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The Scottish Parliament
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Expression of Interest seeking year one Just Transition Fund award to facilitate a new feasibility study examining rail connections between Dyce, Ellon, Peterhead and Fraserburgh.

Please find this letter a satisfactory 'expression of interest' to begin the process of application for funds in the first year of the JTF. Below we will demonstrate how our application meets the assessment criteria for 'pilot or feasibility study' funding, and how our proposed railway would benefit the North East in such a way as to help the region achieve the Just Transition.

Supplementary to this EOI, we include our organisation's 'Framework Document' in our application. This document details how a such a feasibility study should be designed, and showcases the benefits of our proposed railway in regards to the Just Transition. Rail connections in the area will strengthen the local economy for business while alleviating previously identified transport problems holding back growth in Buchan, improve overall quality of life, and crucially, attract new investment to the region, providing jobs, and prosperity.

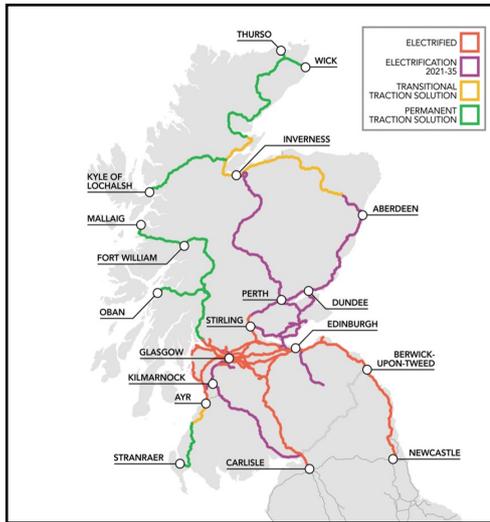
Further, we would like to highlight the progress of our campaign. After growing awareness of our group in the local community we have now achieved sustained cross-party support in Holyrood for our proposals. This led to a meeting with Minister for Transport Jenny Gilruth MSP, who praised the idea but highlighted the process that must be followed for projects such as these. A key step in that process is the completion of a STAG based feasibility study, the source for funding such a study is not important, so long as the study is completed. CNER have begun building pressure for a new study in recent months, focussing on raising pressure in three key areas; Community, Business, and Political. A recent event hosted by the Aberdeen & Grampian Chamber of Commerce saw us gain favour with local businesses, as well as the clear support of the chamber itself, and now will be pursuing explicit endorsement to demonstrate the demand for this project.

Finally, on April 5th 2022, CNER attended another event hosted by AGCC in which 10 ideas for how the Just Transition Fund should be spent were pitched to business leaders, Chamber delegates, and Minister for Just Transition, Employment and Fair Work Richard Lochhead MSP. Our proposed 'passenger and freight railway connecting Ellon, Peterhead, St Fergus and Fraserburgh' came out on top of a poll of attendees. This, we believe, puts our application in good standing in regards to the proposition of receiving an award from the JTF.

'A Narrative Summary of Proposal'

Fraserburgh and Peterhead are the largest towns, the furthest from a railway station anywhere in the UK. Today these towns remain isolated and in decline. Previous studies in 2016 and 2017 identified key challenges faced by business in the region that hinder growth and stifle investment. Since local industry relies heavily on transport, local trunk roads are congested with heavy freight, causing delays and unreliable journey times. This unpredictable nature is a handicap on business, 'slack' must be built into shipping times, increasing costs and inefficiencies, frustrated drivers cause dangerous roads. These studies also predicted that the roads **north of Ellon** will see an increase in traffic and further exacerbation of these problems caused by delays by 2023 regardless if the AWPR opening. "Overall the analysis emphasises that the future ability to efficiently move people and goods is paramount in order to anchor local businesses and employment opportunities in the area."

Both of these previous studies STAG analysis on reconnecting Fraserburgh, Peterhead, and Ellon, by rail are now obsolete. New data from the Borders Railway showed that stations further away from Edinburgh significantly outperformed stations closer to the city, this is relevant as population along our proposed Buchan Railway is weighted towards the end of the line. The Scottish Government has since recognised the Climate Emergency in parliament, and has implemented new policies to meet this challenge; a target of overall 20% reduction in car usage by 2030, commitments to achieve modal shift from road to rail and expand rail freight over the next 20 years (STPR2), and now fully decarbonising the Scottish rail network by 2035. Previous studies assumed, rightly, Diesel traction.



Transport Scotland Rail Services Decarbonisation Action Plan 2035

Additionally, the significant potential for rail freight was overlooked in these studies. The Buchan Coast produces a diverse range of produce including beer, fish, ice cream, grain, and oil and gas materials. Most of these products are perfect candidates for rail freight, they're bulky, are transported regularly, and over long distances. CNER propose freight terminals in Ellon, Peterhead, Fraserburgh and St Fergus Gas Terminal.

The strategic nature of the ports of Fraserburgh and Peterhead were also overlooked by previous studies. Fraserburgh is the closest UK port to the Norwegian west coast ports of Stavanger and Bergen (excluding Lerwick), and is investing significant funds to diversify and upgrade the harbour. Peterhead is the closest UK port to the remaining large Norwegian ports of Kristiansand and Oslo, as well as being the closest UK port to the Danish Straits, giving access to the Baltic Sea and therefore major ports in Sweden, Finland, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Germany and Denmark. Rail connections allow import and export trade between all of these ports, with the minimum possible sea crossing.

Significant costs attributed to the project in these studies can also be dismissed. Firstly, upgrades to the single line section through the Schoolhill and Hutcheon Street tunnels in Aberdeen unfairly burdened the Buchan railway. There has since been agreement by the Minister for Transport Jenny Gilruth MSP that this project should be assessed on its own merits, and recommendations for freight gauge upgrades made by STPR2 have provided a basis for a study of this section, CNER will be pursuing this with NESTRANS. Secondly, the 2016 study assumed replacement of the Formartine and Buchan Way active travel path in full, CNER proposals only require 7 miles of this work. Finally, this study also applied a 66% optimism bias. Since 2016, Scotland has gained experience and technical skills in delivering rail projects such as these. Similar schemes have been completed on time and on budget, at an event this month, MD of Scotland's Railway Alex Hynes agreed that 66% is far too high for a project such as this in 2022.

Enough has changed since the 2016 and 2017 studies to warrant a reinvestigation of these rail links. CNER have provided a framework for how a new study should be designed, including the former Boddam Branch line, which has never been studied for reopening, and presents the most direct route to Peterhead. A modern rail link would provide a number of benefits across Buchan. Improved connectivity, increased reliability of freight and passenger travel times by road, reduced feelings of isolation in the community, reduced frustration on the roads, and will allow smaller towns to meaningfully compete with Aberdeen for new renewable energy investment as skilled workers will be more likely to want to live in these areas. This railway will act as a catalyst for regeneration; supporting the Just Transition by improving the quality of life along the length of the line, solve chronic transport issues that plague local businesses, and significantly enhance progress towards our collective goal of Net-Zero.



2016 Study - Full reopening of the Formartine and Buchan Way



2017 Study - Railway that terminates at Ellon



CNER Proposal - Boddam Branch line to reach Peterhead

CNER are seeking year one JTF funding for a STAG based feasibility study examining a freight and passenger railway connecting Dyce, Ellon, Peterhead, and Fraserburgh. Should an award be granted, CNER will seek to work with Aberdeen City Council, Aberdeenshire Council, and NESTRANS to commission a study from an organisation with a track record of performing these types of studies. This study will build on the work of the 2016 and 2017 studies, and update the findings to reflect the changes in circumstances since they were first performed. Further, CNER will seek to work with the councils and NESTRANS to design the study in line with our proposals such that the work our organisation have done so far can benefit the study, and give the railway the best chance of approval.

Transport Scotland estimate a study of this type will cost between £80,000 and £250,000 depending on scope. Therefore, CNER are seeking up to £250,000 from the JTF for this project, and expect funds to be provided directly to the studying organisation once agreement on scope and design has been agreed by the councils, NESTRANS and CNER. On completion of this feasibility study, CNER will continue work to see this railway constructed.

‘Demonstration of Eligibility’

Just Transition Fund Eligibility Criteria	How CNER proposals satisfy criteria
<p>“Must demonstrate a strong connection to Aberdeenshire, Aberdeen City or Moray.” The majority of project activity and benefits realised must also be within these regions.</p>	<p>Railway proposals are entirely within Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire boundaries. Campaign activities are focussed in Buchan. The benefits of the scheme will be most strongly realised along the Dyce-Peterhead-Fraserburgh corridor, but will also have additional benefit for Aberdeen City and surrounding regions.</p>
<p>“Demonstrate delivery against Just Transition Outcomes.” Demonstrate a positive impact on the ‘Decarbonisation and Efficiencies’ Just Transition Outcome is mandatory.</p>	<p>See ‘Appendix A - Additional criteria required for eligibility’</p>
<p>“Demonstrate that projects are able to receive and spend the total amount of the bid in the 2022/23 financial year.”</p>	<p>CNER have completed proposals for how this study should be designed. Upon receipt of JTF award, CNER will engage with Aberdeen City Council, Aberdeenshire Council, and NESTRANS to seek a consensus on the study design. The study will then be commissioned by NESTRANS by usual tendering process.</p>
<p>“For pilot projects - Demonstrate the core purpose to be ‘acquiring new knowledge’ per the definition in HM Treasury guidance”</p>	<p>See ‘Appendix A - Additional criteria required for eligibility’</p>

‘Demonstration of Alignment with the Impact Objectives’

Just Transition Fund Impact Objectives	How CNER proposals satisfy criteria
<p>“Ensure the investment is targeted in such a way that can create good, green jobs now and throughout the transition to net zero.”</p>	<p>Buchan rail connections would create a number of green jobs directly, through employment in the railway, and indirectly, by catalysing growth in the local trade and the economy. Railway jobs typically pay higher than the national average, and are relatively secure. Ongoing skilled work would be created in the maintaining and running of the railway. Line reopenings now have a proven track record of delivering transformative change to communities in need of regeneration. Rail transforms connectivity, breathing new life into communities. This feeds a ‘virtuous cycle’, as regeneration drives investment which drives more regeneration. This effect will see existing businesses thrive, new businesses open, and as such jobs created in these communities in regeneration priority areas. Local jobs and services are key to a green, sustainable future by ways of reducing the overall need for frequent long distance travel, allowing people to live their lives in a ‘20 minute community’ as much as possible, while decarbonised rail picks up the gaps which remain necessary. Further, there is already evidence of road congestion and lack of alternative transport options in Buchan constraining growth. Previous studies highlighted the reliance of local business on freight, and the quantity of it on local roads as major factors limiting expansion of business. Local businesses have no alternative to road transportation, leaving them vulnerable to congestion and delay, causing inefficiency to be locked in to their operations. Introducing rail will immediately alleviate these chronic transport issues, allowing for growth in existing business, and making the area an attractive place to invest in, while clearing congestion from the roads for freight which is too large for rail transportation. This will allow for the diversification of Fraserburgh harbour to accelerate to cater for Renewable industry, and for the world class facilities in Peterhead to truly compete. Finally, Buchan rail seeks to support the activities of the Carbon Capture and Hydrogen production at St Fergus Gas Terminal. Rail freight could play a vital role in developing this project, importing compressed CO₂ emissions for sequestration in the North Sea, and exporting Hydrogen to power sustainable transportation and generation across the UK. These types of jobs are critical to ensure the retention of key skills in the North East, such that the region can make a success of the JT.</p>
<p>“Ensure communities directly benefit from the JTF, including through the ability to decide on and drive spend.”</p>	<p>Peterhead and Fraserburgh are in regional development areas as identified by the Scottish government, namely, a Regeneration Priority Area, Strategic Growth Area, and the Energetica Corridor. Communities connected to the national rail network benefit are better able to compete for investment and development as they are more attractive places to live, work and conduct business. CNER attended an event with AGCC to pitch our ideas for how the JTF should be spent, it should be noted that this gathering, attended by business and community leaders in the North East, decided that our proposals was the best of ten presented at the event.</p>
<p>“Work in partnership with the private sector, especially shaping opportunities to crowd in private sector finance.”</p>	<p>The rail freight industry is currently a private enterprise. Development of freight networks supports private enterprise throughout Scotland and markets further south. Step change in passenger connectivity will make it easier to conduct business, make meetings, invite guests, and attract investment.</p>
<p>“Collaborate at a local and national level on the decisions that impact the North East and Moray”</p>	<p>CNER continue to successfully collaborate on a cross-party basis with local political representatives at a local and national level, engage community groups, Business leaders, and Business representatives such as the Aberdeen & Grampian Chamber of Commerce. Our group intends to continue operating in this way to build as broad a consensus as possible for the success of this project, such that the maximum benefit can be delivered for our communities as is possible.</p>

‘Provide Evidence of where the Assessment Criteria has been met ’

Criteria for pilot or feasibility study	Weighting	How CNER proposals satisfy criteria
Meets eligibility criteria	Yes/No	Yes. See Table ‘Demonstration of Eligibility’
Meets definition of pilot for purposes of capitalisation of costs	Yes/No	Yes. CNER are requesting funding for a feasibility study, this is the first stage of assessing the merits of a project and tests benefits against a set of TPOs.
Outline the need for JTF to support the proposal	20	CNER is seeking funding for a feasibility study to comprehensively assess new rail lines to Peterhead and Fraserburgh. At this time there is no such funding available for such a study. As demonstrated in answers throughout this EOI, a project such as this will provide the exact type of change the JTF is designed to deliver, therefore CNER see it as appropriate for JTF funds to support such a study.
Outline positive impact against at least one Just Transition Outcome	15	CNER proposals positively impact a number of Just Transition Outcomes. See ‘Appendix A - Additional criteria required for eligibility’
Identify the risks of negative social and environmental impacts from the proposal and outline approaches to mitigate those risks.	15	Construction of line would have an initial carbon cost, however this ultimately will be offset in the long term by significant carbon savings derived from modal shift. Mitigations for this work could include appropriate tree planting and habitat development on railway land to offset the carbon releases from construction, this work is conducted routinely by Network Rail. Carbon-Neutral construction methods could be adopted by appointing contractors who offset their carbon footprint. Railways have a distinct advantage during construction by utilising the existing network to transport materials to and from construction sites. Raith’s Farm depot in Dyce was used extensively during the A-I redoubling, and we would expect that to be repeated. Socially, construction will impact on the Formartine and Buchan Way cycle path while sections are re-laid and railway construction is progressing. This can be mitigated with temporary diversions. Finally, compulsory purchase is necessary in some areas of the proposed alignment. This is mitigated by providing multiple route options, which can be assessed based on study outcomes and community engagement during the feasibility study process.
Demonstrate replicability or scalability, with clear applications beyond the individual project, including into other sectors	30	Buchan Rail would support businesses and individuals far beyond the initial construction and following operation of the line. By providing access to high quality low carbon transport, the agriculture, fishing, industrial and tourism sectors would have the opportunity to take advantage of access to markets that currently are only served by road transport or are difficult to access. Local rail provides connections to the wider UK network, and ultimately European rail network, opening new opportunities for growth and connection. As detailed in previous answers, this project will deliver growth, and investment to the local area. The railway will act as a catalyst for regeneration, and breathe new life into local communities. When this project is shown to be a success, it will then add to the growing evidence base surrounding the impact rail connections can have on communities, and can therefore feed data into studies in other areas where rail may be a feasible solution.
Evidence existing or planned transparent partnership and engagement with relevant local communities, businesses and/or local government as most relevant to the proposal	20	CNER continue to collaborate and engage with local communities, and have a number of community engagements throughout 2022. CNER is in regular discussion with local and national political representatives and business groups. Our group is actively seeking a formal endorsement from community, business and our local authorities and transport partnership (NESTRANS). As the campaign continues, CNER will be hosting public meetings to discuss the proposals, two of these are scheduled for August this year, and will continue to build momentum and support from wherever we can in the area such that all NE voices are engaged.

Conclusion

We hope we have now demonstrated the impact our proposed railway can have in the North East, and how such a project can support the region through the Just Transition. The unique position of Buchan means that this railway has the potential to boost local business, attract new investment, improve the quality of life of residents, and create new jobs, helping to retain the skilled workforce in the area, and attract new people to the area. CNER firmly believe there is a prosperous future for the North East, and Buchan, and that rail connections are a vital part of bringing this to fruition.

We are asking for the JTF to fund a feasibility study from an accredited company to examine new rail connections between Dyce, Ellon, Peterhead and Fraserburgh. This will cost £80,000 - £250,000 depending on scale. The study will build on the knowledge gained from the 2016/17 studies, and will renew the findings to reflect the drastic changes that have occurred since the conclusion of that work. Further, this study will investigate CNER proposals, which include the never before studied Boddam Branch line, which we believe is the key to a feasible rail link to Peterhead. CNER will work with the local authorities and NESTRANS to deliver this study in a way that satisfies all stakeholders such that the findings can be legitimate, and take us closer to realising new rail links in Buchan.

Appendix A

Additional criteria required for eligibility

The table below compares CNER proposals against Just Transition Outcomes.
This satisfies second eligibility criteria - "Demonstrate delivery against Just Transition Outcomes."
(Demonstrate a positive impact on the 'Decarbonisation and Efficiencies' Just Transition Outcome is mandatory.)

Just Transition Outcomes	How CNER proposals deliver against outcomes.
<p>"Citizens, communities and place" Support affected regions by empowering and invigorating communities and strengthening local economies.</p>	<p>The Borders Railway has been a major factor in the regeneration of the region. It has been said that the line has "breathed new life in local economies and communities" [Herald, 2018]. Peterhead and Fraserburgh both reside within a Regeneration Priority Area, there is no reason to believe the regeneration seen in the Borders will not be replicated in Buchan. In the Borders, 71% of tourists said the railway was a factor in their decision to visit the region. Reintroducing rail connections to Buchan will revitalise an area in desperate need of regeneration, open up new avenues for growth, create busier towns, and strengthen local connections.</p>
<p>"Jobs, skills and education" Equip people with skills/education/retraining required to support retention and creation of green, fair and high-value work.</p>	<p>Retaining and attracting skilled workers is a problem for Buchan coastal towns. Fraserburgh is the town most reliant on fishing in the entire UK. To evolve towards a low carbon future, utilising the expert technical knowledge that exists within the Oil & Gas industry is fundamental. The 2016 FFAST Study identified deeply held feelings of isolation in these towns which make it difficult to retain and attract skilled workers to the area. This has contributed to business moving out of the town as they grow to be able to access the skilled staff they need. Brewdog and Powerjacks are international £multi-million businesses who began in Fraserburgh, and have since moved out of the town, partially due to this effect. A railway would literally put the area 'on the map', reducing these feelings of isolation, and helping to make the area a place that attracts investment in new and existing businesses.</p>
<p>"Fair distribution of costs and benefits" Address existing economic and social inequality by sharing the benefits of climate action widely, while ensuring that the costs are distributed on the basis of ability to pay.</p>	<p>The cost of constructing this railway will most likely be met by the Scottish Government as per previous railway projects in Scotland. Railways deliver a wide range of benefits directly and indirectly across the areas they are introduced to. The climate benefit of achieving modal shift of passenger and freight traffic will be felt most strongly. Reduced HGV traffic on the roads will have a significant impact on emissions and air quality, and quieter roads will make buses and business journeys more reliable. Recent railway projects have seen the creation of groups for steering the design of the project so the benefits can be maximised and shared equally. (Such as 'Borders Railway Blueprint Group', and 'Levenmouth Reconnected')</p>
<p>"Business and Economy" Support a strong, dynamic and productive economy which creates wealth and high quality employment across Scotland, upholds the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, and continues to make Scotland a great place to do business.</p>	<p>Buchan Rail would significantly enhance the dynamism and employment opportunity within Buchan by making it a more attractive, accessible and connected place in which to do business. It will deliver opportunities for local people - unlocking access to education, culture, entertainment and employment options, as well attracting new business and investment. Population along the length of the Borders Railway has continued to increase since the reopening of the line, in year 2, 58% of movers stated the railway was a factor in their decision. This will be replicated in Buchan, and an overall increase in population will kickstart desperately needed regeneration. Connections to the diversifying ports of Fraserburgh and Peterhead will open new opportunities for existing businesses and attract new investment in the area, creating and strengthening jobs.</p>
<p>"Adaptation and resilience" Identify key risks from Climate Change and set out actions to build resilience to these risks, ensuring our economy is flexible, adaptable and responsive to the changing climate.</p>	<p>The local Buchan economy is heavily reliant on freight. Climate related extreme weather events will continue to increase in frequency. Since there is no alternative to road transport, delay, blockage and damage to the road network impacts heavily on business. The construction of a railway will introduce an alternative mode of transport to the area. Scotland's Railway will be fully decarbonised by 2035, therefore any modal shift from road to rail will have a significant impact on emissions.</p>
<p>"Environmental protection and restoration" Act within our planetary boundaries while protecting and restoring our natural environment.</p>	<p>Low carbon rail transport would provide significant environmental protection by creating additional capacity for freight without requiring any new road infrastructure to be built. Further, there is significant existing evidence that railways provide considerable habitats for flora and fauna which would be enhanced and developed as part of railway development. Finally, CNER proposals include the retention of the Formartine and Buchan Way, connections to this cycle path will encourage uptake of active travel for first mile/last mile journeys, maximising sustainable journeys.</p>
<p>"Further equality and human rights implementation, preventing new inequalities from arising" Address fuel and child poverty in a manner consistent with Scotland's statutory targets on each, while furthering wider equality and human rights across protected characteristics.</p>	<p>Peterhead and Fraserburgh are categorised as Regeneration Priority Areas within the Local Development Plans. By connecting these communities to the rail network, inequalities can be prevented from advancing by improving the competitiveness and investment potential of the towns and surrounding areas. Rail is excellent for disabled access, and modal shift will increase reliability of the bus network. Further, HMP/YOI Grampian is currently the worst connected prison in Scotland. Evidence shows that regular visitation significantly reduces rates of reoffending, an additional rail option and improved bus service will increase ease of visiting, and thus increase regularity of these visits, particularly to vulnerable young offenders.</p>

Mandatory Just Transition Outcome

How CNER proposals deliver against outcomes.

“Decarbonisation and efficiencies”

Contribute to resource efficient and sustainable economic approaches that actively encourage decarbonisation, support low-carbon investment/infrastructure, avoid carbon 'lock-in'

CNER seek to further evidence these by collaborating with local universities to robustly assess the potential carbon savings that would arise as a result of connecting Peterhead and Fraserburgh to the rail network.

Buchan Rail has the potential to transform the local economy for existing businesses, and improve circumstances such that new industry and investment is attracted to the area, all while reducing transport emissions;

1. Modal shift of freight from road to rail will directly reduce carbon emissions and increase the efficiency of transporting goods to and from Buchan. A single freight train can replace 76 HGVs [Network Rail, 2022], by 2035, there will be a continuous route of electrification between Aberdeen and the Central Belt, and thus further south across the UK, boosting the decarbonising effect of this shift.

2. Previous studies identified key inefficiencies for existing businesses transporting goods in Buchan. High quantities of freight on the roads create unreliable journey times. This then means that businesses must build in 'slack to their timetables, adding cost and inefficiency to their operations. These busy roads north of Ellon also contribute to frustration in drivers, which causes an increased rate of accidents compared to the national average, further adding to delay and unpredictability of journeys. As well as removing significant weight of freight from the road, a railway provides an alternative mode of transport. This increases the resilience of the entire local transport system, and means that disruption on the roads does not grind the entire local economy to a halt.

3. 64% of users on the Borders Railway previously drove all the way to their destination. Significant modal shift like this will also be delivered in Buchan, further easing strain on the roads. This increase efficiency for businesses who cannot ship by rail by further reducing road traffic. This increase in reliability will also improve bus services, further adding to the decarbonising effect of this rail project, and providing better connections between stations and surrounding settlements.

4. CNER proposals all make use of less than half of the Formartine and Buchan Way cycle path. In areas where the route is shared with the railway, the path will be retained or replaced alongside the tracks, as has been achieved in other rail projects in Scotland. At every stop proposed by CNER, the station connects to an active travel path, be that a long distance one like the Formartine and Buchan Way, or shorter, local paths. This will encourage first mile/last mile journeys by active travel means (walk, wheeling, cycling). Trains are excellent at catering for cyclists, and this railway will allow for cyclists to enjoy the Formartine and Buchan Way without having to tackle the entire 50+ mile route. Further, the path will serve to connect towns and villages to stations without the need for a car, or even cycling on roads. This will also work in reverse, for example visitors to the area will be able to take the train to Ellon or Peterhead, then cycle a few miles to Mintlaw to enjoy the stunning Aden Country Park, a 5 star visitor attraction.

5. As the North East undergoes a paradigm shift in it's economy, rail connections will play a vital role. Fraserburgh port is the closest in the UK to the Norwegian west coast ports of Bergen and Stavanger. Peterhead is the closest UK port to other major Norwegian ports such as Kristiansand and Oslo, as well as the Danish Straits, which lead to the Baltic Sea, and thus major ports in Denmark, Sweden, Finland, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland and Germany. Peterhead is also the closest Scottish port to the Danish port of Esbjerg, which is a major Oil & Gas hub, now undergoing a transformation towards renewable industries. Rail connections to Fraserburgh and Peterhead will allow for growth between Scotland and all of these countries in line with all decarbonising targets. Rail is the most efficient mode of transport across land, connections to these ports will minimise the length of sea crossings, meaning carbon and cost will be saved by reducing crossing times, and thus minimising burn of heavy shipping oils.

6. Railways attract regeneration, investment along the length of the railway and increasing populations will mean local communities thrive. Growth in these economies will mean the opening of services and facilities that currently require locals to travel to access. A railway could remove the need entirely for some trips to be undertaken at all, reducing emissions, and contributing to the Scottish Government's goal of establishing '20 minute communities'.

7. Railway signalling and GSM-r communications systems require fibre optic connections to function. Superfast fibre internet providers can 'piggyback' on this infrastructure and use it to accelerate the installation of superfast broadband to rural areas. This has been successfully achieved in railway projects across the UK. Superfast broadband allows rural communities to participate in the global online economy without commuting, further reducing unnecessary travel.

8. Finally, St Fergus Gas Terminal is one of the largest of it's kind in the North Sea, with many pipeline connections to Oil & Gas fields. The Acorn carbon capture project intends to use these pipelines to sequester CO₂ in spent gas fields, in future, the site will be used to produce H₂ to power renewable technologies. There is potential here to import CO₂ for capture, and to export H₂ across the UK, all by rail.

The table below compares CNER proposals against the HM Treasury definition of ‘acquiring new knowledge’.
CNER are seeking JTF funding for a feasibility study examining our proposed rail connections.

This satisfies fourth eligibility criteria;

“Demonstrate the core purpose to be 'acquiring new knowledge' per the definition in HM Treasury guidance.”

Criteria required to satisfy the HM Treasury definition of ‘acquiring new knowledge’	How CNER proposals satisfy criteria.
<p>“Aimed at new findings” This includes acquiring new knowledge directed primarily towards a specific aim or objective.</p>	<p>CNER are seeking funding to investigate rail connections between Dyce, Ellon, Peterhead and Fraserburgh. Two previous studies have looked at these connections, one in 2016 and another in 2017. Since then, both of these STAG analyses have become obsolete. New data from the Borders Railway showed that stations further away from Edinburgh significantly outperformed stations closer to the city, this is relevant as population along our proposed Buchan Railway is weighted towards the end of the line. The Scottish Government has since recognised the Climate Emergency in parliament, and has implemented new policies to meet this challenge; a target of overall 20% reduction in car usage by 2030, commitments to achieve modal shift from road to rail and expand rail freight over the next 20 years (STPR2), and now fully decarbonising the Scottish rail network by 2035. Previous studies assumed, rightly at the time, Diesel traction, any new railway will be operated by decarbonised traction, be that electric, battery or hydrogen trains. Significant costs attributed to the project in these studies can also be dismissed. Firstly, upgrades to the single line section through the Schoolhill and Hutcheon Street tunnels in Aberdeen unfairly burdened the Buchan railway. There has since been agreement by the Minister for Transport Jenny Gilruth MSP that this project should be assessed on its own merits, and recommendations for freight gauge upgrades made by STPR2 have provided a basis for a study of this section, CNER will be pursuing this with NESTRANS. Secondly, the 2016 study assumed replacement of the Formartine and Buchan Way active travel path in full, CNER proposals only require 7 miles of this work. Finally, this study also applied a 66% optimism bias. Since 2016, Scotland has gained experience and technical skills in delivering rail projects such as these. Similar schemes have been completed on time and on budget, at an event this month, MD of Scotland’s Railway Alex Hynes agreed that 66% is far too high for a project such as this in 2022. Together, these changes provide an environment completely different to that studied in 2016/17, it is clear that another study would come to new conclusions, based on new findings.</p>
<p>“Based on new concepts or ideas with the objective of improving on existing knowledge.”</p>	<p>Previous studies examined fully reopening the Formartine and Buchan Way, an entirely new railway, and a railway that terminates in Ellon. None of these options provide a rail link to Peterhead that would compete with the road journey, and be affordable. CNER are proposing the Boddam branch line is investigated in the next study. This line ran from Ellon, along the coast to Boddam, near Peterhead. This route is by far the most direct way to reach Peterhead, it will compete with the journey by road, and since significant amounts of the original infrastructure still exists, costs will be in line with other successful rail reopenings completed in Scotland. Crucially, utilising the Boddam Branch line has never been examined, and constitutes a new concept for the purposes of this criteria. The next study will also be STAG based, as were the previous studies, this study will update the findings of these studies, and add to the knowledge they provided, particularly by assessing the impact of a railway designed to this route on chronic transport issues raised by the 2016 ns 2017 feasibility studies.</p>
<p>“Uncertain about its final outcome.”</p>	<p>A new STAG Study will examine CNER rail proposals against multiple TPOs alongside other multimodal solutions. CNER have included multiple options, it is uncertain which of these will provide the best makeup of costs and benefits.</p>
<p>“Systematically performed. Research is conducted in a planned way, with the process and outcomes documented.”</p>	<p>STAG studies are well established in Scotland, follow a detailed and specific, published process. The study will be conducted by an accredited organisation with a history of performing such work, and the findings will be publicly available.</p>
<p>“Leads to results that have the potential to be reproduced.”</p>	<p>STAG criteria is a published Scottish Government/Transport Scotland framework for studies. Results of any future feasibility study will be infinitely reproducible by again performing a STAG analysis on the given proposals and TPOs.</p>

Appendix A ends.