Institution: University of Aberdeen
Unit of Assessment: 16 Architecture, Built Environment and Planning

a. Context

Real Estate and Transport & Environment operate as separate units within Aberdeen but both have strong applied and practical elements to their research. They provide new evidence that challenges conventional policy wisdom about property markets, local planning practice, transport operations and sustainable lifestyles. Non-academic beneficiaries of their research include EU and national policy makers, legislators, local authorities and regional development agencies, professional bodies, environmental campaign groups, social enterprises, real estate and transport practitioners, transport operators, planners and the general public. Highlights include:

Real Estate
- Research on **property investment and market analysis** has shaped and influenced urban regeneration policies across the UK, the market awareness and decisions of UK property investors, and has been used in evidence at a Leasehold Valuation Tribunal.
- Research on **housing markets** has improved market information through the development of a series of new house price indices (see case study A), thereby influencing decision-making by surveyors, housing associations, mortgage lenders and the general public.
- Research on **regional and rural development** has involved providing detailed information on the economic structure of regional economies against which the impact of new developments can be assessed. Other research has informed the development of the European Commission's Common Agricultural Policy.

Transport and Environment
- Research on **transport** has led to reframing of policy and investment in new types of 'soft' interventions (See case study B), has altered the way in which public transport providers (e.g. Strathclyde Passenger Transport) provide services to passengers by using real-time scheduling and flexible dispatching; has informed climate change policy in the UK and Scotland; and has resulted in evidence to Select Committees in the House of Lords, House of Commons and Scottish Parliament on policies to influence travel behaviour.
- Research on **Digital Economy** works closely with a consortium of public sector bodies through direct collaborations and Advisory Board structures leading to projects shaped by end users. A good example is the 'Flexible Integrated Transport Services' project developing greater co-ordination of transport services in the local 'Health Transport Action Plan'. This was cited as an example of impact in the RCUK Digital Economy Impact Review Panel report (Sept 2012).

b. Approach to impact

Research within both groups is often "near market" or "policy ready". In other words, it is closely aligned with the interests of user groups. Non-academic impact has been maximised through:

Direct collaboration with professional bodies, private enterprise and NGOs (a) A high proportion of research is **funded by professional bodies** and undertaken directly for stakeholders (e.g. Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (RICS), Investment Property Forum, NHS, Transport Scotland, Department for Transport, Transport for Greater Manchester). These close relationships ensure that our work influences policy and practice and has greater potential to directly impact the general public. For example, *Mitigating Transport's Climate Impact in Scotland* (Scottish Government) was used to prioritise transport policies within Scotland's Climate Change programme. The impact is evidenced by citations in government climate change policy documentation (2010-12), numerous regional, local transport authorities and NGO reports, and invitations to speak to conferences and committees such as the Cross-Party Group on Climate Change (Scottish Parliament). (b) Research involves **project steering groups** with representation from stakeholders. The Centre for Transport Research (CTR) and dot.rural have their own independent **Advisory Board/Steering Committee** with representation from passenger transport authorities, public transport operators, government officials, IBM, BT, and the NHS. These lead to impact by ensuring the relevance of research to user groups, acting as conduits for the translation of results into policy and practice, and aiding dissemination of results to target audiences, often through industry-led publications and presentations. For example, representation by Transport for London (TfL) on *Disruption* (EPSRC) led to the adoption of the 2012 Olympics as a case study with access to TfL's data on transport movements before, during and after the Games. TfL will use the project's findings on the flexibility and responsiveness of travel patterns to boost the case for individualised travel marketing in the

capital. (c) Responding to opportunities arising from **established links with specific user groups**. For example, a longstanding data sharing arrangement with Aberdeen Solicitors Property Centre has led to the development of the Aberdeen house price index which, in turn, has led to an ESRC collaborative studentship aimed at producing findings of relevance to future housing decisions by Local Authority and local housing associations. (d) CTR had a **partnership with core funding** from FirstGroup (the world's largest public transport operator in private ownership) which led to a strengthening of engagement with industry and informed FirstGroup's strategies. For example, research on travel behaviour identified a 'Malcontented Motorist' market segment which was used in a national campaign by the UK bus industry ('Greener Journeys') to influence mode choice.

Embedding impact in project design (a) Impact is embedded within projects from the outset. Dot.rural, for example, has a **dedicated Impact Research Fellow** line managed by a member of the Unit (cited as best practice in the Report of the RCUK Digital Economy Impact Review Panel (Sept 2012)). Similarly, the *CAP-IRE* (EU funded) project on the impact of Common Agricultural Policy reforms established a **local participatory network** comprising of 16 stakeholders including farmer cooperatives and unions, environmental agencies, and rural development officers from Local Authorities. The network informed the choice of research questions, participated in the research process, and provided feedback on findings. It also helped to ensure findings were disseminated at a number of levels including a Directorate General Agriculture and Rural Developments conference in Brussels, a Scottish Government conference on CAP reform, and a local farmers discussion group in Aberdeenshire. (b) Projects have built in resources for **bespoke engagement or dissemination events**. For example, the *Climate Change Scanning Study* (ESRC) produced policy briefs and hosted a workshop attended by 20 senior policymakers from various UK government departments in Westminster (June 2011). (c) Grants have been secured solely for the purpose of engaging stakeholders. For example, a partnership between Aberdeen, Edinburgh Napier and Glasgow Universities secured a grant for **Knowledge Exchange on Public Policy** to bring together 45 academics and policy makers in four workshops on Scotland's economic and climate change objectives (2008/9). (d) Many projects are based around the **evaluation of public or private sector interventions** in partnership with local authorities that have used the results to inform subsequent policy design. For instance, *SEGMENT* (EU funded) resulted in transport authorities in 7 European cities adopting new messages in their mobility campaigns based on our research on the most effective population segments to target.

Informing public policy An important route to impact is the **provision of evidence to government committees**. Staff have given oral evidence on travel behaviour change to the House of Lords Select Committee on Science and Technology (2011) and were quoted several times in the final report. Evidence was also provided on the contribution of demand management to carbon reduction to the House of Commons Transport Select Committee (2012), Scottish Parliament Energy, Economy and Tourism Committee (2010), Scottish Parliament Transport, Infrastructure and Climate Change Committee. In relation to rural policy, staff have addressed the Cross-Party Group on Rural Policy (Scotland) on the subject of Rural Digital Economy (2010 and 2013) and provided evidence to Audit Scotland (2011) on the strategic implementation of transport for health and social care. Evidence of the success of this strategy is Anable's award as 'Young Scottish Transport Professional of the Year 2011' in recognition of the way her research informs policy and practice.

Appointments on working groups, advisory bodies and professional associations **Staff are encouraged to act as advisors on or participate in professional associations and networks** Currently, staff are advisors to the Royal Automobile Club, Campaign for Better Transport, Low Carbon Vehicles Partnership, Yellow School Bus Commission, Aberdeen and Grampian Chamber of Commerce Transport Network, North East Scotland Agricultural Advisory Group, Geddes Taskforce on Scottish Cities and their Regions, and the Scottish Government's Expert Input-Output group. A member of the Unit is also current Chair of the Universities' Transport Study Group.

Industry lectures and seminars (a) The Real Estate group hosts an **annual public lecture,** typically attended by around 30 local practitioners on a broad range of contemporary issues (E.g. global office markets (May 2009) or the potential for institutional investment in residential real estate markets Prof Robin Goodchild, (May 2012). Since 2011 the group has also hosted **events to enhance knowledge exchange with user groups** including the first two Scottish regional

Investment Property Forum seminars (March and November 2012). These attracted, in total, over 80 attendees from across Scotland. (b) CTR hosts a **seminar series** where guest lecturers from academia and practice present to an audience comprising staff from several disciplines in the University plus representatives from the local authorities, consultancies and NGOs in Aberdeenshire. Each seminar typically attracts around 10 external members.

Public Engagement (a) The university has a dedicated Public Engagement with Research Unit which assists in the design of research group specific and university-wide **outreach events**. Staff, including research fellows and postgraduate research students, have been involved with Cafe Scientifique; British Science Festival; 'Big Questions in Life Sciences; Motion' event for S4 pupils as part of National Science & Engineering week; Café Connect; Speed Science; TechFest lunchtime talks; the Word Festival; the May Festival; and the Highland Schools Tour. The latter is especially innovative as it involved activities in remote rural locations and reached an audience of over 730 pupils. These events have been used to engage communities with transport and digital economy issues using a variety of types of communication and to gather feedback on research plans. A dot.rural/CTR research student is also working with a team of local citizens to develop a participatory approach towards accessibility requirements of people living in rural areas. (b) In Real Estate, engagement with the general public has arisen through the publication of housing market indices. Quarterly releases of the Aberdeen house price index are reported on **local radio and in the local press**, with staff invited to comment on developments in the market. All price indices (including those on the commercial real estate market) are publically available and accessible through external websites. A representative of the university's Communications Team and FirstGroup's local PR manager sit on CTR's Strategic Management Board resulting in research findings being regularly press released and staff talking to local and national press (e.g. on carbon reduction, electric vehicles, road pricing, speed limits).

c. Strategy and plans

The two research groups have embedded a culture which recognises the value of non-academic impact. The common elements of their forward strategy include:

- The continuation of partnership activities and collaborative ventures through Advisory Boards, consultancy and agenda setting workshops to ensure our research can be shaped by end users to aid relevance and responsiveness.
- Further embedding collaborations with end users in grant funding applications to encourage the exchange of data, knowledge and networks.
- Bi-annual meetings carried out with staff members by the sub-unit research theme leaders to collect data on indicators of impact and to share information on innovations, KTP grant ideas and network contacts.
- Regular research theme meetings on the topic of research impact, bringing in staff from the University's dedicated Public Engagement with Research Unit to provide training and advice. Training includes research fellows and postgraduate research students and stresses the importance of collaborating with and disseminating to end users.
- Accessing support from their respective School in the form of pump priming funding for knowledge transfer and engagement, and from the University's programme of impact training events.
- Continual encouragement of staff and postgraduate research students to take advantage of the training opportunities and the strong institutional support for public engagement noted above.

d. Relationship to case studies

Case study A: Index construction and property market transparency has been selected as exemplifying how work similar in nature but across differing real estate markets has impacted a wide variety of beneficiaries from property investment institutions to the general public. The case study indicates the variety of means by which research is disseminated, from consultancy reports and presentations to industry specialists to websites and services aimed at the general public.

Case study B: Smarter Travel Measures illustrates how research carried out within a number of different grants on a specific approach to the management of travel demand has had a direct impact on transport policy development within the REF census period. The case study demonstrates the progression from our research to local, national and international policy debate, policy guidance, pilot programmes and a subsequent programme of national investment.