

Agenda Item No

Report No 276/99

## ANGUS COUNCIL

PLANNING AND TRANSPORT POLICY COMMITTEE  
ROADS COMMITTEE

11 MARCH 1999  
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### SUBJECT: REGIONAL TRANSPORT PARTNERSHIPS AND THE NATIONAL TRANSPORT FORUM FOR SCOTLAND

JOINT REPORT BY DIRECTOR OF PLANNING AND TRANSPORT AND DIRECTOR OF  
ROADS

**Abstract:** This Report comments on and responds to a consultation document published by the Scottish Office on how best to improve and co-ordinate the planning of transport across the boundaries of Local Authorities, and on the future role and responsibilities of the National Transport Forum for Scotland.

#### 1 RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Committee:-

1. note the terms of the Consultation Document which examines options for addressing the need to improve the co-ordination and planning of transport issues at national and regional level;
2. agree that this Report be submitted to the Scottish Office Development Department as the observations of Angus Council highlighting this Council's preference to base any new arrangements around voluntary partnership working rather than the creation of new statutory bodies with a range of powers.

#### 2 INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 The Scottish Integrated Transport White Paper "Travel Choices for Scotland" published in July 1998 (Report No. 878/98 refers) committed the Government to consult both on how best to improve and co-ordinate the planning of transport across the boundaries of Local Authorities, and on the future role and responsibilities of the National Transport Forum for Scotland, a body which brings together a wide range of transport-related interests from across the whole of Scotland. The Scottish Office have recently published a Consultation Document, as part of a series of follow-up documents to the Scottish White Paper, which seeks detailed views on both these issues.
- 2.2 A copy of the Consultation Document entitled "Regional Transport Partnerships and the National Transport Forum for Scotland" has been placed in the members lounge. The Scottish Office have requested views on the document by 31 March 1999.

### 3 CONSULTATION DOCUMENT

3.1 The Consultation Document is presented in seven main sections covering:-

Introduction	Provides the background to the document, including links at the U.K. level to the proposed establishment of the Commission for Integrated Transport.
National Transport Forum for Scotland	Identifies current membership and operation of the National Transport Forum and seeks views on longer term role.
Existing Regional Partnerships	Summarises current diversity of practice in co-ordinating transport issues across Local Authority boundaries, together with strategic land use planning arrangements.
Future Options for Regional Transport Partnerships : Their Role and Structure	Highlights Government's overall Objectives and Key Principles and summarises advantages/disadvantages of Passenger Transport Authorities; Joint Boards; and Non-Statutory Partnerships.
Future Options for Regional Transport Partnerships : Relationship to other Policies and Bodies	Comments on relationships between individual Local Authorities and Central Government; links with other Policy Areas; Role of Land Use Planning; links to Economic Development and Tourism; Issues relating to Environment and Health; Social Inclusion; Rural Development; Education and Awareness; Involvement of Transport Users.
Democratic Accountability and Relationship to the Scottish Executive and Parliament	Summarises direction to be given by Scottish Parliament and Executive and indicates possible hierarchy of partnership arrangements including Parliament and Committees/National Transport Forum/Regional Partnerships/Individual Local Authorities.
Summary of Consultation Issues	Lists 50 issues on which views are invited (see Appendix 1 to this Report).

3.2 The stated aim of the document is to stimulate debate, rather than set out a single option or master plan. The results of the consultation will be put to the incoming Scottish Executive for its consideration.

### 4 DISCUSSION

4.1 Rteport 878/98 on the "Travel Choices for Scotland" White Paper noted that an initial meeting had been held on a possible Transport Partnership for Northern Scotland. Members agreed that Angus Council should continue to participate in considering an appropriate forum for addressing strategic transportation issues.

4.2 To date three meetings of the embryo Northern Scotland Transport Partnership have taken place. At the most recent meeting on 22 January 1999 Calum MacDonald, M.P., Minister for Housing, Transport and European Affairs, confirmed that a flexible approach should be adopted to the setting up of Regional Transport Partnerships which might vary between different parts of Scotland. This echoes the Government's sentiments expressed in the Consultation Document which indicate that:-

- it is for local communities to decide on the organisational solutions that best address their local circumstances;

- local circumstances differ and different parts of the country may wish to move at their own pace in pursuit of differing arrangements.
- 4.3 It is suggested that in responding to the Consultation Document this Council should frame its comments around support for a “bottom up” rather than “top down” approach which recognises that circumstances vary and that appropriate areas and roles for partnerships should be shaped by the views of Local Authorities individually and collectively. This would be accompanied by a clear preference for:-
- individual Local Authorities to retain current functions and powers including responsibility for preparing local transport strategies;
  - Regional Transport Partnerships to be formed on a voluntary non-statutory basis with an emphasis on consensus;
  - liaison, consultation, research to be among the roles addressed by the National Transport Forum.
- 4.4 A fuller response, based on the above preferences, to each of the 50 detailed issues raised in the Consultation Document is included in Appendix 1 to this Report.
- 4.5 The likelihood of overlapping partnerships has previously been recognised and a key theme in developing Regional Transport Partnerships will be to focus on common areas of interest where “added value” can be achieved through collaboration. To date the embryo Northern Scotland Transport Partnership has not agreed definitive terms of reference. Key transport matters which have been raised for discussion and which may help to shape the future geographical extent, role and direction of this Partnership focus on strategic transport links including issues concerned with peripherality covering:-
- road, rail, sea and air connections;
  - public and private transport including rural requirements;
  - transport and tourism.

## **5 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 There are no financial implications arising from this Report.

## **6 CONSULTATION**

- 6.1 The Chief Executive and Director's of Finance and Law & Administration have been consulted in the preparation of this Report.

## **7 CONCLUSION**

- 7.1 The Consultation Document seeks views on a wide range of related issues concerning the co-ordination and planning of transport matters at national and regional level. In developing the Council's response to the document a theme underpinning more detailed comments is to base any new arrangements around voluntary partnership working rather than the creation of new statutory bodies with a range of powers.

**NOTE**

The following background papers, as defined by Section 50D of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973, (other than any containing confidential or exempt information) was relied on to a material extent in preparing the above Report.

- Regional Transport Partnerships and the National Transport Forum for Scotland : A Consultation - Scottish Office Development Department, January 1999.

AA/CGR/KW  
1 March 1999

Alex Anderson  
Director of Planning and Transport

Dr. Bob McLellan  
Director of Roads

## APPENDIX 1 - COMMENTS ON DETAILED ISSUES RAISED IN CONSULTATION DOCUMENT

### Chapter 2 National Transport Forum for Scotland

1. Is there still a need for a National Transport Forum for Scotland? Would the establishment of a Scottish Parliament, possibly with a select committee on transport, make its role redundant?

***Forum could retain a useful role as sounding board, advisory mechanism and link to Regional Partnerships.***

2. If the Scottish Executive were to dispense with the Forum, how might the Scottish Executive best liaise with any Scottish based members of the Commission for Integrated Transport?

***Preference to retain Forum otherwise ensure wide membership of any select Committee including representation from commission for Integrated Transport.***

3. If the Forum or a similar body is to continue, how might it best practically assist the establishment of an effective, integrated and sustainable transport system for Scotland?

***Promote a holistic view of transport policy including undertaking/ commissioning appropriate research including European context.***

4. What should its primary role be?

***Advisory; liaison; monitoring; co-ordination; sounding board.***

5. Should it be a consultative body offering advice to the Scottish Executive on possible new policy changes?

***This should be part of the Forum's role linked to 6 below.***

6. Or should it have a wider oversight role to scrutinise and measure progress towards the implementation of policy and the effective and co-ordinated management of transport operations across Scotland?

***This is also relevant to providing practical advice in 5 above.***

7. How should it relate to the Scottish Parliament and a possible transport Committee?

***A useful adjunct reporting to the Parliament/Committee- see 1, 5, 6 above.***

8. How should any successor body best carry out its role?

***Via full forum and appropriate sub groups - see 10 below.***

9. Who should chair the body? Should it be the Minister in the Scottish Executive with responsibility for Transport or a respected non-political figure?

***Depends on whether a select Committee on Transport is established. May be advantage in non-political appointment.***

10. What is the optimum size of such a body? Current membership is 38. Is this too large a number for such a body? Should the body operate with a smaller central Steering Committee and a number of sub-groups?

***Agree a more focused Steering Committee/Sub Group mechanism including enhanced local authority representation.***

11. The Forum's current membership is drawn from a wide range of interests from across Scotland - Annex 1 gives details of their backgrounds. Does this strike the right balance? If not, what changes would you make to the membership?

***A wide range of interests including local authority representation from Regional Transport Partnerships is appropriate.***

12. What role should sub-groups play in its work?

***Focus on different aspects of interest including research/policy development.***

13. Should the successor body have its own budget for research purposes? If so, what would be the most effective way to use such a budget? Should it employ a dedicated researcher or commission paper research studies into aspects of transport related planning and operations in Scotland?

***A research capability is highly desirable but does not require a dedicated budget.***

14. Who should provide the Secretariat for the Forum?

***Seconded from Scottish Office.***

15. Should a successor body produce an independent annual report on the integration of transport in Scotland?

***Useful to provide statement of achievements and issues.***

16. How should any successor body best relate to individual local authorities, to the Strathclyde Passenger Transport Authority and to the emerging regional partnerships?

***Liaison, advisory role - see 1, 11 above.***

17. Should the Strathclyde Passenger Transport Authority and each of the regional transport partnerships be represented on the body?

***Yes, this would strengthen linkages.***

## Chapter 4 Future Options for Regional Transport Partnerships: Their Role and Structure

1. The relative advantages and disadvantages of the three main models for regional co-operation:
  - Passenger Transport Authority (or similar)?
  - Joint Boards under the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 (similar to the existing Police and Fire Joint Boards)?
  - Non-statutory partnership (such as the South East Scotland Transport Partnership and the Highlands and Islands Integrated Transport Forum)?

### ***Further development of non-statutory partnerships.***

2. Whether regional bodies should continue to develop as voluntary groupings or whether they should be put on a statutory footing, and, if the latter, what powers are judged appropriate for them to exercise?

### ***Continue as voluntary groupings.***

3. Whether the Strathclyde Passenger Transport Authority model would be appropriate for use elsewhere in Scotland?

### ***Not relevant for many other parts of Scotland.***

4. Whether central government should intervene to arrive at a comprehensive regional transport coverage for the whole of Scotland or let the local authorities decide whether or not to establish or join a partnership?

### ***A voluntary approach based on consensus is preferred. Last resort powers available to central government, including funding priorities.***

5. Whether the existing Bridge Joint Boards should be recast as, or subsumed by, wider statutory partnerships and, if so, how?

### ***Do not favour statutory partnerships.***

6. Whether the regional partnerships should take on decision-making and funding responsibility for some or all of the following transport services within their areas:
  - Public transport (excluding rail)?
  - Ownership of some or all roads in the relevant areas?
  - The current functions of the Bridge Joint Boards?
  - CalMac, Northern Isles Ferry subsidies, HIAL and air subsidies in Highlands and Islands?

### ***Do not favour transfer of decision-making powers to regional partnerships.***

7. Whether the regional partnerships should take on a wider consultative role in relation to some or all of the above transport operations?

***Regional partnerships could play a useful consultative and lobbying role across a range of matters.***

8. Whether there are any implications for the current responsibilities of the Strathclyde Passenger Transport Authority?

***No comment.***

9. How wider national priorities might be safeguarded and progressed in the context of a more devolved transport policy and operating framework for transport services?

***Improved liaison across local/regional/national levels.***

10. Whether consultative partnerships should establish dedicated secretariats funded by means of a levy on local authority and possibly other partners?

***To be left for decision by individual partnerships. A single partnership model is not applicable.***

11. How the capital expenditure and current requirements of executive partnerships should be funded? What would be the process for deciding how much and where expenditure should fall?

***As 10 above will depend on how particular partnerships develop.***

12. The role that partnerships might play in taking forward road charging and workplace parking schemes?

***Depends on local circumstances for example not a priority issue for rural partnerships. Retain any powers at local authority level.***

13. How the key transport operators might be best involved in the work of the relevant partnerships?

***As full members.***

14. Whether transport operators should be under a duty to give evidence and/or appear before the regional partnership on request, though the government would expect such powers to be seldom if ever used in practice?

***No, the voluntary principle should underpin the arrangements.***

15. The scope for regional public/private partnerships?

***Partnerships should include both public and private representation.***



## Chapter 5 Future Options for Regional Transport Partnerships: Relationship to Other Policies and Bodies

1. Whether the lead role in preparing local transport strategies should rest with individual local authorities or the regional partnerships?

***Individual local authorities should have responsibility for local transport strategies.***

2. Whether local authorities should consult any regional partnership of which they are members on their draft Local Transport Strategy?

***May be appropriate as part of wider liaison.***

3. Whether local authorities which are not members of a regional partnership should nevertheless consult the relevant partnership(s) if its draft Local Transport Strategy impact on their interests?

***Might be helpful on a voluntary basis where a significant impact is envisaged.***

4. How best to secure closer working relationships between statutory planning authorities and regional partnerships?

***Via appropriate representation on and liaison with partnerships.***

5. Whether the statutory planning functions in local authorities should have a formal role in transport partnerships?

***Transport partnerships should have regard to strategic land use guidance prepared by local authorities.***

6. Whether the transport partnerships should have a formal role in the preparation of statutory plans, local plans and/or individual planning approvals?

***Should be consulted on Development Plan but no need to be statutory consultees.***

7. How economic development and tourism bodies might best be involved in any regional transport partnerships?

***As full members.***

8. The role of regional partnerships in measures to reduce the environmental impact of transport?

***Depends on focus of different partnerships which may vary across Scotland.***

9. How environment and heritage bodies (Scottish Natural Heritage, Scottish Environment Protection Agency and Historic Scotland) might be best involved in the work of the partnerships?

***As 8 above may depend on which issues are of particular relevance to a partnership e.g. on ad hoc basis.***

10. What role should regional transport partnerships play in reversing the growth of social exclusion in both urban and rural areas?

***Should complement efforts of individual partners taking account of Community Planning process.***

11. How best to ensure that the needs of rural areas are considered in the development of the regional partnership approach?

***Will depend on geographical area covered by partnership eg peripherality issues could be addressed.***

12. What role (if any) should regional transport partnerships play in raising awareness in the wider community of the benefits of integrated transport?

***General liaison role is appropriate.***

13. How bodies representing transport users might best be involved in the work of the partnership?

***As members of appropriate sub-groups.***

14. How business representative bodies might best be involved in the partnerships?

***As members of sub-groups.***

## **Chapter 6 Democratic Accountability and Relationship to the Scottish Executive and Parliament**

1. The mechanisms that would be required to ensure effective working relations between partnerships, the Scottish Executive and the Parliament?

***A flexible hierarchy would be appropriate with individual local authorities continuing to retain direct access to Scottish Executive and Parliament.***

2. How to safeguard the achievement of national policy goals?

***Improved liaison across local/regional/national levels complementing existing national powers (e.g. Secretary of State approval of Structure Plans) and further incentives. Ensuring adequate resources remains vital.***

3. How to ensure genuine accountability for the actions of the partnerships?

***As voluntary non-statutory partnerships are preferred accountability will continue to rest with individual partners.***

4. The appropriate reporting arrangements?

***To be decided by individual partnerships***