Councils. There were mixed views on this issue and it was recognised that the situation in Model 3 RTPs was different from that in Model 1 RTPs due to the range of functions that they exercised, and that there were particular issues affecting single authority RTPs.

It was agreed that the issue regarding GAE should not be raised at this time. It was agreed that in view of the particular circumstances for South West and Shetland RTPs, the lead officers for those RTPs would discuss the matter further with a view to raising with the Minister at a later date.

Item 9 – Tolloed Bridges / Estuarial Crossings – Councillor Livingstone advised that he intended to ask the Minister for an update on the position regarding what type of additional Forth Crossing was being considered and the timescale for delivery. He also proposed seeking any update on the future of tolling regimes for the Forth and Tay Road Bridges.

3. Ferry Users Consultation Arrangements

A paper was circulated by Howard Brindley and Councillor King provided an update on progress in establishing new consultation arrangements to replace the Shipping Services Advisory Committees (SSAC). It was noted that the proposals that were agreed at the previous Chairs' meeting on 29 September had been discussed with the Minister on 4 October. The new arrangements involved a two-tier approach, with Tier 1 focusing on local issues arising between ferry users and operators and Tier 2 focusing on strategic development of ferry services.

Councillor King reported that the Tier 1 arrangements for the Northern Isles had been put in place already and that the first meeting of the Tier 2 group would take place in the spring. Councillor King advised that there had been difficulties in agreeing the arrangements for the Clyde and Hebrides routes, with local concerns regarding the level of representation at the Tier 2 level. Detailed operational notes for the new arrangements were being prepared by HITRANS and SPT officials for the final SSAC meeting in Renfrew on 22 February at which it was hoped there would be agreement on the way forward.

4. CPT/Bus Issues

Councillor Imrie noted that the proposals in the National Transport Strategy and Bus Action Plan meant that continued liaison with CPT was important in identifying common ground and making progress. In particular it was considered that more needed to be asked of bus operators in return for the public funding they received through the concessionary travel scheme and other funding streams. It was recognised that there was an important role for discussion between individual RTPs and operators as well as between the Chairs and CPT on more general issues.

It was agreed that it would be appropriate to arrange another meeting with CPT, and to aim to schedule this to coincide with the next meeting of the RTP Chairs.

5. Update on Regional Transport Strategies and Cross-Boundary Issues

Councillor Irvine invited each of the Regional Transport Partnerships to provide an update on the progress of its Regional Transport Strategy. It was noted that it was important that the RTSs give appropriate recognition to cross-boundary issues.

Shetland Transport Partnership – The draft RTS is out for consultation and on schedule for submission by the end of March. No major issues had arisen so far from the consultation.

Tactran – The draft RTS would be considered by the Board on 16 January, following which it would be out to consultation until 16 March. Tactran still intended to submit its strategy by the end of March.

SEStran – The draft RTS is currently out to consultation until 26 January. No major issues had arisen so far from the consultation. SEStran had undertaken question and answer sessions with three Councils and it was proposed that an additional round of consultation be undertaken with all constituent Councils on the final draft to gain endorsement prior to submission. Meetings had taken place with Tactran, SPT and authorities in north east England to cover cross-boundary issues.

HITRANS – The draft RTS is out to consultation until 31 January. The draft was being considered by all constituent councils, Highlands and Islands Enterprise and Community Planning Partnerships. The draft RTS had been well-received with no major issues arising. HITRANS proposed to move from a Model 1 to Model 3 partnership.

South West of Scotland Transport Partnership – The draft RTS is out to consultation until 9 February. This included consideration of the draft by all Area Committees of the Council. No major issues had arisen so far.

SPT – The draft RTS is out to consultation until 12 February and had generated considerable interest. A public meeting was being organised at the Glasgow Royal Concert Hall in response to high level of interest in the strategy's proposals.

Nestrans – The draft is out to consultation until 7 February, including consideration by Council committees and a meeting of the stakeholder forum. The final RTS will go to the Board on 14 March for approval prior to submission.

RTPs stressed the timescale was tight but all were committed to meeting the end of March deadline for submission. It was suggested to request further detail on the approval process from the Minister.

6. High Speed Rail and Other Heavy Rail Issues

Councillor Watson noted that High Speed Rail was high on the political agenda and pointed to its potential role in rebalancing the UK economy, as discussed in the Eddington Report. He stressed it was important that Scotland did not lose out as a result of any future High Speed Rail developments. Councillor King added that it was important that there were not disbenefits for areas such as the Highlands and Islands and north east Scotland as a result of High Speed Rail serving Glasgow or Edinburgh. He also suggested that any domestic slots at London airports which may be released as a result of High Speed Rail, should be used to provide enhanced air access for those regions not directly served by such a rail link.

Eric Guthrie noted the recent publication of the Scotland's Railways strategy and the recent RUS consultation. He suggested clarification was required on how these fitted together and linked to the development of RTSs. Councillor Watson also noted that rolling stock procurement was a major issue for the future, particularly in order to provide capacity for new rail services, such as Edinburgh Airport Rail Link. He suggested that this meant that electrification was back on the agenda. It was agreed to raise these issues with the Minister.

7. RTP Input to Strategic Transport Projects Review

Alistair Speedie reported that a reference group had been established comprising lead officers of all RTPs to inform the STPR and that this would be meeting on 12 January. Concern was expressed by a number of those present at the manner in which RTPs had been involved in the process to date and a lack of clarity about the opportunities for RTPs to contribute. It was agreed that there needed to be meaningful, two-way dialogue between Transport Scotland and their consultants and RTPs and it was agreed that lead officers should meet to discuss this further ahead of the reference group meeting. It was also agreed to seek assurance from the Minister that these concerns would be addressed.

The issue of input to the 2007 Spending Review was also discussed and it was noted that in England, PTEs have a statutory role in contributing to the Spending Review. It was agreed to seek information from the Minister on how RTPs may input to the Spending Review process to ensure continued levels of funding for transport.

8. Equity and Rail Fares

Councillor Imrie referred to the recent rail fare increases and the differential and complex fare structures that exist across Scotland. He suggested that the franchise agreement was not sufficiently strong on this matter. It was noted that fare levels in the SPT area tended to be lower than elsewhere in Scotland and that future fare reviews should 'level down' to SPT levels. In addition it was noted that there had been significant increases by the cross-Border operators in unregulated fares, which were not controlled by franchise agreements. It was agreed to seek the Minister's views on these issues.

9. National Issues Warranting Joint RTP Position

Michael Craigie noted that many national issues had been discussed already and Chairs were invited to consider whether it was appropriate to formulate joint position statements on issues such as these. Councillor Watson referred to SPT's involvement in PTEG and the strength of argument that was provided by organisations taking a common position and providing a respected voice. Councillor McInnes referred to the Memorandum of Understanding agreed at the last meeting and suggested that the group prioritise key issues where there is common ground.

The Chairs expressed support in principle and requested officers to produce a paper on this issue for the next meeting, setting out key issues on which it would be most beneficial to agree a common position and providing an example of a position statement for agreement.

10. Demand Responsive Transport

As discussed at the beginning of the meeting, the Chairs agreed that an update be sought from the Minister on any future announcement.

11. Relationship Between RTPs and Constituent Councils

Councillor Irvine invited Chairs to update the meeting on how the relationship between RTPs and constituent councils was developing. From the discussion that followed, it was noted that prioritisation of projects across the region and the need to work across local authority boundaries sometimes created difficulties, but that it was important to maintain good relations with all constituent Councils. It was also suggested that implementation of RTSs may also involve difficult decisions on any future transfer of functions.

12. Date of Next Meeting

Councillor Livingstone confirmed that Tactran would host the next meeting in Perth. It was agreed that this would take place on 29 March 2007, possibly in conjunction with a meeting between RTP Chairs and CPT.

BK/12 January 2007

Meeting of Chairs of the Regional Transport Partnerships and the Minister for Transport

Town Hall, Lerwick
9 January 2007

Note of Meeting

Present:	Tavish Scott MSP	Minister for Transport
	Diane McLafferty	Scottish Executive
	Alistair Mitchell	Scottish Executive
	Douglas Forson	Scottish Executive
	Janet Egdell	Transport Scotland
	Cllr Jim Irvine	Chair, Shetland Transport Partnership (Chair)
	Michael Craigie	Shetland Transport Partnership
	Cllr Charles King	Chair, HITRANS
	Howard Brindley	HITRANS
	Cllr Alison McInnes	Chair, Nestrans
	Ben Kerfoot	Nestrans
	Cllr Russell Imrie	Chair, SEStran
	Alex Macaulay	SEStran
	Cllr Ivor Hyslop	Chair, South West Scotland Transport Partnership
	Alistair Speedie	South West Scotland Transport Partnership
	Cllr Alistair Watson	Chair, Strathclyde Partnership for Transport
	Ron Culley	Strathclyde Partnership for Transport
	Cllr Alan Livingstone	Chair, TACTRAN
	Eric Guthrie	TACTRAN
Apologies:	Peter Cockhead	Nestrans

1. Welcome and Introductory Remarks

Councillor Irvine welcomed the Minister and thanked him for agreeing to meet in Shetland. He noted that while the Minister did not now intend making an announcement on Demand Responsive Transport, the Chairs would appreciate any update he was able to provide on this issue.

The Minister responded by welcoming the RTP Chairs to Shetland and hoped that they would enjoy their visit. He also welcomed the publication of draft RTSs for consultation and appreciated the hard work of RTPs in producing draft strategies. The Minister indicated he would say something about DRT in the context of the item on future funding.

2. NTS and Daughter Action Plans

The Minister referred to the publication of the National Transport Strategy and 'daughter' action plans in December. He said that these represented coherent thinking on the future of transport, and in particular were the product of cross-portfolio working particularly on issues such as health and the environment. He noted that the detail of the NTS and its Action Plans would be discussed further with the RTPs.

3. Progress on Regional Transport Strategies and Future RTP functions

Councillor Irvine invited each of the RTP Chairs to provide an update on the progress of their Regional Transport Strategies.

Tactran – Councillor Livingstone reported that the draft RTS was to be considered by the Board on 16 January and thereafter would be out to consultation from 22 January until 16 March. While the timetable was tight, they were still aiming for submission by 31 March.

SEStran – Councillor Imrie reported that the RTS was out to consultation until 26 January, following which it was intended that constituent Councils would have an opportunity to endorse the final RTS prior to its submission at the end of March.

HITRANS – Councillor King reported that consultation was ongoing until 31 January. It was also intended that the final RTS be put to the Councils for endorsement prior to submission.

South West of Scotland Transport Partnership – Councillor Hyslop reported that the draft RTS was out to consultation until 9 February. The draft strategy was being considered by the Council's Area Committees and consideration was being given to cross-boundary issues.

SPT – Councillor Watson reported that the draft RTS was out to consultation until 12 February and had generated considerable interest. A public meeting was being organised at the Glasgow Royal Concert Hall in response to high level of interest in the strategy's proposals.

Nestrans – Councillor McInnes reported that the draft RTS was out to consultation until 7 February and the Board had been actively involved in its development. The consultation was involving community planning mechanisms and a meeting of the stakeholder forum was taking place later in January.

Shetland Transport Partnership – Councillor Irvine reported that the draft RTS was currently out to consultation until 26 January and that a number of community, stakeholder and public meetings were being held.

It was noted that although the timetable was tight, all RTPs are aiming for submission by the end of March.

On the issue of future functions, Councillor King asked the Minister to consider whether he needed to do more to encourage local authorities and RTPs to think about what functions it would be appropriate to transfer in the future. The Minister indicated that he was happy to have further discussions on this issue.

4. Scottish Executive funding for RTPs in 2007-08 and Beyond

Councillor McInnes noted that RTPs were setting budgets for next year but were still awaiting confirmation of revenue funding, including whether there would be continued funding for development and implementation of Regional Transport Strategies. She also requested that the Minister give consideration to establishing 3-year budget settlements for RTPs in future.

The Minister responded by saying that the Executive was looking at 3-year budgets in the context of the 2007 Spending Review. With regard to funding for 2007-08, some details were still being sorted out and RTPs would be advised of the outcome shortly.

With regard to Demand Responsive Transport, the Minister advised that he intended to simplify three existing funding streams into one and that further information on this would be circulated to RTPs. There would be an enhanced budget for DRT and an increased role for RTPs. The Minister mentioned that the Executive's thinking had been influenced by the Finnish model of DRT.

5. RTP Input into Strategic Transport Projects Review and the Comprehensive Spending Review

Councillor Hyslop referred to the Strategic Transport Projects Review (STPR) that had been commenced by Transport Scotland and reported that when the Chairs had discussed this at the previous meeting, a number of concerns had been expressed by RTPs about the way in which the review had progressed to date and the opportunities for RTP involvement in the future. In particular, Councillor Hyslop said that there needed to be two-way dialogue between Transport Scotland and their consultants and the RTPs to ensure that RTP issues and proposals were fully taken into account.

On the issue of the 2007 Spending Review, Councillor Hyslop asked what opportunity there would be for RTPs to feed into this process. He queried whether, as statutory bodies, RTPs would have a role as of right in contributing to the process.

The Minister undertook to consider how best RTPs could assist in making the case for transport investment in the Spending Review. He suggested that RTSs would play a part in stating the outcomes that RTPs are looking to achieve.

Regarding the STPR, the Minister expressed his concern at the issues raised by the RTPs and stressed that the RTPs needed to play to full part in the process. In particular, the Minister said it was important that consultants working for Transport Scotland involved RTPs in a meaningful way. The Minister was clear that he wanted to see the concerns of RTPs addressed and asked RTPs to raise particular issues on the process with Transport Scotland officials.

6. Ferry Users' Consultation Arrangements

The new two-tier consultative arrangements proposed by the RTPs had been agreed at the last meeting with the Minister on 4 October 2006.

Councillor King reported that the Tier 1 arrangements for the Northern Isles had been put in place already and that the first meeting of the Tier 2 group would take place in the spring. Councillor King advised that there had been difficulties in agreeing the arrangements for the Clyde and Hebrides routes, with local concerns regarding the level of representation at the Tier 2 level. Detailed operational notes for the new arrangements were being prepared by HITRANS and SPT officials for the final SSAC meeting in Renfrew on 22 February at which it was hoped there would be agreement on the way forward.

The Minister welcomed the progress that had been made and Councillor Irvine recorded thanks of all present for the lead that HITRANS had taken in developing and implementing the new arrangements.

7. High Speed Rail and Other Heavy Rail Issues

Councillor Watson raised the issue of rolling stock procurement, noting that new trains were required to cater for the expanded rail network. He considered that it was important to avoid some of the mistakes that had been made in the past and sought information on a timetable for procurement. Councillor Watson also noted the intention of Network Rail to initiate a recasting of timetables and asked what role RTPs would have in this process. Councillor Watson also asked what plans the Executive had for further electrification of the rail network.

On the issue of High Speed Rail, Councillor Watson pointed to its potential role in rebalancing the UK economy, as discussed in the Eddington Report, and the benefits of High Speed Rail for Scotland. Councillor King added that a consequent reduction in domestic flights arising from new High Speed Rail services might also enable more slots to be made available at Heathrow and other airports for services from peripheral regions. Councillor Livingstone also referred to the importance of improving journey times on the existing network, in particular between Perth and Edinburgh / Glasgow.

The Minister noted the views of Eddington on High Speed Rail and agreed that its potential warranted further exploration. He stressed that the Government was committed to improving journey times as set out in the National Transport Strategy. The Minister suggested that the Scottish Executive and RTPs could agree a joint position on High Speed Rail. He noted Councillor King's point about access to hub airports, but also referred to the importance of investing in direct air links to avoid interlining.

The Minister said that rolling stock procurement was a major issue for Transport Scotland and that the agency had increased its expertise in this area and would progress the issue as a priority. The Minister also agreed that RTPs should be involved in any recasting of timetables. On electrification the Minister noted that Network Rail was currently looking at the Edinburgh – Glasgow route specifically and that the output of this work would feed into the STPR.

8. Rail Fares and Equity Across Scotland

Councillor Imrie referred to the recent rail fare increases and the different and complex fare structures that exist across Scotland. It was noted that fare levels in the SPT area tended to be lower than elsewhere in Scotland and that future fare reviews should 'level down' to SPT levels.

The Minister reported that Transport Scotland was reviewing fares policy this year and was also looking at capacity issues on the network at particular times. He noted that the peak period had been getting larger as patronage increased. He advised that Transport Scotland had introduced specific funding for improvements such as platform extensions which could be used to increase capacity. He said that First ScotRail was aware of the issues regarding fares and fare structures.

Councillor Imrie queried whether it was possible to get a better deal out of the franchise on fares and the Minister acknowledged that the level of funding available was an issue, but that Transport Scotland was keen to get the best possible outcome from the franchise.

Councillor McInnes added that operators had a role in making ticketing simpler and making it easier to buy cheaper, advance purchase tickets. She also noted that a

peak-time restriction on services between Aberdeen and Edinburgh/Glasgow introduced by First ScotRail had reduced the availability of cheaper flexible tickets for walk-up travellers. Councillor McInnes expressed concern that this disadvantaged longer-distance travellers in order to deal with commuter pressures on the approach to Edinburgh/Glasgow. The Minister agreed that ticketing could be made simpler but also acknowledged the need to deal with capacity issues arising from increased demand.

9. Tolloed Bridges Review / Estuarial Crossings

Councillor Livingstone stressed the economic importance of the Forth Road Bridge and sought clarification on whether the Minister was considering a new Forth crossing, whether this would be multi-modal and the time period for delivery of such a new crossing. Councillor Livingstone also asked the Minister if he could provide any update on the future of tolling on the Forth and Tay Road Bridges.

The Minister responded that he was looking at options for a new, multi-modal crossing, which may come into service between 2014 and 2020. He noted that a range of options was being considered, as well as what types of mode the crossing would accommodate, particularly in relation to public transport and the capacity of the existing Forth Rail Bridge. He noted that any new Forth crossing would be a major construction project and that there was an issue of how this would be financed. The Minister said that he was unable to provide any information on the future of tolling on the existing bridges.

Councillor Imrie referred to recent reports regarding potential usage of the Stirling-Alloa-Kincairdine by freight operators and the extent to which this would reduce traffic on the Forth Bridge. The Minister provided reassurance that he expected the Stirling-Alloa-Kincairdine line to be well utilised by freight traffic which would free up capacity across the Forth.

10. Date of Next Meeting

Councillor Irvine noted that the Chairs would next be meeting on 29 March in Perth and suggested the Minister may wish to join them. However as this may not be feasible, the date of the next meeting between the Chairs and the Minister is still to be arranged and agreed at a later date.

The Minister thanked Councillor Irvine and Shetland Transport Partnership for hosting the meeting. He noted that Councillor Irvine would be standing down at the election and paid tribute to his long service. The Minister also conveyed his good wishes to any other Chairs not returning after the election.