

Agenda Item	18
Report No	ECI/3920

THE HIGHLAND COUNCIL

Committee: Environment and Infrastructure

Date: 4 November 2020

Report Title: Northern Roads Collaboration Joint Committee – 2019/20 annual report.

Report By: Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure and Environment

1. Purpose/Executive Summary

- 1.1 At its most recent meeting on 28 August 2020, The Northern Roads Collaboration Joint Committee approved an annual report and recommended that each of the partners take that report back to the relevant Committee within their Authority.
- 1.2 This report updates Members on the progress of the Northern Roads Collaboration Joint Committee of which Highland Council is a partner. The terms of the Minute of Agreement between Member Authorities provide that an annual report shall be submitted to each authority on the work of the Northern Roads Collaboration Joint Committee.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 Members are asked to:
 - i. consider the Annual report from the Northern Roads Collaboration Joint Committee as attached at **Appendix 1**;
 - ii. note the continued role of Highland Council in providing the Finance Officer for the Joint Committee; and
 - iii. note that it is intended that the Economy and Infrastructure Committee will continue to receive an annual report on performance activities and annual achievements of the Joint Committee.

3. Implications

- 3.1 Resource - There are limited staffing and financial implications associated with participation in the Joint Committee including the cost of Highland Council providing the Financial Officer to the Joint Committee. These costs are covered by service budgets.
- 3.2 Legal - Participation in the Joint Committee does not oblige Highland Council to enter into any sharing or collaboration agreements.

- 3.3 Community (Equality, Poverty, Rural and Island) - There are no direct equality, poverty or rural implications arising from these proposals.
- 3.4 Climate Change / Carbon Clever - There are no Climate or Carbon clever implications.
- 3.5 Risk - As this report is an annual summary report identifying events that have already occurred there are no risks in terms of Corporate or Service Risk registers. The ongoing participation in the Joint committee is designed to eliminate risk of sharing/collaborating which does not conform to EU procurement rules.
- 3.6 Gaelic - There are no Gaelic implications arising for this report.

4. Background

- 4.1 At its meeting on 29 June 2017 (Item 17) Highland Council agreed to the formation of the Northern Roads Collaboration Joint Committee. Aberdeenshire Council, Aberdeen City Council, Angus Council, Argyll and Bute Council, the Moray Council and Western Isles Council are joint participants in this Committee. The Council agreed that the lead Authority for the year would be Aberdeenshire Council and that the then Chair and Vice-chair of the Environment, Development and Infrastructure (EDI) Committee be appointed to the Joint Committee with two named substitutes.
- 4.2 Since its formation on 18 May, the Northern Roads Collaboration Joint Committee has met nine times. Four of these meetings took place in financial year 2019/20 which is the period covered by the attached report.
- 4.3 Due to the geography of the area of the 7 partner authorities the joint committee's constitution allows for video and telephone attendance, this facility has been used since the inaugural meeting on 18 May 2018. The introduction of the COVID19 restrictions has resulted in the cancellation of the May meeting, but otherwise has had limited impact on the operation of the Joint Committee.
- 4.4 At its meeting on 7 November 2019 (Item 19 – EDI/81/10) EDI Committee received the second annual report on the progress of the Northern Roads Collaboration Joint Committee.
- 4.5 At its meeting on 28 August 2020, the Northern Roads Collaboration Joint Committee approved the annual report with the recommendation that each of the partner authorities take the report back to the most relevant Committee within their Authority. The Annual Report of the Northern Roads Collaboration Joint Committee is attached at **Appendix 1**. At the same meeting it was confirmed that Highland Council would continue to provide the Financial Officer to the committee.
- 4.6 Decisions to participate in collaborative projects will be taken by each Council, who would then be required to allocate resources to the project. Once a project is initiated, the Joint Committee will oversee the delivery of the project.

5. Progress to date

- 5.1 The Joint Committee continued to meet quarterly on 21 June 2019 in Forfar, 6 September 2019 in Inverness, 29 November 2019 in Aberdeen and virtually on 21 February 2020. For 2020/21 4 meetings were scheduled, the first in May was cancelled with the second

held virtually on 28 August 2020. The next meeting of the Joint Committee is scheduled virtually for 26 November with meetings quarterly thereafter.

- 5.2 At the Joint Committee on 28 August 2020 a new Chair was elected, the role of Lead Authority was confirmed as being retained by Aberdeenshire. All committee agendas, reports and minutes are accessible directly on the Aberdeenshire Council website at : <http://committees.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/committees.aspx?commid=511>
- 5.3 During 2019/20 officers from the 7 partner authorities met by Skye/MS Teams on 8 May 2019, 23 August 2019 and 10 February 2020. Meetings using MS Teams have continued in 2020/21, most recently on 8 October 2020.
- 5.4 During the previous 12 months the Joint committee has been working on a range of initiatives including:
- updates on the National Roads Collaboration programme;
 - proposed carriageway recycling and retexturing joint collaboration projects;
 - strategic business case for roads asset management;
 - road casualty reduction, safety plan development and sharing of resources;
 - future funding of road maintenance due to impact of industrial vehicles;
 - joint working proposals with Transport Scotland and their operating companies;
 - business case approval for sharing of professional services and staff;
 - Scottish Roads Training Partnership;
 - A9/A96 dualling programmes;
 - road drainage and flood risk; and
 - joint authority officer workshops.
- 5.5 During 2019/20 the Roads & Transportation team entered into an ongoing joint procurement with Aberdeenshire Council for road surface friction testing (SCRIM). This has enabled several sections of road in the Highlands with poor surface texture to be formally identified. To maintain road safety the immediate action is the erection of slippery road warning signs, with targeted works to address poor surface texture currently being planned for 2021/22.
- 5.6 Additionally, in 2019/20 and 2020/21 the road safety team had and is receiving support to draft the new Road Safety Strategy for the Highland Road network. It is intended to bring a report on the proposed strategy to this committee in the new year.
- 5.7 Having formally adopted the Joint Committee does not preclude any other joint working with say Transport Scotland, or other local authorities. Council Officers continue to review activities regularly discussing collaborative opportunities with a range of partners.

Designation: Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure and Environment

Date: 12 October 2020

Author: Robin Pope, Policy and Programme Manager

Northern Roads Collaboration Joint Committee

REPORT TO NORTHERN ROADS COLLABORATION JOINT COMMITTEE – 28 AUGUST 2020

ANNUAL REPORT ON ACTIVITIES

1 Recommendations

The Joint Committee is recommended to:

- 1.1 Consider and comment on the Annual Report on Activities at Appendix 1; and
- 1.2 Approve the Annual Report on Activities and agree to submit to each Member Authority for consideration.

2 Background/Discussion

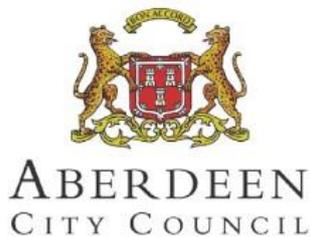
- 2.1 In terms of Clause 4.1.2 of the Minute of Agreement entered into by the Member Authorities, the Joint Committee's remit shall include the approval of an annual performance report.
- 2.2 An Annual Report on Activities has been prepared and forms **Appendix 1** to this report. It sets out the range of activities that the Joint Committee has overseen financial year 2019/20 and sets out some of the areas that are likely to be considered in the coming period. Each of the Authorities on the Joint Committee can take this report back to the relevant Committees as an update on the work of the Joint Committee. The foreword of the report also reflects on the period since March 2020.
- 2.3 The Joint Committee's Legal Monitoring Officer within Aberdeenshire Council and Financial Monitoring Officer within the Highland Council have been consulted in the preparation of this report and had no comments to make and are satisfied that the report complies relevant legislation.

3 Implications and Risk

- 3.1 An equality impact assessment is not required because the Joint Committee is being asked to consider and approve an annual report for the year and the matter does not have a differential impact on any of the protected characteristics.
- 3.2 There are no staffing and financial implications associated with this report.
- 3.3 There are no Risks which have been identified as directly relevant to this matter

Ewan Wallace
Lead Officer

Northern Roads Collaboration Joint Committee Annual Report 2019/20



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Foreword

Local Government has a proud record of working across physical and professional boundaries for the benefit of our communities.

The Northern Roads Collaboration Joint Committee is an excellent example of just such an approach with the added dimension of being able to bring other agencies and authorities to the table. The area covered by the 7 member authorities covers 58% of Scotland with 19% of the population and 38% of the road network that supports a diverse and successful range of economic activities.

With similar issues to deal with across our Authorities and the common purpose of ensuring we have a safe, sustainable and efficient transport network our formal collaboration is a first in Scotland. This last year has seen more steady progress and the Joint Committee is keen to see additional initiatives on our agenda that would enable joint working, increased resilience, knowledge transfer and reduced costs.

The period since the emergence of the Covid 19 pandemic has been especially difficult for all but I know that the networks established through collaborations such as ours have only assisted our response. Indeed, as our authorities take stock of future priorities and available resources the opportunity to collaborate may become even more attractive.

Autumn of 2020 will also see me step back from the role of Chair of this Joint Committee. Any collaboration is only as strong as its members make it and I would like to thank all of the elected representatives and their officers for how we have continued to work proactively and positively over the last 18 months. I have every confidence that you will adopt the same approach over the next year and beyond.

Councillor Ellen Morton
Chair of the Northern Roads Collaboration Joint Committee

Northern Roads Collaboration Joint Committee

The first meeting of the Joint Committee was held on 18 May 2018 in Woodhill House, Aberdeen.

The Committee had been preceded by an informal collaborative forum which had been established on the back of one of the workstreams under the national Roads Collaboration Programme (RCP). That forum agreed that it should move to a formal Joint Committee arrangement and the appropriate papers were approved by each of the partner Authorities. The first meeting of the Joint Committee put in place the chairing and officer support arrangements.

The Standing Orders for the Joint Committee allow for business to be conducted with members attending remotely. This has allowed a good level of attendance by members of the Joint Committee and also by officers presenting reports. It has also reduced costs and minimised the carbon footprint compared to an approach requiring physical attendance.

In 2019/20 the Joint Committee met on a further 4 occasions:

- 21 June 2019 in Forfar
- 6 September 2019 in Inverness
- 29 November 2019 in Aberdeen and;
- 21 February 2020 by Skype.

Collaborative Initiatives and Topics reported to the Joint Committee in 2019/20

During 2019/20 officers met by Skype/Microsoft Teams on 8 May 2019, 23 August 2019 and 10 February 2020.

Updates on the Joint Committee work has been provided at SCOTS Meetings in 2019, 2020 and via the National Roads Collaboration Board.

Use of Recycled Plastic in Road Surfacing was first reported to the Joint Committee on 23 November 2018 (Item No 6) and again on 21 June 2019 (Item 7). Officers are continuing to explore opportunities.

Initial officer engagement with National Timber Transport Forum began in March 2019 with an update provided to the Joint Committee on 6 September 2019 (Item 11). This work is still ongoing.

Officer liaison meetings were held with BEAR Scotland on 29 April 2019 and 18 November 2019 and this work is ongoing.

During the period of 2019/20 the following reports were present to the Joint Committee:

- Updates on the National Roads Collaboration Programme
- Proposed Carriageway Recycling and Retexturing Joint Collaboration Contracts
- Strategic Business Case for Roads Asset Management
- Scottish Roads Training Partnership
- Commenting on the National Transport Strategy
- Road Casualty
- Business Case Approval for Sharing of Professional Services and Staff
- Future Funding for Road Maintenance due to the Impact of Industrial Vehicles
- Joint Asset Management
- A9/A96 Dualling Programmes
- National Gully Maintenance Project
- Maintenance of Natural Stone Surfacing
- Road Drainage and Flood Risk

- Proposal to Transport Scotland for £300k to fund Northern Roads Collaboration activities over next two years

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National Activity 2019/20

Workforce Planning

- Successful Routes to Leadership course
- Co-ordination on Recruitment of Graduate Apprentices and establishment of new courses
- Foundation Apprentice placements
- Support to School Career Events
- Roads Training Partnership
- Development of Knowledge Hub across Scotland

Collaborative Network Management

- Scottish Road Network Management Forum
- Exploring collaboration opportunities with BEAR Scotland

Technical Projects

- Research Project on the Value of the Local Road Network
- Position Paper on Plastic Roads
- Guidance on consistent road material specifications and associated training events
- Sharing of Information and Best Practice
- Development of an Asset Management Hub

Planning for the Future

During the meetings of the Joint Committee in 2019/20 requests were made for reports and presentations to be brought forward on the following topics:

- Continuing Joint Procurement intra-authority discussions
- Scottish Roads Asset Management Plan
- The Strategic Timber Transport Fund
- Cobble surface specialist repair issues
- The potential security implications for Ports in the context of BREXIT
- Continued consideration of the use of recycled plastics in road surfacing
- Joint contractual agreements
- Consideration of the “Value in Local Roads”
- Consideration of national transport infrastructure in support of the emerging National Transport Strategy
- A presentation on the dualling of the A9/A96
- The officer group considered how to share the learning experiences of the Aberdeen Western Peripheral Route (AWPR), recently completed, including the lack consideration of active travel and bus service networking, and the knock on impact for local road authorities in falling unexpected heirs to detrunked roads
- Electric vehicles (including ULEV and Hydrogen vehicles)
- Signage on the network and interrelationship with linkages to trunk roads

Where these have not already been reported back to subsequent meetings of the Joint Committee the requests will be considered as part of the Activity Plan for the period 2020 to 2022.

The Plan will also take into account any other regional or national initiatives relevant to the work of the Joint Committee as well as the ongoing impact of the Covid 19 pandemic.

Finally, the Plan will consider the themes and proposed areas of work detailed in the unsuccessful bid for funding from Transport Scotland whilst taking into account the available resources within the partners.

The formal Activity Plan will be presented to a future meeting of the Joint Committee.

Due to the Covid 19 pandemic the Joint Committee meetings will continue to be held virtually for the foreseeable future.

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Costs and Funding

The central support costs to operate the Joint Committee in 2019/20 were £21,400.

These costs have been split as per the approach agreed in May 2018. No formal bids for funding support have been made to national agencies or partner authorities at this time although a proposal was put to the RCP partners. The RCP is currently being reviewed and so there may be an opportunity to revisit that proposal in 2020/21 for the period from 2021/22.

The Joint Committee also receives support from the RCP officers retained by the Improvement Service. The RCP is funded by Transport Scotland and the 32 Local Authorities.

The Joint Committee and the Officer Group are also supported by a nominated officer representative from Transport Scotland whilst 3 of the Regional Transport Partnerships (HITRANS, NESTRANS and TACTRAN) are also included in the Officer Group that supports the Committee.

Members and officers time and expenses are covered by each authority.

Appendix 1 - Northern Roads Collaboration Joint Committee and Officers as of 31 March 2020

	Members	Substitute Members	Officer
Aberdeen City Council	Councillor M Hutchison Councillor S Macdonald	Councillor R Grant Councillor A Nicoll	Doug Ritchie
Aberdeenshire Council	Councillor P Argyle Councillor D Aitchison	Councillor J Cox Councillor A Kloppert	Ewan Wallace Philip McKay Legal Officer Ruth O'Hare Committee Officer Jan McRobbie
Angus Council	Councillor B Durno Councillor R Sturrock	Councillor R Proctor Councillor B Duff	Douglas Hill
Argyll & Bute Council	Councillor E Morton Councillor R Curry		Jim Smith
Highland Council	Councillor A Henderson Councillor T Robertson	Councillor K Gowans Councillor L MacDonald	Robin Pope Tracey Urry Finance Officer Mike Mitchell

	Members	Substitute Members	Officer
Moray Council	Councillor G Cowie Councillor T Coull		Stephen Cooper Mark Atherton
Western Isles Council	Councillor U Robertson Councillor K MacLeod	Councillor I M Macleod Councillor J N Macleod	Callum Mackenzie

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