

## **Review of Forums**

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

**1.1** Between June 2016 and March 2017, on several occasions, the previous Board discussed a proposed review of the consultative structures of the Partnership<sup>1</sup>. Previously, SEStran managed consultative forums on Bus, Rail, Air and Sustainable Transport, alongside an Access to Healthcare Forum, a Freight Quality Partnership, a Chief Officers Liaison Group and an Equalities Forum. The previous Board was unable to conclude the process, given the forthcoming Council elections, following a mandate given to the Director in June 2016.

**1.2** There is a clear distinction between Committees and Forums. The current committee structure consists of the Performance and Audit Committee, which reports to the Partnership Board and a Succession Planning Committee. There is no suggestion of change to this committee structure, with the exception of the Appointments Committee, detailed in Item XX. The present structure provides a clear mechanism for transparency and audit of the Partnership's activities in respect of policies, succession planning and appointments. The purpose of this paper is to describe the new office bearers' proposals for the introduction of a new forum structure.

### **2. SUMMARY OF PREVIOUS COMMENTS**

**2.1** At the August 2017 Partnership Board meeting, views were expressed suggesting that the previous forums offered the opportunity to scrutinise or challenge public transport operators. However, as a Model 1 RTP SEStran is not empowered with those direct responsibilities and the office bearers feel a change in the consultative forum structure would promote a greater degree of partnership working with the operators; a view which has also been expressed by various stakeholders. For example, ScotRail has asked for a wider integrated forum to fulfil their stakeholder engagement responsibilities, as distinct from a stand-alone "rail forum". They wish to develop links with Bus and Active Travel groups. Outlined elsewhere on the agenda is the Scottish Government's plans to move away from "silo/sole subject" groups and the structure of the NTS2 consultation. As outlined in Item 10, the Policy and Projects report, includes a description of a more integrated consultative approach to transport policy formulation, nationally. In response to a question from the Performance and Audit Committee on how influential SEStran could be in national debates, the Partnership Director stated that having a consultative structure, which is seen as relevant and reflective of direction of travel, would assist SEStran in being able to influence and lobby

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<sup>1</sup> March 2017 paper <http://sestran.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/1487862669.pdf>  
Dec 2016 paper pages 91-94 <http://sestran.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/1480082271.pdf>  
September 2016 pages 137-141 <http://sestran.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/1474022237.pdf>  
June 2016 <http://sestran.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/1465893699.pdf>

effectively. This view was accepted by the Committee and is recommended to the Board.

**2.2** At the last meeting of the Board, a view was expressed that 2/3 meetings a year of all 7 forums should not place a strain on SEStran's resources and that officers did not need to attend. However, current guidance suggests that officers should attend such meetings to ensure representation of the Partnership. Furthermore, SEStran officers have taken on a significant number of projects in recent months, following approval from the Board and this, added to a consultative calendar requiring officers to service multiple sole policy forums, is likely to prove inefficient, resource intensive for stakeholders and critically not in the best interest of the Partnership. Constituent council Officers have also stated that fewer meetings would enable them to effectively support the forums, from an individual council viewpoint. This again was the stated view of Chief Officers at their August 2017 meeting. The Partnership Director has also requested that digital knowledge hubs are set up for each previous forum to allow continuation of discussions and knowledge exchange on specific policy areas, which is now common practice across local government to enable information exchange with a reduced need for meetings, recognising the pressure on officer resources throughout local government and reducing the need for travel but enabling dialogue.

**2.3** There is clearly a need for forums going forward to be strategically inputting to a work plan and enabling and contributing delivery of the Annual Business Plan. This should enable the Board to see the strategic impact of their work and facilitate the structures going forward to agree measurable outcomes for clarity / future decision making. Allowing the big picture to be pulled together and the delivery of Regional Transport Strategy through these consultation structures to be clearly assessed by the Board. Having this direction and impact now will save board time and focus discussions on key issues which have been subject to integrated debate at relevant forums.

### **3. FUTURE PROPOSALS**

**3.1** The Chair and Vice-Chairs have proposed that whilst recognising the previous views expressed, the wider corporate demands placed on the limited SESTRAN staff resource pointed to the need for a change in structure to enable prioritisation of resource. The Chair and Vice-Chairs therefore propose:

- 2 regional consultative forums, more in line with the original guidance issued in 2005/06 by the Scottish Government. In recognising the wider legislative requirement to consult on the RTS, the office bearers propose that there should be an:
  - “Integrated Inclusive Growth” forum looking at the passenger transport aspects bus, rail, mobility as a service, airport surface access and sustainable transport issues; and
  - an “Economic Growth and Resilience” forum which will have a focus on all forms of freight, business needs in line with the Enterprise and Skills review recommendations and sustainable logistics;

- These regional consultative forums will be chaired by the SEStran Vice Chairs and in their absence by the Partnership Director and meet twice a year (one forum Spring/Autumn and the other forum Winter/Summer) with a work programme informed by the Business Plan for the year. The membership would as with the current liaison structures be open to all to attend and the changes would seek to strengthen the work and direction of our external liaison towards the achievement of identified strategic outcomes.
- The Equalities and Healthcare forum would continue as a primarily stakeholder and officer group chaired by the Partnership Director to deliver our Equality Outcomes and legislative requirement to consult Health Boards and those who represent those with or share a protected characteristic. Albeit, the group would remain open to all in terms of ability to attend but there has been limited board member attendance in recent meetings. It would still be the intention to ensure that any issues raised are mainstreamed into the other forums/groups to fulfil our Equality duties.
- In terms of the Chief Officers group, it provides a clear opportunity for developing a key stakeholder lead input to the work of SEStran and should be retained, with perhaps greater integration across wider infrastructure and land-use planning considerations, consistent with the City Deal, Enterprise and Skills review and Planning Review. This would remain a lead officer group of the 8 councils meeting with the SEStran team of officers and relevant executive stakeholders. This forum would continue to be an officer only group focused on operational and implementation of strategic matters.

**3.2** Within the context of the Edinburgh City Region Deal, there are emerging specific pieces of work that constituent councils wish SEStran to progress around the move towards a wider Regional Partnership. It is proposed by the Chairs and Vice-Chairs that this change seeks to balance a continuous improvement approach to engagement, recognises the demands on all stakeholders' time and would be proposed to be reviewed by the Board in Winter 2018/18 prior to the completion of NTS2 and presumably the commencement of the new RTS. This will enable a period of identifying potential overlaps, further efficiencies and striking the right balance between operational and strategic for our liaison/consultative structures.

#### **4. CONCLUSION**

**4.1** The Board are asked to agree the proposals from the Chair and Vice-Chairs to introduce a new consultative structure for the new session of the SEStran Board and that meetings will be organised for Autumn/Winter 2017/18.

George Eckton  
**Partnership Director**  
 15<sup>th</sup> September 2017

**On behalf of the Chair and Vice-Chairs of SEStran**

Policy Implications	Maximise the potential for partnership working on the delivery of policy.
Financial Implications	Potential to reduce the amount of officer time and financial resource spent on stakeholder engagement, whilst providing an integrated and inclusive forum.
Equalities Implications	Proposal would seek to retain and mainstream equalities policy development.
Climate Change Implications	The proposals will reduce the number of meetings, reducing the travel associated with SEStran activities in line with our Climate Change Duties as a public body.