Regional Transport Strategy 2035

SEA Post Adoption Statement

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1.1 Introduction

1.1.1 The South-East of Scotland Transport Partnership (SEStran) 2035 Regional Transport Strategy (RTS) received **ministerial approval on 21st March 2023** and was **also approved by the SEStran Partnership Board on 31st March 2023**. This document is the Post Adoption Statement (PAS) for the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) of the SEStran RTS. The PAS has been prepared on behalf of SEStran, the Planning Authority, by Stantec UK Ltd in accordance with the requirements of the Environmental Assessments (Scotland) Act 2005 (2005 Act).

1.1.2 In working towards the publication of the final RTS, several interim milestones were delivered:

- The Draft RTS and supporting statutory assessments were approved by the SEStran Partnership Board in October 2021.

- Statutory advertising of the publication of the Draft RTS together with the associated documents, including an Environmental Report (ER) and an ER Non-Technical Summary (NTS), took place between Tuesday 16th November 2021 and 11th February 2022.

- On 23rd September 2022, the SEStran Partnership Board approved the final version of the RTS. The SEStran 2035 Regional Transport Strategy was then submitted to Scottish Ministers for approval in compliance with the requirements of the Transport (Scotland) Act 2005 and the Statutory Guidance on the preparation of Regional Transport Strategies.

1.1.3 The RTS is focused around the four 'Priorities' defined in the Scottish Government's National Transport Strategy 2 (NTS2), which was published in February 2020. The four 'Priorities' are:

- Reduces inequalities
- Takes climate action
- Helps deliver inclusive economic growth
- Improves our health and wellbeing.

1.1.4 The RTS sets out a clear framework for how transport and mobility will be provided, developed and improved in the south-east Scotland region to meet the aspirations for a sustainable and economically active growth area over the next 10 years and beyond.

1.1.5 A full SEA on the RTS was carried out to identify, assess and evaluate the likely significant environmental effects of all substantive proposals contained within the document. The details of the SEA were presented in the full SEA Environmental Report for the RTS, which was published in October 2021.

1.1.6 This PAS has been prepared in accordance with Section 18 of the Environmental Assessment (Scotland) Act 2005. The purpose of this statement is to demonstrate how the SEA served to influence the drafting of the final adopted RTS. This PAS has been produced by taking into account the findings of the consultation and the final adopted RTS. As per the Environmental Assessment (Scotland) Act 2005, the document sets out the following:

- A summary of the SEA process (Section 1.2)
- How environmental considerations have been integrated into the RTS (Section 1.3)
- How the Environmental Report has been taken into account (Section 1.4)
- Description of how the responses to the consultation on the RTS were taken into account (Section 1.5)

ˡ How the results of consultation under Regulation 14 of the Environmental Assessment Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 (S.I.2004 / 1633) have been taken into account (Section 1.6)

ˡ The reasons for choosing the RTS, in the light of other reasonable alternatives (Section 1.7)

ˡ An overview of the measures that are to be taken to monitor the significant environmental effects of the implementation of the RTS (Section 1.8)

1.2   The SEA Process

1.2.1   It is a requirement under Section 18 of the Environmental Assessment (Scotland) Act 2005 that a Post Adoption Statement is produced. The purpose of this statement is to demonstrate how the SEA served to influence the drafting of the final adopted RTS. The purpose of SEA is to identify, assess and evaluate the likely significant environmental effects of a qualifying plan, programme or strategy. A key objective of SEA is to enhance the environmental and wider sustainability performance of a plan. This is achieved through:

ˡ Identifying any likely significant effects from implementation of the plan as drafted.

ˡ Proposing mitigation measures to address any identified significant environmental effects.

ˡ Identifying enhancement measures to improve the overall performance of the plan.

1.2.2   As such, SEA is an integral part of good policy development and should not be viewed as a separate or retrospective activity. Section 18(1) and (2) require that a statement containing the particulars set out in Section 18(3) is prepared and published following adoption of the RTS and the publication of the SEA Report.

1.2.3   The previous stages of SEA undertaken with respect to the emerging RTS comprised consultations on an SEA Scoping Report (March 2021) and the SEA of the 'Case for Change' Report (June 2021). The SEA of the RTS builds directly on these previous stages and relevant content from previous reporting has been carried forward into the ER with updates as required.

1.2.4   The SEA Scoping Report was submitted to the Scottish Government's SEA Gateway in February 2021. The Scoping Report sought the views of the SEA Consultation Authorities on the proposed scope, methodology and level of detail required in undertaking a legally compliant SEA of the emerging RTS. Responses relating to the SEA Scoping Report were received from the SEA consultation authorities[1] and were incorporated into both the RTS development and the associated SEA process.

1.2.5   The SEStran RTS 'Case for Change' Report was conducted to provide a consolidated evidence base to identify the main transport problems experienced within the SEStran region and to set out proposed Strategy Objectives to underpin the development of the new RTS.

1.2.6   The overall approach to the SEA and the SEA framework was amended to take account of scoping consultation responses - please refer to **Appendix C** of the full SEA Environmental Report for further detail on this. The SEA framework focuses on assessing potential effects in relation to the following ten SEA Objectives:

i.   **Climate change:** Respond to the climate emergency by decarbonising infrastructure, facilitating a low carbon economy and adapting to accommodate the effects of climate change.

ii.   **Air quality and amenity:** Tackle poor air quality, reduce concentrations of harmful atmospheric pollutants and minimise exposure to noise and vibration.

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[1] Historic Environment Scotland, Scottish Environment Protection Agency and Scottish Natural Heritage

iii. **Biodiversity, geodiversity and soil:** Conserve, protect and enhance biodiversity and geodiversity interests, including through safeguarding important sites, species and soil resources and by protecting green infrastructure.

iv. **Water, flood risk and resilience:** Conserve, protect and enhance water environments, water quality and water resources, whilst adapting to climate change and reducing flood risks.

v. **Cultural heritage:** Conserve, protect and enhance all aspects of the historic environment, including archaeological sites and cultural assets.

vi. **Landscape:** Protect and enhance the landscape character, townscape character and visual amenity.

vii. **Accessibility:** Ensure appropriate and affordable access for all to facilities, services, employment, economic opportunities and social activities.

viii. **Inclusive growth:** Improve social and economic prosperity for all by enhancing productivity and competitiveness and reducing societal inequalities.

ix. **Health:** Improve the health of the resident and workplace population, including with respect to physical and mental health and social wellbeing.

x. **Material assets:** Manage, maintain and where possible improve the efficient and effective use of natural resources, land and infrastructure to meet identified needs.

1.3 Integration of the SEA into the RTS

1.3.1 Stantec has provided drafting and technical support to SEStran in the preparation of the Draft RTS in conjunction with the SEA. This has allowed informal and early feedback of key issues identified by the SEA project team to be incorporated, resulting in iterative amendments to strengthen the Draft RTS as it developed. Since the RTS is objective-led, the aim has been to embed and integrate environmental principles at the earliest stages so that the RTS Strategy Objectives had environment firmly integrated with the other important themes of economy, accessibility, social inclusion and health.

1.3.2 Stantec commenced the SEA of the Draft RTS in August 2021 in tandem with the development of RTS components (following completion of a STAG-based Preliminary Options Appraisal). An initial step involved advising on how best to implement mitigation and enhancement recommendations identified through the SEA of the 'Case for Change' Report. SEA based testing and refinement of emerging RTS components (e.g., policies) then took place before formal SEA policy assessment reporting was completed in October 2021 to align with the settled version of the Draft RTS. This iterative process allowed the SEA to inform the final content of the Draft RTS, and latterly the RTS itself, minimising its likely significant adverse effects and maximising its positive environmental performance.

1.3.3 Since all components of a development plan need to be unambiguous to ensure that they can be implemented as intended, the identification of any assumptions and uncertainties is an important element of SEA. In addition, the 2005 Act requires consideration to be given to "the measures envisaged to prevent, reduce and as fully as possible offset any significant adverse effects on the environment of implementing the plan or programme". A key role of the SEA process is therefore to devise appropriate mitigation and enhancement recommendations in order to address identified uncertainties, resolve deficiencies and strengthen the sustainability performance of the plan being assessed.

1.3.4 An SEA focused review of emerging content for inclusion in the RTS was undertaken by the SEA project team in August 2021 to address any emerging structural or environmental issues at the earliest opportunity. The review took into account the SEA recommendations developed in the RTS 'Case for Change' Report (July 2021). The purpose of the review was to identify any weakness and to improve the environmental performance of the proposed RTS Vision and Strategy Objectives through iterative testing and refinement.

1.3.5　The Environmental Report was drafted late on in the process of RTS development and appraisal. It therefore presents an assessment of the likely environmental effects of the Strategy at a stage when the environmental effects had been minimised as far as possible. Some changes were made to the layout and format of the final RTS document following public consultation on the Draft RTS and the Environmental Report. There were, however, no significant changes to the content of the Strategy.

1.4　How the ER has been accounted for in the RTS

1.4.1　The settled version of the Draft RTS was confirmed in October 2021, allowing a formal SEA of its substantive content to be undertaken. The SEA was then undertaken on a pre-mitigation basis, which allowed any ambiguities and other weaknesses to be identified and appropriate mitigation and enhancement recommendations to be devised by the SEA project team. Further recommendations to address potential weaknesses identified within components of the Draft RTS and to further enhance the ability of the document to tackle key sustainability issues were then developed by Stantec. These recommendations were largely incorporated within the Draft RTS, following which the SEA report was updated to reflect the final position and the improved environmental performance of many proposed components. This has resulted in the removal of previously identified uncertainties and inconsistencies and improved coverage of identified key environmental issues within the final RTS.

1.4.2　It has demonstrated that through resolving uncertainties and inconsistencies, and by identifying opportunities to improve the clarity and environmental performance of the RTS, the SEA process has closely influenced the content of the final document. As a result, the RTS is now considered to be more robust and effective in terms of addressing relevant environmental issues.

1.4.3　Through the SEA process, both positive and negative environmental effects of the proposed policies and actions were identified, which were detailed in **Appendix E** of the full SEA Environmental Report. Table 1.1 below summarises the key SEA findings in relation to the proposed policies and actions.

Table 1.1: Summary of SEA findings on the proposed policies and actions

SEA Objectives	Summary of proposed policies and actions	Environmental effect
Climate change	• Actions include increasing the number of railway lines that are electrified, improving access to public transport for all areas across the region and facilitating and encouraging the uptake of active travel, all of which is considered to contribute to efforts to decarbonise the transport sector. • 'Facilitating Efficient Passenger Travel and Freight Movement' contains a specific policy regarding adaptation of transport networks and services to be robust and resilient to the impacts of climate change.	• Significant positive
Air quality and amenity	• The RTS includes policies and actions which seek to reduce the number of journeys made in private vehicles and encourage and facilitate more people using public transport and active travel to make journeys. The result of this is predicted to be improved air quality and reduced concentrations of harmful atmospheric pollutants. • Policies also seek to minimise the need to travel through integrating transport planning with land-use planning. • Of particular note are the policies and actions associated with the 'Decarbonising Transport' theme, which will tackle poor air quality and harmful emissions most directly.	• Significant positive

SEA Objectives	Summary of proposed policies and actions	Environmental effect
	• Policies and actions which propose new or extended infrastructure have been scored positively as it is assumed that they will only be implemented to meet identified needs and where the overall benefits outweigh any environmental impacts, and those impacts are appropriately mitigated. These would include any impact on amenity resulting from noise and / or vibration.	
Biodiversity, geodiversity and soil	• A number of the policies and actions will work to deliver a transport network that is less reliant on private car journeys and support the uptake of travel by active travel and public transport. This will lead to a resultant reduction in toxic emissions which pollute the environment and which are harmful to biodiversity, geodiversity and soils. • Actions and policies associated with the 'Reallocation of Road Space on the Regional and Local Network' are considered particularly positive as they will result in improvements without significant new infrastructure and therefore minimise impacts on species, habitats and soil resources.	• Significant positive
	• The effects of the 'Facilitating Efficient Passenger Travel and Freight Movement' theme are considered to have an uncertain effect on the 'Biodiversity, geodiversity and soil' SEA Objective as they include infrastructure works. Hence, it is recommended that any planned infrastructure works incorporate green and sustainable infrastructure, where practical.	• Uncertainty
Water, flood risk and resilience	• 'Decarbonising Transport' actions and policies are predicted to have a significant positive effect as they will reduce the risk of water environments and resources being polluted by oil-based fuels. • 'Facilitating Efficient Freight Movement and Passenger Travel' actions and policies are predicted to have a significant positive effect as they include making the transport network robust and resilient to adapt to the impacts of climate change.	• Significant positive
	• 'Enhancing and Extending the Train Service' is predicted to have an uncertain effect on water, flood risk and resilience due to the inclusion of policies and actions to deliver new infrastructure.	• Uncertainty
Cultural heritage	• The policies and actions designed to reduce carbon emissions generated by transport will help to conserve historic buildings as the materials they are constructed of are vulnerable to the effects of toxic pollutants. • Providing an enhanced public transport service with better bus and rail connections is predicted to make accessing historic and cultural sites easier for people and there could be a resultant increase in visitor numbers and increased awareness and appreciation of the region's historic and cultural assets.	• Significant positive
Landscape	• Actions and policies are forecast to improve townscape and amenity in urban and built-up areas as it is predicted that there will be less congestion and more people travelling by active means which will improve air quality, reduce noise and will make spending time in these environments more pleasant. • Improvements in Park & Ride services and public transport more generally is predicted to result in less	• Significant positive

SEA Objectives	Summary of proposed policies and actions	Environmental effect
	car parking being required in towns and cities, which will have a positive impact on visual amenity and improve townscape character more generally. • It is also likely that the actions will have positive effects on rural areas through improved access to public transport and allowing more people to spend time in the landscape and appreciate its characteristics.	
Accessibility	• The actions and policies seek to improve accessibility in terms of both physical access to the network and infrastructure and also access to information about services and prioritising vulnerable groups and those who live in rural areas.	• Significant positive
Inclusive growth	• The policies and actions will allow industry to improve efficiency in transporting goods with more direct routes to market. Conditions for commercial vehicle drivers are likely to improve with more and better rest stops to be delivered. • Overall connectivity across the region is expected to improve, giving businesses access to the best talent who may previously have been restricted by their transport options to employment locations. • Better transport options can also increase productivity by reducing the effects of fatigue on employees who may previously have experienced long and tiring commutes.	• Significant positive
Health	• A large proportion of the policies and actions are designed to increase the proportion of trips undertaken by active travel (walking, wheeling and cycling), allowing people to incorporate exercise into their daily trips and increasing their level of activity. Exercise is known to have beneficial effects on both mental and physical health. • The actions and policies included to decarbonise vehicles are expected to improve air quality, which in turn is predicted to have a significant positive effect on health.	• Significant positive
Material Assets	• All actions and policies seek to make the best use of existing infrastructure, such as Park & Ride sites, by improving connectivity to them. Research will be undertaken to identify where improvements are most needed and would provide most benefit. • Decarbonising the vehicle fleet and reducing the number of kilometres travelled in cars will help to ensure natural resources are used effectively and efficiently. • The improvements to public transport to make it more accessible and to enhance and extend bus and train services is likely to result in greater uptake of public transport and reduced car use which will reduce congestion and allow transport infrastructure to operate more efficiently.	• Significant positive

1.5   Consideration of the consultation responses

1.5.1   Consultation has played a significant role in both of RTS development and SEA process (see **Section 1.6** below). Information gathered from RTS specific consultations was used in the SEA process and similarly information gathered from the SEA workshops was used to inform the RTS process. In addition. consultation undertaken through the SEA process has also been

1.5.2   An initial consultation and engagement with stakeholders and a public consultation exercise were undertaken as part of the 'Case for Change' development in March - May 2021.

1.5.3   Following production of the 'Case for Change' report, there was a short period of consultation on the document and the associated Equalities Duties Report and SEA Environmental Report to allow for further feedback.

1.5.4   Statutory advertising of the publication of the Draft RTS together with associated documents, including an Environmental Report (ER) and an ER Non-Technical Summary (NTS) took place between Tuesday 16th November 2021 and 11th February 2022.

1.5.5   Following public and stakeholder consultation on the Draft RTS and the Environmental Report, all of the comments received were analysed. The RTS team determined how the document should be amended based on the feedback received. A report of public and stakeholder comments received and how these have been dealt with was prepared and this is available separately as part of the suite of RTS documents (available from A New Regional Transport Strategy – SEStran 2035 - SEStran: The South East of Scotland Transport Partnership :SEStran: The South East of Scotland Transport Partnership). Also, the finalised RTS sets out how the opinions expressed by the public and stakeholders were taken into account in the revision of the RTS from its draft to finalised status.

Consideration of the consultation results

1.5.6   Following consultation, the responses received in relation to the Draft RTS were given due consideration. Redrafting of the RTS was undertaken to present the document more effectively and concisely and to reflect the main themes of the consultation responses. The final RTS, which has been approved by Scottish Ministers and the SEStran Partnership Board, has therefore taken into account the alternatives and consultation results in an iterative manner throughout the process. This ensures that the RTS has best met the agreed Strategy Objectives.

1.6   Reasons other reasonable alternatives have not been considered

1.6.1   The 2005 Act requires that the likely significant effects of implementing both a plan or programme (i.e., the emerging RTS) and reasonable alternatives to it to be examined, as well as the rationale for identifying reasonable alternatives to be described. The 2005 Act further states that, to be considered as reasonable alternatives, options (e.g., alternative policy criteria) must relate to the plan or programme's corresponding objectives and geographic scope.

1.6.2   Alternatives have been considered throughout the process of RTS development and the SEA (**Sections 4.6** of the full SEA Environmental Report). This process effectively refined and narrowed the scope of the RTS in a structured manner so that the alternatives available for the measures and initiatives in the Strategy were honed down to those which helped to meet the RTS Strategy Objectives and mode share targets.

1.6.3   Alternative policies and actions were considered during the preparation of the Draft RTS to implement the proposed SEStran RTS Vision and Objectives. The rationale for the development of individual proposed policies is explained fully within the final RTS. In all cases, each policy is considered necessary either to implement higher level statutory and national policy requirements, achieve identified RTS Strategy Objectives and address associated Transport Planning Objectives, or otherwise to address identified key environmental issues.

1.6.4   As detailed in **Section 5** of the full SEA Environmental Report, a series of recommendations was developed and incorporated within proposed policies and actions through the SEA process to improve their effectiveness and clarity. The assessment of the SEA Environmental

Report was updated to take into account all agreed mitigation incorporated within the Draft RTS. This means all policies included within the final RTS themselves constitute reasonable alternative policy options and no further reasonable alternative options have been identified.

1.6.5   A high level and non-spatially defined list of transport options ('the initial options generation matrix') was defined by SEStran in the RTS 'Case for Change' report as the starting point to develop options to implement the proposed RTS Strategy Objectives. In accordance with SEA case law, all implementation components within an emerging plan themselves need to constitute reasonable options to implement the purpose of the plan, i.e., to achieve the RTS Strategy Objectives. An assessment of the initial options generation matrix was therefore carried out to demonstrate that all initially identified types of options are themselves reasonable and that no potentially reasonable alternatives have been excluded from consideration.

1.6.6   The high-level nature of the RTS precluded the development of individual transport options or interventions at this stage, as is appropriate for a Strategy document. However, the STAG Preliminary Options Appraisal defined 18 transport corridors corresponding with key movements within the SEStran region where any future strategic transport interventions should be focused. The initial options generation matrix was overlaid against these transport corridors to identify potential types of options which could be progressed. However, at this stage, no spatially defined interventions were developed and thus none were assessed in the SEA.

1.7   Monitoring environmental effects of the RTS

1.7.1   The 2005 Act requires the responsible authority to monitor the **significant effects** of the implementation of the plan in a manner which enables the authority to identify any unforeseen adverse effects at an early stage and undertake appropriate remedial action. The Act requires Post Adoption Statements to set out the measures that are to be taken to monitor the significant environmental effects of the plan. As significant adverse environmental effects are not anticipated, the scope of monitoring required through the 2005 Act is limited. Nonetheless, monitoring provides opportunities to review progress and to identify any unforeseen adverse environmental effects.

1.7.2   The RTS commits to undertaking monitoring on a two-yearly basis to set out the key regional trends using a series of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs). Several of the KPIs reflect the SEA Objectives, as follows:

Table 1.2: RTS Monitoring KPIs relevant to the SEA Objectives

KPIs	Relevant to the SEA Objectives									
	Climate Change	Air Quality & Amenity	Biodiversity	Water, Flood	Heritage	Landscape	Accessibility	Growth	Health	Material Assets
Strategy Objective 1: Transitioning to a Sustainable, Post-Carbon Transport System • Transport emissions in the SEStran region (Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy) • Car kilometres in the SEStran region (Scottish Transport Statistics) • Number of Air Quality Management Areas (Scottish Transport Statistics) • Proportion of road vehicle fleet which is ULEVs (DfT Vehicle Licensing Statistics)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
Strategy Objective 2: Facilitating Greater Physical Activity • Number of bikes available for private use by households (Scottish Household Survey Travel Diary) • Adults (16+) - frequency of walking in previous seven days (Scottish Household Survey Travel Diary) • Main mode of travel – walking (Scottish Household Survey Travel Diary) • Main mode of travel – bicycle (Scottish Household Survey Travel Diary)	✓	✓					✓		✓	✓
Strategy Objective 3: Widening Public Transport Connectivity and Access Across the Region • Use of local bus services in previous month (Scottish Household Survey Travel Diary) • Use of local train services in previous month (Scottish Household Survey Travel Diary)	✓	✓	✓				✓	✓	✓	

KPIs	Relevant to the SEA Objectives									
	Climate Change	Air Quality & Amenity	Biodiversity	Water, Flood	Heritage	Landscape	Accessibility	Growth	Health	Material Assets
• Main mode of travel – bus (Scottish Household Survey Travel Diary) • Main mode of travel – rail (Scottish Household Survey Travel Diary) • Satisfaction with public transport (Scottish Household Survey Travel Diary / Transport Focus surveys) • Percentage of average weekly household expenditure on transport (Scottish Transport Statistics) • Connectivity and deprivation analysis for key healthcare, education and employment destinations (TRACC) • Public transport labour market catchments of largest employment sites (TRACC)										
Strategy Objective 4: Supporting Safe, Sustainable and Efficient Movement of People and Freight Across the Region • Use of local bus services in previous month (Scottish Household Survey Travel Diary) • Use of local train services in previous month (Scottish Household Survey Travel Diary) • Main mode of travel – bus (Scottish Household Survey Travel Diary) • Main mode of travel – rail (Scottish Household Survey Travel Diary) • Satisfaction with public transport (Scottish Household Survey Travel Diary / Transport Focus surveys) • Percentage of average weekly household expenditure on transport (Scottish Transport Statistics) • Connectivity and deprivation analysis for key healthcare, education and employment destinations (TRACC)	✓	✓	✓				✓	✓	✓	✓

KPIs	Relevant to the SEA Objectives									
	Climate Change	Air Quality & Amenity	Biodiversity	Water, Flood	Heritage	Landscape	Accessibility	Growth	Health	Material Assets
• Public transport labour market catchments of largest employment sites (TRACC)										

1.7.3   The SEA Environmental Reports identify some uncertain environmental effects in relation to infrastructure developments. Depending on their nature and likely environmental effects, such works are likely to require project-level Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) and potentially Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA). These established statutory requirements will necessitate more detailed environmental assessments to identify and address potential adverse effects and establish project-level monitoring requirements.

1.7.4   Regular plan review shall be conducted to assess whether all RTS policies are being implemented as intended and with no unforeseen adverse environmental consequences. To inform future RTS reviews, it would also be prudent to monitor whether the policies remain in conformity with any updates to national transport and land-use planning policies.

1.8   Summary

1.8.1   This PAS document has set out the background to the SEA for the SEStran RTS. It reports on the response to consultation on the SEA Environmental Report. It also considers the reasons for adopting the RTS and refers to the assessment of alternatives. The PAS outlines the key findings of the SEA process which are that, overall, the RTS will have no major, identifiable detrimental impacts on the environment. The monitoring arrangements for the RTS in relation to environmental effects of implementation of the plan are also set out.