

SEStran Brand Identity Evaluation and Evolution

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This report proposes, for discussion, a name change and rebranding of the partnership; replacing the current SEStran “brand”. This is due to current lack of awareness, confusion with a partner organisation and lack of brand equity being a key issue identified on the corporate risk register for several years and in 2017/18 Business Plan. Through re-branding we aim to improve engagement and recognition and so best value from marketing and general promotional activities.
- 1.2 The name of a Regional Transport Partnership can be changed in terms of paragraph 3(4) of the Regional Transport Partnerships (Establishment, Constitution and Membership) (Scotland) Order 2005. If so, the Scottish Ministers and its constituent authorities require to be notified of the change

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 A stated aim of the organisation has been to make SEStran a household name. This is a key risk on the corporate risk register. The level of budget required to do this is considerable, especially with a brand like SEStran which is not descriptive and is close to a similar transport body. At the start of a new Board term it is suggested that now is the time to conclude that we will never achieve household name status but that with a different brand we could have greater recognition of our efforts and contribution to transport.
- 2.2 Effective branding can help to communicate the values, beliefs, and goals at the core of what an organisation does. It will also facilitate better communication with the public which is vital for the take-up of our products and services in order to generate best value. An effective brand makes our current and proposed marketing activities better value for money.
- 2.3 A new brand identity fits with the Business Plan’s Key Priorities for 2017/18 specifically item 10, which states the objective is to increase the recognition of the Partnership amongst our key audiences and support wider engagement to build our reputation and increase the awareness of the work of the Partnership. It is proposed that we should focus on a brand that better enables these outcomes than the current brand.
- 2.4 Advice from Transport Scotland has confirmed that a change of name is a matter for the Partnership Board to determine as follows:

As per the Regional Transport Partnerships (Establishment, Constitution and Membership) (Scotland) Order 2005 Clause 3 (4):

“Once established a Partnership may decide to change the name given to the region and if they so decide the Partnership shall notify the Scottish Ministers and its constituent councils of the change of name of the region.”

3. REVIEW OF THE CURRENT SESTRAN BRAND IDENTITY

3.1 The current SEStran name & branding has been in existence for 12 years as a statutory body and for some years prior to that as a voluntary partnership. Lack of awareness of the organisation and what it does, in the mind of the public reduces the impact that the RTP can have. A more engaging identity will help address this and help move the RTP in the direction that puts the Partnership in the best position for the future, with a branding that could incorporate other disciplines such as planning and economic development. This is consistent with the response of the Board in March 2017 to the Scottish Government Planning Review. Where we wanted to position ourselves as a wider multi-disciplinary partnership platform in line with the strategic approach proposed in the Enterprise and skills review and City Deal outlined in Item 15(c) - Planning Consultation response.

3.2 It was agreed by the Chief Officers Liaison Group in May 2017 to carry out a study and propose for discussion a new branding for the organisation. An essential part of the process was to lead a workshop with staff to get their views, first-hand experience of the brand impact of SEStran on their work and buy-in to the process. This involved an in-depth workshop focussed on the core elements of SEStran's work.

3.3 The internal analysis identified several key issues:

- Confusion with SUSTRANS in the market place which does not help build a separate identity for the RTP. This is an issue frequently encountered by staff both in engaging with other professionals and with the wider public. SUSTRANS have the advantage of being a known UK brand with a significantly larger marketing budget allowing them to actively and successfully market the brand to the public.
 - The current SEStran name and branding does not reflect a dynamic, modern, forward thinking organisation able to effectively engage with the public.
 - Current branding does not conveniently deliver benefits to the RTP when promoting sub brands such as the Thistle Assistance Card and Tripshare.
 - SEStran - the existing acronym does not provide any locational identity for the RTP; only the use of the full title reveals the area that the partnership represents. Bringing in the River Forth Estuary helps identify the RTP, clearly indicates the area in which it operates and allows the RTP to exploit unique regional but also global icons like the bridges in designing logos etc.
- One suggestion emerging from the workshop was to name the organisation the “Forth Transport Partnership” or “Forth Partnership for Transport” which was viewed favourably but it was felt that it

would be condensed into “FTP or FPT” which could then be confused with SPT and again would offer no locational identity in its condensed form.

- It is key to avoid the use of an acronym for the name of the organisation in future and focus on establishing a name that stood out, would convey a geographical identity, identify the role the organisation plays and also infer a call to action for the partnership in advancing its strategy and new partnerships.

3.4 It was concluded that a new identity should be developed that:

- a) better represents the strategic role of the RTP, what it delivers for the public.
- b) Clearly indicates where the organisation is situated.
- c) increases awareness and brand value – builds brand equity.
- d) is the RTP’s unique identity – not confused with other organisations such as SUSTRANS.
- e) allows for future organisational RTP development to a more multifunctional model.
- f) provides a platform that sub brands can leverage e.g. Tripshare, Thistle Assistance Card, bustracker etc.
- g) maximises opportunities for appropriate budget spend and impact by delivering greater value for limited resources.
- h) Promotes partnership working.

4. DEVELOPMENT OF A NEW BRAND IDENTITY

4.1 External advice was sought from a creative and design agency; “Stand”. (<http://stand.agency>). After reviewing the brief and internal work undertaken they recommended several naming concepts and developed creative concepts that delivered against the key issues and challenges presented.

The creative agency has proposed an approach that is:

- a. **Dynamic and engaging:** Creating a brand that engages with both the public and business-to-business audiences. It was important to create something which evoked feelings of movement and progress.
- b. **A positive brand language:** Creating a brand language that we can deliver more emotive messages (e.g. “We’re Moving Forth”) and acts as a call to action for the audience (“Moving Forth to a sustainable future”).
- c. **Clear and direct:** Avoiding the use of acronyms as these require additional clarification and are open to interpretation. We need the public, not just those in the sector, to be able to digest what the RTP does immediately.
- d. **Sub-brands:** Creating a brand which can be applied to sub-identities, giving them their own identities.

- e. **Digital:** The existing brand was created for a pre-internet/pre-digital time. We now need a brand that works across a variety of media including online.
- f. **Partner use:** maximises cross branding opportunities, including when it is not the lead brand on partner materials/member council's materials.

4.2 A new brand identity will clearly require a series of changes to current promotions and projects such as Bustracker, Tripshare and Thistle card and will also require changes to a range of stationary and business cards, although much more use of modern media of communication is now be employed which will reduce the use of paper, generally. In addition, the new brand will itself require promotion and publicity. These costs have been estimated to cost up to £25,000, including 6 months' media spend delivering free to air television advertising (Tripshare & Thistle Card). This can be contained within the current year's budget.

5.0 CONCLUSION / RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 It is recommended that:

The Board discusses the suggested new brand concepts and identities for the South East of Scotland Transport Partnership and if minded to agree on one option, approve that the process of change begins as soon as possible.

If a consensus cannot be reached at the meeting, provide a mandate to the Chair and Partnership Director to oversee for further work and a proposal for decision at the September 2017 meeting.

Keith Fisker
Business Partner
 July 2017

Policy Implications	None
Financial Implications	Research, design and implementation costs can be met within existing budget.
Equalities Implications	None
Climate Change Implications	None