

ABERDEEN CITY REGION DEAL:

Powering Tomorrow's World

Report Name	Scottish Government Additional Investment Update
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Governance	Additional Investment Minute Of Understanding

1: Purpose of the Report

To update the Aberdeen City Region Deal Joint Committee on the progress of projects being taken forward through the additional Scottish Government investment announced alongside the Aberdeen City Region Deal. This report covers progress on the A90/A937 Laurencekirk Junction Improvement Scheme and the investment in the rail network to improve services between Aberdeen and the Central Belt.

2: Recommendations for Action

To note the update in the report.

3: Summary of Key Information

A90/A937 Laurencekirk Junction Improvement Scheme

Transport Scotland appointed design consultants (AMEY) for the A90/A937 Laurencekirk Junction Improvement scheme in September 2016 to support progress of the design development and assessment phases based on the standards of good practice set by the Design Manual for Roads and Bridges (DMRB).

The options from the DMRB Stage 2 assessment process were presented to the public at an exhibition in October 2017 with the preferred option itself announced in July 2018 at a series of public exhibitions. The preferred option consists of a south grade-separated junction with a full diamond layout and bridge over the A90 together with retention of the existing central reserve gaps at the Centre (B9120) and North (A937) junctions.

The DMRB Stage 3 detailed development and assessment of the preferred option was completed with the culmination in the publication of the draft Orders and an Environmental Impact Assessment Report on 19 December 2019. A public exhibition was held on 10 January 2020 to allow local communities and road users to view and comment on proposals for the scheme. The statutory

3: Summary of Key Information

consultation period closed on 14 February 2020. Of the objections received to the published draft Orders for the scheme Transport Scotland have identified four interests which are directly affected by the Compulsory Purchase Order process and will continue to negotiate with these parties with a view to progressing the scheme without the need for a Public Local Inquiry.

Construction of the scheme itself can only commence if the scheme is approved under the relevant statutory procedures and thereafter a timetable for its progress can be set.

A Partnership Group with Aberdeenshire and Angus Councils, along with NESTRANS has been set up to support this scheme by providing a cohesive policy and investment approach which will help to maximise the benefits of the investment. Consultation has been maintained throughout the scheme development with the group consulted in March 2020 and most recently in May 2020. Further consultation will be conducted as part of the statutory process.

Aberdeen to Central Belt Rail Investment

Scottish Government has committed £200 million to improve journey times and increase capacity on key rail links between Aberdeen and the Central Belt for passengers and freight.

Transport Scotland has set up a bespoke Aberdeen to Central Belt Key Stakeholders Group, which meets quarterly to keep stakeholders informed of progress and is attended by an Aberdeen City Region Deal representative.

The most recent meeting of the Group took place on 16 April 2020, where Network Rail set out the four concept timetables it has developed, each of which could deliver the service specification endorsed by the Aberdeen to Central Belt Reference Group at its final meeting on 12 September 2019. Alongside the timetables, Network Rail has also identified the signalling and infrastructure enhancements that would be required to deliver them.

The Governance for Railway Investment Projects (GRIP) 2 stage of the project, which establishes a project's feasibility, is close to completion. In the normal course of business this stage can take up to two years to complete; we have, however, sought to accelerate timescales, including by engaging consultants Atkins to assist in this work.

Network Rail indicated at the most recent Key Stakeholder Group that it was aiming to share a draft report with the Group at the end of May. It has, however, recently informed us that its Capability and Capacity Analysis team in Milton Keynes was heavily involved in this work and has had to re-prioritise its resources to Covid-19-related timetabling work. Network Rail is now hoping to finalise this report by the end of June.

The next stage will be GRIP 3, which is option selection and will be carried out by Network Rail's Capital Delivery team. During this stage, further detail on the

3: Summary of Key Information

estimated costs and a draft programme will be developed for the single option selected for progression. The GRIP 3 process will identify specific measures and their contribution to the journey times stated within the Reference Group's close-out report, i.e.

- An average journey time of 2 hours 10 minutes or less for inter-city services between Aberdeen and Edinburgh;
- An average journey time of 2 hours 30 minutes or less for inter-city services between Aberdeen and Glasgow;
- An average journey time of 1 hour 10 minutes or less for inter-city services between Aberdeen and Dundee.

Work is also on-going to prepare an Outline Business Case that will be subject to Transport Scotland Governance procedures where it is required to demonstrate value for money and to fulfil the requirements of the Rail Enhancement Capital Investment Strategy (RECIS).

Network Rail indicated at the Key Stakeholders Group that each of the timetables developed as part of its GRIP 2 work would deliver the service frequencies and journey times specified by the Reference Group, i.e. the afore-mentioned journey times along with hourly stopping services between Aberdeen and Dundee and half-hourly peak services from local stations into Aberdeen and Dundee. Initial work by Atkins on the feasibility of the required signalling and infrastructure enhancements provides assurance that delivering these by 2026 is feasible. Whilst cost estimates at this early stage can only be expressed within considerable ranges, this early work suggests that these enhancements would be likely to cost significantly in excess of £200 million.

Transport Scotland resources have been pivoted to respond to Covid-19 and the challenges that it presents. We would, however, offer reassurance to the Joint Committee that we are continuing to do everything we can at this challenging time to progress the Aberdeen to Central Belt rail enhancements project, which remains a priority. In addition to fulfilling the commitment by Scottish Ministers, it will be a key enabler to our ambitious de-carbonisation strategy for routes to Aberdeen and beyond.

To ensure stakeholders are kept up to date we have committed significant resource to the Key Stakeholders Meetings where we provide detailed progress updates along with our industry partners. We would encourage you to continue to raise any queries through your representative on this forum.

We appreciate that there is much to cover at Joint Committee meetings and that our offer to attend the previous February Meeting was not taken up. We would, however, take this opportunity to reiterate our offer to attend the meeting on 5 June, and any future Joint Committee Meetings, to answer any questions members may have.