

SCOTLAND'S NATIONAL TRANSPORT STRATEGY

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1. Introduction

The 2004 Transport White Paper, *Scotland's Transport Future*, outlined the Scottish Executive's vision and five high-level Government objectives for transport in Scotland - to:

- Promote economic growth;
- Promote social inclusion;
- Protect our environment and improve health;
- Improve safety of journeys; and
- Improve integration.

The White Paper also detailed changes to the delivery of transport across Scotland and outlined a number of commitments, including the development of a National Transport Strategy (NTS).

Building on the 2004 White Paper, and in keeping with the vision and objectives already outlined, the Scottish Executive published *Scotland's National Transport Strategy* in December 2006. The NTS is part of a suite of documents, with specific issues being addressed in further detail through the *Bus Action Plan*, *Freight Action Plan* and *Scotland's Railways*.

As with major policy development of any nature, developing the NTS was a challenging process. It is recognised that many readers will be familiar with the content of the NTS and it is not the purpose of this paper to discuss the detail of the strategy but rather to consider the key processes, issues and challenges presented in developing the NTS¹.

The paper will seek to highlight the background to the NTS; methodology used in developing the NTS, in particular the extensive consultation undertaken with stakeholders, the general public and specific hard to reach groups; the input sought and received from a range of different departments across the Scottish Executive and the analytical work undertaken to support the development of the NTS. The paper will also focus on other key elements which formed part of the development of the NTS, in particular the mainstreaming of equalities and the application of the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) process to the NTS on a voluntary basis and the challenges this presented.

The paper will also discuss the Scottish Executive's plans in relation to the implementation, monitoring and review of the strategy.

2. Background

Published in December 2006, the NTS provides, for the first time, a single, comprehensive, national statement of the Scottish Executive's priorities and plans for transport in the future. The aim of the NTS is to promote economic growth, social inclusion and sustainable development through a safe, integrated and efficient transport network. The NTS outlines how this can be achieved through focusing on three strategic outcomes:

- **Improve journey times and connections**, to tackle congestion and the lack of integration and connections in transport which impact on our high level objectives for economic growth, social inclusion, integration and safety;
- **Reduce emissions**, to tackle the issues of climate change, air quality and health improvement which impact on our high level objective for protecting the environment and improving health; and
- **Improve quality, accessibility and affordability**, to give people a choice of public transport, where availability means better quality transport services and value for money or an alternative to the car.

Regional transport partnerships (RTPs), local authorities, transport operators and other public and private organisations will be key partners in delivering the aforementioned strategic outcomes. Section 6 provides further detail concerning the implementation of the NTS.

3. Consultation

One of the key challenges presented in developing the NTS was the complex and wide ranging issues and tensions which the strategy sought to address. This included issues which affect transport directly and also cross-cutting policy issues to which transport is strongly linked such as climate change, sustainable development, health improvement and access to education and tourism. In view of these issues an open, transparent, inclusive and wide-ranging consultation process was integral to the overall development of the strategy.

As part of the consultation process, a web-based approach was taken to facilitate easy access to information as the development of the strategy progressed, further supporting the open and inclusive approach adopted. Information provided on the NTS pages of the Scottish Executive website included write-ups of the events held and general updates on progress.

A number of different elements formed part of the consultation process including:

- Pre-consultation stakeholder events;
- Written consultation;
- Consultation with transport users;
- Consultation across the Scottish Executive; and
- External Reference Group.

3.1 Pre-Consultation Stakeholder Events

Early in the development of the NTS (June 2005 – April 2006) a series of pre-consultation events were held to enable the development of the NTS to be informed by the stakeholder community and to gather information on key issues. The events took the form of:

- Themed events – the environment, health etc;
- Mode specific events – on bus, cycling and walking etc but sometimes using existing forums such as the Scottish Rail Stakeholder Forum; and
- Regional events – working with RTPs to consider how the NTS should address regional issues and how the Regional Transport Strategies (RTSs) should address cross-RTP and national issues.

The stakeholder events sought to provide the opportunity for:

- The Scottish Executive to share information about the NTS process;
- Consultees to identify key issues for the NTS;
- Consultees to share information which might be useful in preparation of the NTS; and
- Consultees to consider how key issues might be addressed in the NTS.

In total, nineteen events took place. The outputs from all of these consultation events fed into the NTS Consultation Paper which was published in April 2006. This initial phase of stakeholder consultation concluded with a National Conference in May 2006 at which the consultation paper was discussed.

In addition, following publication of the consultation paper, two business breakfasts were held to discuss transport issues in detail with the business community and Highlands and Islands Enterprise hosted a series of meetings to provide an opportunity to focus specifically on key issues for the business community in the Highlands and Islands.

3.2 Written Consultation

The NTS Consultation Paper was published on 20 April 2006 for a 12 week public consultation. Over 600 copies of the consultation paper were distributed to a wide range of organisations and individuals with an interest in national transport policy. In addition, over 500 copies of a summary version of the consultation paper were also distributed.

Over 300 responses were received from a wide range of individuals and organisations. Research was commissioned to independently analyse the comments received, this included gathering information about the number and type of respondent; interpreting and analysing the responses and exploring the range and depth of views submitted. A systematic approach was adopted by the researchers with all responses collated and referenced using an electronic database, and then summarised with no judgement or weighting applied.

The findings from the analysis of the responses fed directly into the final NTS, with, 'you told us' text boxes incorporated throughout the document.

3.3 Consultation with Transport Users

In taking forward the development of the NTS it was recognised that a number of audiences – primarily the general public – typically do not respond to traditional written consultation exercises. In order to ensure that the views of transport users fed into the process, independent and objective qualitative research that placed a focus on understanding the views of the general public and certain key groups which are traditionally hard to reach was commissioned.

A series of 11 focus groups and a further 40 individual/paired/triad in-depth interviews were held across Scotland. Focus groups were held among the general public, young people, older people, women and those on low income. Interviews were held among disabled, lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people and minority ethnic people. Participants were given a copy of the more accessible summary booklet version in advance of being interviewed, with the option of receiving a copy of the full consultation paper if they wished.

The consultation with transport users allowed as broad a consultation as possible to be completed which included the views of transport users who are not directly involved in the development of transport policy or the delivery of transport services and who would not necessarily have otherwise put forward their views as part of the written consultation.

3.4 Consultation across the Scottish Executive

Consultation with departments across the Scottish Executive was also a key element in the development of the NTS. A number of existing policy and strategy documents had a direct influence on the development of the NTS, including the *Framework for Economic Development in Scotland*, *A Smart, Successful, Scotland*, *Changing our Ways: Scotland's Climate Change Programme* and the *National Planning Framework for Scotland*.

It was important to ensure that other policy areas were able to contribute to the development of the NTS. A cross-departmental Scottish Executive Steering Group was set up to ensure that the linkages between the NTS and other policy areas, including environment, economy, health, planning and social inclusion were clear and consistent.

Following the written consultation, a number of internal workshops were held which sought to discuss the outcomes of the consultation, consider potential policies to be included in the NTS and seek views on how these policies would align across other departments.

3.5 External Reference Group

To assist in ensuring that the stakeholder consultation process was transparent and comprehensive and that stakeholders received appropriate, informative and timely feedback on how their views were taken into account in the process of developing the NTS, an external reference group was established. Membership comprised representatives from a number of organisations, including:

- Community Transport Association;
- Confederation of British Industry;
- Convention of Scottish Local Authorities;
- Freight Transport Association;
- Regional Transport Partnerships;
- Scottish Consumer Council; and
- Sustainable Development Commission Scotland.

3.6 NTS Consultation: Key Challenges

One of the main challenges for the NTS consultation process was to ensure it was both transparent and comprehensive. This was addressed through the wide-ranging stakeholder consultation programme, including consultation with transport users.

Promoting active engagement between different stakeholder groups is a challenge for the policy development process, an issue which was of relevance to the NTS. It may be that more value could have been obtained from the events organised, particularly the themed events, had there been greater representation of opposing views at the different events which may have led to more informed debate and discussion. For example, the inherent tension between economic growth and protection of the environment was recognised but, while it was ensured that both points of view were addressed in the presentations made at the events organised, the audience profiles did not engender debate of this nature taking place.

Capturing the views of users was an important consideration in the consultation process followed. The independent analysis of the responses received allowed account to be taken of the views of particular sectors as well as the individual responses. The outcomes from this analysis were integral to informing the development of the final NTS. Likewise, the consultation with transport users and report produced ensured that the views of users, including hard to reach groups, were taken into account in developing the final NTS.

4. ANALYTICAL ISSUES

Different types of data, modelling and analysis contributed to the NTS. Information to build up a picture of past trends and to give an indication of the current position was gathered, while modelling was used to predict what the situation may be in the future.

Working closely with the Scottish Executive's Transport Analytical Services team, statistical data from Scottish Transport Statistics, the Scottish Household Survey as well as from GB/UK wide systems was gathered. Information was also collated on the following:

- Economy (forecasts of economic growth);
- Environment (estimates of greenhouse gas emissions, sustainability indicators);
- Accessibility and social inclusion (Scottish Household Survey);
- Integration (transport integration, transport land-use integration and policy integration); and
- Safety (data from Road Accidents Scotland).

The primary source of modelling information came from the Transport Model for Scotland (TMfS) which is a multi-modal demand and assignment model with an interactive land-use model covering 95% of Scotland's population. The model covers surface transport only.

In addition, a number of research documents were referenced and new research was commissioned in two specific areas:

- An appraisal of policy options which assessed the evidence concerning the relative effects of different policy options and interventions available to help achieve the Government's high level objectives for transport. The study was carried out very much at the strategic level and focused on areas of devolved responsibility; and
- A study into decoupling the link between economic growth, transport growth and carbon emissions. The report considered whether future economic development could occur in Scotland with significantly less mobility and carbon output than has been achieved in the past.

4.1 NTS Analytical Issues: Key Challenges

The overriding challenge in developing the NTS from an analytical perspective was to ensure that the strategy was evidence based, as far as possible. However, gaps in the data/modelling/knowledge and the limited time available to develop the NTS meant that the analysis underpinning the initial strategy would be incomplete. For example, while there was appropriate evidence available concerning the environmental impact of transport in relation to both emissions and air quality while information on the links between transport and economic growth was less well developed.

Developing an informed evidence base is an issue for policy development generally, and in terms of the NTS appropriate work will continue to be undertaken to enhance the evidence base and inform subsequent reviews of the strategy.

5. POLICY IMPACT ASSESSMENTS

As part of the policy development process there is a requirement to take into consideration the need to complete wider impact assessments. Within the context of the NTS due regard was required of the following:

- Mainstreaming Equalities; and
- Strategic Environmental Assessment.

5.1 Mainstreaming Equalities

The public sector duties on race, disability and gender require a formal impact assessment to be undertaken to ensure the policy development process does not place a negative impact on these different equality groups. The public sector equality duties for race and disability came into effect in November 2002 and December 2006 respectively and the gender duty will come into force in June 2007.

It is Scottish Executive policy that the equality groups considered extends beyond those covered by a public sector equalities duty to also include – age, sexual orientation and faith and religion. Essentially when developing transport policy or making decisions about service delivery there is a requirement at the national, regional and local level to ensure full account has been taken of the six equality strands which the Executive is committed to mainstreaming.

A workshop with a number of equality groups, including Age Concern, Disability Rights Commission, Equal Opportunities Commission and the Equality Network was held as part of the NTS consultation process. This provided the opportunity to discuss equality issues in further detail with a number of key organisations and ensure appropriate account was taken of equality issues with regard to the NTS. Taking account of the workshop discussion and wider legislative provisions the following equality related activities were undertaken during the development of the NTS:

- Completion of a stage 1 race impact assessment (screening stage) as required by the public sector race equality duty (the duties for disability and gender had not yet come into force at the time of developing the NTS); and
- Integration of the six equality strands as part of the user consultation process.

The stage 1 race impact assessment undertaken in accordance with the Race Relations (Amendment) Act concluded that the NTS would not discriminate against different ethnic minority groups. This assessment was further supported by the report on the consultation undertaken with transport users which identified that the different groups consulted tended to have relatively similar points of view, with any different opinions being based primarily on individual experiences of using transport or attitudes towards certain key issues such as the importance of the environment.

5.2 NTS Mainstreaming Equalities: Key Challenges

A key challenge to mainstreaming equality issues as part of the development of the NTS was to ensure the views of all six strands were captured as part of the consultation with transport users. A representative sample was therefore drawn from across each group as far as possible. It was also important to be aware of sensitivities in consulting with different equality groups and that appropriate consultation methods were employed. To ensure these issues were taken into account and addressed in an appropriate manner advice was sought from the Equality Unit at the Scottish Executive and a number of equality organisations.

5.3 Strategic Environmental Assessment

Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) is a systematic method which extends the assessment of environmental impact beyond individual projects. The Environmental Assessment (Scotland) Act 2005 came into force in February 2006 and repealed the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes (Scotland) Regulations 2004. The Act extended the scope of SEA in Scotland beyond the provisions of the European Union Directive 2001/42/EC to include strategies as well as plans and programmes.

In terms of the NTS, there was no statutory requirement to apply the SEA process on the following grounds:

- The provisions of the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes (Scotland) Regulations 2004 did not apply as the NTS was not required by legislative, regulatory or administrative provisions; and
- The first preparatory act for the NTS was undertaken prior to the Environmental Assessment (Scotland) Act 2005 being formally adopted.

However, the SEA process was viewed to be of value to the development of the NTS and therefore applied on a voluntary basis. Also, in view of the limited practical experience in applying SEA at such a strategic level the NTS was in effect breaking new ground and presented a valuable opportunity for the Scottish Executive to gain experience in this with the SEA being carried out in-house by the NTS team.

There are five key stages to the SEA process and in applying the SEA to the NTS the following activities were undertaken:

- **Screening:**
 - The likely significant environmental effects of the NTS were outlined. While there was not a legislative requirement to apply SEA to the NTS, in view of the likely significant environmental impacts the Screening Report submitted to the Consultation Authorities concluded a SEA would be undertaken.

- **Scoping:**
 - Baseline environmental information was outlined together with the scope and level of detail of the SEA, links between the NTS and other policies, key environmental problems relating to transport and proposed consultation period for the Environmental Report. This information was detailed in a Scoping Report submitted to the Consultation Authorities.
- **Environmental Report:**
 - A strategic assessment was undertaken of the broad concepts outlined in the NTS Consultation Paper, providing a framework for more detailed assessment at the regional and local level as policy detail further developed. This information was captured in an Environmental Report upon which there was an 8 week public consultation.
- **Post-Adoption:**
 - Due consideration was taken of the consultation comments received and the methods for monitoring the significant environmental effects, including the commitment to monitor progress against the strategic outcome to reduce emissions. A Post-Adoption Statement was published alongside the final NTS in December 2006.
- **Monitoring:**
 - The monitoring programme was outlined in both the Environmental Report and Post-Adoption Statement. The NTS will be monitored on an ongoing basis with a formal review undertaken every four years, supported by an update of the SEA as required.

In total 12 responses were received to the public consultation on the Environmental Report prepared on the NTS Consultation Paper. Comments were received from a range of organisations, including local authorities, other public bodies and the private sector. As highlighted in section 3, over 300 responses were received to the NTS Consultation Paper, a significantly higher response than the SEA consultation.

5.4 NTS Strategic Environmental Assessment: Key Challenges

One of the main challenges in applying the SEA process to the NTS was the synergy between the approach adopted in the development of the NTS and the principles of SEA. It is good practice for the SEA process to be undertaken in parallel and for an Environmental Report to be prepared on the draft plan, programme or strategy. However, this was not a feasible approach to take within the context of the NTS as the publication of a draft strategy did not form an integral part of the policy development model adopted.

In the absence of preparation of a draft NTS, best practice was applied and the SEA was undertaken in parallel to the development of the NTS with the Environmental Report prepared on the NTS Consultation Paper. This ensured the SEA process still informed the development of the final NTS and the opportunity was taken to gain experience and understanding in the application of SEA within a high level strategy context.

The NTS Consultation Paper outlined broad strategic approaches/alternatives, for example, increasing choice and managing demand rather than fixed policy commitments. Given that the consultation paper outlined wide-ranging alternatives as opposed to firm policies it was difficult to quantify the environmental impacts, hence a strategic approach was adopted with impacts detailed in qualitative rather than quantitative terms.

The limitations posed by a qualitative assessment were acknowledged and the Environmental Report provided an indication of environmental issues perceived to be of particular significance with regard to transport and sought to identify where the SEA process (and also Environmental Impact Assessment) should be applied at other levels of the transport hierarchy, with the Strategic Transport Projects Review and RTSs being of particular relevance.

6. IMPLEMENTING THE NTS

A delivery plan for the NTS is now being taken forward. A series of short presentations have been held with a number of key stakeholders to raise awareness of the key themes of the NTS, including the Transport Group at the Scottish Executive, Transport Scotland, RTPs and Society of Chief Officers of Transportation (SCOTS). A further set of awareness raising presentations, for the wider Executive and a range of external stakeholders are being planned to take place over the coming months. These will communicate the key themes of the NTS and the actions to be taken forward through the strategy.

In addition, discussions have been held with policy leads on the Bus Action Plan, Freight Action Plan and Scotland's Railways to ensure that a coherent and consistent approach is adopted to the implementation of the NTS and associated documents. Based on experience of the development of the NTS, a framework will be put in place to monitor and review progress. The existing website will continue to be updated as part of the communication plan to support the implementation of the NTS.

6.1 Evaluating and Measuring Progress of the Implementation of the NTS

There is a commitment to review the NTS every 4 years with the first review due in 2010. This review will form a substantial piece of work which will be informed by an objective evaluation of the delivery of the NTS to 2010 as well as a review of the potential scenarios impacting on the future of Scotland's transport system.

7. CONCLUSION AND LESSONS LEARNED

The NTS demonstrates the processes and challenges presented in the development of cross-cutting policy at the strategic level. The policy development process followed for the NTS highlights a number of key issues and valuable lessons for both future policy development and delivery at the

national, regional and local level. A summary of the key lessons drawn from the particular processes discussed within this paper are presented below:

7.1 Consultation

- Consider whether the consultation document prepared is specific enough and try to focus down on key questions to assist stakeholders in submitting responses;
- Promote active engagement between different stakeholder groups to ensure informed debate;
- Add value to the analysis of consultation responses by taking into account the views of particular sectors as well as the individual responses;
- Include transport users, including hard to reach groups, within the consultation process; and
- Consider different ways of accepting responses to a consultation - for example an online response form.

7.2 SEA

- Consider the fit between the policy development approach adopted and the SEA process, and where there are issues follow best practice as far as possible;
- Utilise the guidance and templates provided in the SEA Toolkit;
- Adopt a pragmatic approach where information is not available or flexibility is required;
- Engage with the Consultation Authorities from the out-set and throughout all stages of the SEA process;
- Ensure the analysis of comments received to the consultation on the plan, programme or strategy being developed also identifies responses in relation to SEA and/or environmental issues more generally, this is of particular value where there has been a low response to the SEA consultation itself; and
- Engage with others who have undertaken the SEA process to learn from their experiences – there is continued development of expertise in the application of SEA.

7.3 Equalities

- Engage with the Equality Unit at the Scottish Executive and wider equality organisations when considering the approach to adopt to take account of equality issues;
- Carefully consider which consultation methods are employed when consulting with different equality groups; and
- Take account of ongoing changes to the profile of different equality groups – age, gender, nationality etc.

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Notes:

¹ Further detail on the content of the NTS can be accessed via www.scottishexecutive.gov.uk/nts.