

# **ECONOMY AND INFRASTRUCTURE COMMITTEE**

## **BULLETIN ITEM**

**Subject: Northern Roads Collaboration Joint Committee - 2020/21 Annual Report**

**Date: 1 September 2021**

**ECO: Infrastructure, Environment & Economy**

### **1. Purpose/Executive Summary**

- 1.1 At its most recent meeting on 25 June 2021, 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. Background**

- 2.1 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, 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
- 2.2 Since its formation on 18 May 2018, the Northern Roads Collaboration Joint Committee has met nine times. Three meetings took place in financial year 2020/21 which is the period covered by the attached report.
- 2.3 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. Apart from the cancelation of the May 2020 meeting the introduction of the COVID19 restrictions has had limited impact on the operation of the Joint Committee.

- 2.4 At its meeting on 4 November 2020 (Item 18 – ECI/3920) the EI Committee received the third annual report on the progress of the Northern Roads Collaboration Joint Committee.
- 2.5 At its meeting on 25 June 2021, the Northern Roads Collaboration Joint Committee approved the 2020/21 annual report with the recommendation that each of the partner authorities take the report back to the most relevant Committee within their Authority. The 2020/21 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
- 2.6 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.

### **3 Progress to date**

- 3.1 During 2020/21 the initial quarterly meeting in May 2020 was cancelled due to COVID19 restrictions, however thereafter Joint Committee was under the standing orders for the committee able to continue its business holding its quarterly meeting remotely using Teams. Meetings were held on 28 August 2020, 27 November 2020 and 5 March 2021.
- 3.2 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>
- 3.3 During 2020/21 officers from the 7 partner authorities met by MS Teams 6 times.
- 3.4 During the previous 12 months the Joint committee has been working on a range of initiatives including:-
- updates on the National Roads Collaboration programme;
  - updates on the Procurement
  - Presentation on the Research into the Value of the Local Road Network with initial outputs.
  - Electric Vehicle Infrastructure – update report (authored by Highland Council)
  - Autonomous Vehicles
  - joint working proposals with Transport Scotland and the new 5<sup>th</sup> Generation Trunk Road Management Contracts.
  - A9/A96 dualling programmes;
  - joint authority officer workshops.
- 3.5 During 2021 the Roads & Transportation Service was able through the collaboration agreement to hire Surface Dressing equipment from two of the NRCJC authorities and also form a third Scottish Local Authority. This has enabled, despite the loss of May due to extremely wet weather, the Roads & Transport Service to deliver its expanded 2021 surface dressing programme deploying 4 separate surface dressing trains simultaneously during July and August in: Skye; Ross & Cromarty; Caithness & Sutherland and Inverness/Nairn/ Badenoch & Strathspey.

#### **4. Future**

- 4.1 An activity plan has been produced and adopted by the NRCLC. An assessment of the resource availability in the 7 Local Authorities and 3 Regional Transport Partnerships has been undertaken. A member/officer workshop to be arranged to agree priorities.

Designation: Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure, Environment & Economy

Date: 18 August 2021

Author: Robin Pope

Background Papers: Northern Roads Collaboration Joint Committee - 2020/21 Annual Report



## Northern Roads Collaboration Joint Committee

### REPORT TO NORTHERN ROADS COLLABORATION JOINT COMMITTEE – 25 JUNE 2021

#### ANNUAL REPORT ON ACTIVITIES

##### 1 Recommendations

The Joint Committee is recommended to:

- 1.1 Consider and comment on the Annual Report on Activities for 2020/21 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 To meet that part of the remit an Annual Report on Activities has been prepared and forms **Appendix 1** to this report. It sets out the range of activity that the Joint Committee has overseen in the period to March 2021 and sets out some of the areas that are likely to be considered in the coming period to May 2022. 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.
- 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.

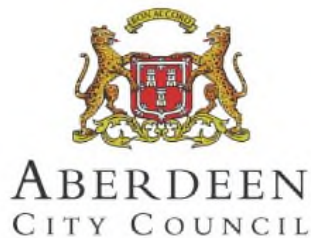
##### 3 Implications and Risk

- 3.1 An equality impact assessment is not required because the Joint Committee is being asked to consider and approve the Annual Report on Activities 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

Report prepared by Mark Skilling, Business Collaboration Manager, Aberdeenshire Council  
17 June 2021

# Northern Roads Collaboration Joint Committee Annual Report 2020/21



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## 1. 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 further 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 covered by this Annual Update obviously includes the full impact of the Covid 19 pandemic. It was during this period that I became Chair of the Joint Committee. The impact of the 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.

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 and I have every confidence that we will adopt the same approach over the next year and beyond.

**Councillor Durno**  
**Chair of the Northern Roads Collaboration Joint Committee**



## 2. Northern Roads Collaboration Joint Committee

- 2.1 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.
- 2.2 The first meeting of the Joint Committee was held on 18 May 2018 in Woodhill House, Aberdeen.
- 2.3 The Joint 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 Program. 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.
- 2.4 The Joint Committee met a total of 4 occasions in its first year 2018/19. In 2019/20 the Committee met on a further 4 occasions.
- 2.5 This financial year 2020/21 the Committee has met on 3 occasions on 28 August 2020, 27 November 2020 and 5 March 2021. All meetings have been by Skype/Teams.
- 2.6 During the year, Councillor Durno (Angus Council) and Councillor Coull (Moray Council) were appointed Chair and Vice Chair respectively.
- 2.7 To support the Joint Committee the Officer Group met a total of 6 times and also ran a workshop in September 2020 on various topics including Workforce of the Future, Position and Opportunities on Electric and Hydrogen, Lessons from Spaces for People/Active Travel Implementation and Future Proofing the Network and Increasing Resilience.
- 2.8 Membership of the Joint Committee is shown in **Appendix 1** together with the officers from each local authority.

### **3 Reports presented at Joint Committee meetings in 2020/21**

#### **3.1 [28 August 2020](#)**

Appointment of Chair and Vice Chair

Review of Governance Arrangements and Financial Monitoring

Annual Report on Activities

Covid-19 Roads and Transport Service Update

National Roads Collaboration Programme Updates

Update on the Procurement of Network

Management Contracts (NMCs) for the Scottish Trunk Road Network

#### **3.2 [27 November 2020](#)**

Appointment of Vice Chair

A Presentation on the Research into the Value of the Local Road Network with Initial Outputs

Infrastructure Investment and Resilience

An Update on the National Roads Collaboration Programme

#### **3.3 [5 March 2021](#)**

Autonomous Vehicle

Activity Plan

Electric Vehicle Infrastructure – Update Report 2021

#### 4. Planning for the Future

- 4.1 An Activity Plan was developed for the planned areas of work for the Joint Committee to consider and this was approved at the Joint Committee at its meeting on 5 March 2021. A copy is appended to this document (**Appendix 2**).
- 4.2 Delivery of the Activity Plan is subject to available resources within the 7 Local Authorities making up the collaboration. It is clear that available resources do not match the demands of the Joint Committee and the ambitious programme set out in the Activity Plan.
- 4.3 To focus the limited resources to the areas where the Joint Committee can best deliver change, a stock taking exercise is taking place in May/June 2021 where the Lead Authority, Aberdeenshire Council will be interviewing officers from the 7 Local Authorities and 3 Regional Transport Partnerships. This will form a report to the Joint Committee in 2021/22 looking at the remit and format of the Joint Committee which will allow members to consider the future role and remit of the Joint Committee prior to the local authority elections in May 2022.
- 4.4 A workshop for officers, with guest presenters will be held on EV Infrastructure and Alternative Fuels on Monday 21 June 2021. This will include consideration of the matters to take into a Member Officer Working Group on this areas of work as requested by the Joint Committee.
- 4.5 For the foreseeable future, meetings will continue to be held remotely using Skype or Teams.

## 5. **Costs and Funding**

- 5.1 The central support costs to operate the Joint Committee in 2020/21 were £6,171.48. These reflect a reduction in the business of the Joint Committee as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic.
- 5.2 These 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. However, this may be an approach that members would wish to see taken when engaging with Transport Scotland and Scottish Government in the period to May 2022.
- 5.3 The Joint Committee has historically received significant support from the Roads Collaboration Programme officers retained by the Improvement Service. The Roads Collaboration Programme was funded by Transport Scotland and the 32 Local Authorities.
- 5.4 However, during 2020/21 the Scottish Government's Improvement Service took the decision to stop hosting the National Roads Collaboration Programme. To date no alternative support arrangement has been put in place to replace this resource and the Lead Authority has sought to pick up as much of that role as they can.
- 5.5 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 are also included in the Lead Officer Group that supports the Joint Committee.
- 5.6 Members and officers time and expenses are covered by each authority.

**Appendix 1 - Northern Roads Collaboration Joint Committee and Officers as of 31 March 2021**

	<b>Members</b>	<b>Substitute Members</b>	<b>Officer</b>
<b>Aberdeen City Council</b>	Councillor M Hutchison Councillor S Macdonald	Councillor R Grant Councillor A Nicoll	Doug Ritchie
<b>Aberdeenshire Council</b>	Councillor D Aitchison Councillor J Gifford	Councillor J Cox Councillor A Kloppert	Ewan Wallace Philip McKay  Legal Officer Ruth O'Hare Committee Officer Jan McRobbie
<b>Angus Council</b>	Councillor B Durno Councillor R Sturrock	Councillor R Proctor Councillor K Braes	Douglas Hill
<b>Argyll &amp; Bute Council</b>	Councillor R Colville Councillor B Good		Jim Smith
<b>Highland Council</b>	Councillor A Henderson Councillor T Robertson	Councillor K Gowans Councillor L MacDonald	Robin Pope Tracey Urry  Finance Officer Mike Mitchell

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

## Appendix 2 - Northern Roads Collaboration – Activity Plan April 2021-March 2023

Activity	Responsible Officer	When	Comments
Joint Committee Meetings	Clerk to the Joint Committee	25 June 2021 10 September 2021 26 November 2021 February 2022 June 2022 September 2022 December 2022 February 2023	Dates are set for 2021. Future dates will be decided in due course.
Officer Group Meetings	Lead Officer	In advance and following each Joint Committee meeting	
Recurring Reports to Joint Committee	Lead Officer	Every second Joint Committee in June and November/December	Transport Strategy Update
	Lead Officer	Annually to June Joint Committee	Annual Report on Activities
	Lead Officer	Annually to June Joint Committee	Network Status and Resilience

Activity	Responsible Officer	When	Comments
	Lead Officer	Annually in September	Appointment of Chair and Vice Chair of Joint Committee
One off reports	Appropriate Report Author from Partners	June 2021	Road Safety
			A presentation on the dualling of the A9/A96 trunk roads
			The implications and opportunities to the Northern Roads Collaboration area of the National
			Review of Governance Arrangements and Financial Monitoring
			The implications and opportunities to the Northern Roads Collaboration area of the Transport (Scotland) Act 2019 and secondary legislation.
		September 2021	Shared Training Opportunities
			Continuing Joint Procurement intra-authority discussions and Joint contractual agreements



Activity	Responsible Officer	When	Comments
		TBC	Updates on National Roads Collaboration Programme (as required)
			The Strategic Timber Transport Fund and its possible extension beyond that for timber to other industries (such as distilleries, farm vehicles etc.) which impact on the rural road network.
			Updates on Research into the Value of the Local Road Network (as required).
			Maintenance of Cobble surface specialist repair issues
			The potential security implications for Ports in the context of BREXIT
			Updates on the use of recycled plastics and other materials in road surfacing
			Electric (and other low carbon) Vehicles
			Signage on the network and interrelationship with linkages to trunk roads.

Activity	Responsible Officer	When	Comments
Programme of Workshops for Officers	Lead Officer	3 times per year	Subject topics to be developed
Communication Strategy to make the work of the Joint Committee more known.	Lead Officer	September 2021	Strategy to be worked up and presented for approval to Joint Committee