

# ABERDEEN CITY REGION DEAL:

Powering Tomorrow's World

<b>Report Name</b>	Scottish Government Additional Investment Update – Transport Projects
<b>Lead Officer</b>	Paul Finch
<b>Report Authors</b>	Paul Finch
<b>Date of Report</b>	05 November 2020
<b>Governance</b>	Additional Investment Memorandum Of Understanding

<b>1:</b>	<b>Purpose of the Report</b>
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. The update report, provided by officers of Transport Scotland, is provided as an <b>Appendix</b> to this cover report.	

<b>2:</b>	<b>Recommendations for Action</b>
To note the update in the report.	

<b>3:</b>	<b>Summary of Key Information</b>
<b><u>Governance</u></b>	
3.1 Funding for the two transport projects was announced alongside the City Region Deal by the Scottish Government. These projects are wholly funded by the Scottish Government and are being managed by Transport Scotland. The MoU notes:	
<i>“The transport commitment that forms part of the package of additional Scottish Government investment alongside the City Region Deal is:</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><i>• An initial £200 million additional funding to help improve journey times and increase capacity on key rail links between Aberdeen and the Central Belt: and</i></li><li><i>• £24 million of funding for the trunk roads programme to support improvements to the key A90/A937 south junction at Laurencekirk</i></li></ul>	
<i>There is value in ensuring that the Aberdeen City Region Deal Joint Committee is kept informed of progress with these projects to that it can maximise synergies with the City Region Deal investments.”</i>	

### 3: Summary of Key Information

3.2 Officers from Transport Scotland have attended the Joint Committee on a six-monthly basis to provide updates on the progress of the projects (typically May and November joint committees).

3.3 Both of the Transport Projects have accompanying stakeholder liaison groups. In the case of the Aberdeen to Central Belt group, these meets quarterly, with the last meeting being 30/10/20. For the Laurencekirk project, this is currently meeting on a broadly monthly basis, with the last meeting held on 06/11/20.

3.4 Furthermore, the CRD Transport Working Group meets approximately every 6 weeks, and the two MOU Transport Projects are included on the agenda as a standing item. Representatives from Transport Scotland are invited to this meeting.

#### **A90/A937 Laurencekirk Junction Improvement Scheme**

3.5 **Section 1 of the Appendix** sets out the progress update provided by Transport Scotland. Ms Philips from Transport Scotland will be available to answer questions on the update at the Joint Board meeting.

3.6 The most recent stakeholder group meeting focussed on the emerging alternatives available to mitigate the impact of the closed road over rail bridge at Oatyhill, and how officers of Aberdeenshire Council can continue to help progress this work, alongside Transport Scotland and their technical consultants.

#### **Aberdeen to Central Belt Rail Improvements**

3.7 **Section 2 of the Appendix** sets out the progress update provided by Transport Scotland. Mr Briody from Transport Scotland will be available to answer questions on the progress update. Representatives from Network Rail will also be available to provide a short presentation on the contents of the GRIP2 feasibility report.

3.8 Members will recall that Mr Briody presented to the Committee 05 June 2020, and that there was a commitment to return to the next Committee with further detail of the emerging proposals. The agenda of the additional meeting on 24 July 2020 did not provide room for this presentation, and whilst Transport Scotland and Network Rail were available and prepared to present to the meeting on 29 August 2020, it was considered inappropriate to take the item due to the tragic rail derailment south of Stonehaven which had occurred earlier that month.

3.9 The Aberdeen to Central Belt stakeholder group meeting held on 23 July 2020 featured a detailed presentation on the GRIP 2<sup>1</sup> report by Network Rail, an abridged version of this being provided for the Joint Committee. The stakeholder group held on 30 October 2020 heard the progress that was being made in commissioning the GRIP 3 stage of work, and associated business case. The

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<sup>1</sup> GRIP stands for Governance for Railway Investment Projects. GRIP 2 is Feasibility; GRIP 3 is Option Selection. There are eight stages in total.

### 3: Summary of Key Information

importance of providing details on programme, and the details of the work packages was emphasised at this meeting.

3.10 The Nestrans Board considered a report on the Aberdeen to Central Belt GRIP 2 report at its meeting on 16 September 2020 as part of a wider rail update. The board noted the potential wider regional benefits that could arise from the proposals set out in the GRIP2 work, including:

- facilitating improved journey times,
- journey time reliability,
- ability to provide improvements to local service patterns (into Aberdeen, but also from Stonehaven/Laurencekirk southbound);
- increasing freight capacity, and
- enabling future provision of local rail stations in the region.

3.11 The link to Energy Transition Zone and potential Hydrogen rail pilots were also discussed, particularly in relation to unblocking current constraints on train movements in and around Aberdeen Station. Concern was expressed at potential future changes to stopping patterns at Stonehaven. The importance of confirming programme and further details was again emphasised.

3.12 Consultation on the Nestrans Regional Transport Strategy concluded on 16 October. Responses from local partners confirmed support in principle for investment in the rail network south of Aberdeen, including electrification of the line. Other elements raised in the consultation responses included: journey time reliability; removing the need for interchange at Montrose for passengers travelling on local services south of Stonehaven and Laurencekirk; future provision of local stations south of Aberdeen; freight capacity (linked to Aberdeen South Harbour/Freeports); interest in local Hydrogen Rail pilots; and overall importance of journey quality and facilities.

### 4: Financial and Risk Implications

4.1 There are no direct financial implications for the Joint Board arising from the progress report, as the two transport projects are directly funded and project managed by the Scottish Government / Transport Scotland.

4.2 With respect to A90/A937 Laurencekirk Grade Separated Junction project, it is important that partners continue to work together in order to finalise development and assessment of alternative options, in order to minimise programme impact.

4.3 With respect to Aberdeen to Central Belt project, it will be necessary to receive confirmation of the project programmes associated with the GRIP3 and business case work, in order to have assurance of progression within the timescales of the City Region Deal.

## Appendix

<b>Report Name</b>	Scottish Government Additional Investment Update
<b>Lead Officer</b>	Amy Phillips, Transport Scotland
<b>Report Authors</b>	Amy Phillips, Darius Astell and Colin McCallum, Transport Scotland
<b>Date of Report</b>	27 October 2020
<b>Governance</b>	Additional Investment Memorandum Of Understanding

<b>Scottish Government Additional Investment Update</b>
<b>1. Laurencekirk A90/A937 Junction Improvement Scheme</b>
<p>1.1 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).</p>
<p>1.2 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.</p>
<p>1.3 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 consultation period closed on 14 February 2020. Three statutory objections were received from landowners directly affected by the Compulsory Purchase Order. The substance of these objections was primarily in relation to loss of land and access arrangements. Aberdeenshire Council as local Roads Authority also lodged a statutory objection on the basis that the stopping up of Oatyhill Junction to the southern end of the Scheme would leave residents with a single point of access over the old Oatyhill Rail bridge which is in poor repair. We continue to negotiate with these parties with a view to progressing the scheme without the need for a Public Local Inquiry. As with all trunk road projects this is the appropriate forum for considering objections received and not withdrawn.</p>
<p>1.4 The outcome of Aberdeenshire Council's structural assessment of Oatyhill Bridge, and specifically its decision to close the bridge as of July 2020 has an impact on the delivery of the Laurencekirk scheme as currently proposed. We continue to work closely with Aberdeenshire Council, as the Roads Authority</p>

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with responsibility for maintaining the bridge, and other affected parties, to bring forward a resolution to the issue.

1.5 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.

1.6 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 with the group has been maintained throughout the scheme development and continues generally on a monthly basis and most recently in early October 2020. Further consultation will be conducted as part of the statutory process.

## **2. Aberdeen to Central Belt Rail Investment**

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

2.2 A bespoke Aberdeen to Central Belt Key Stakeholders Group meets quarterly to keep stakeholders informed of progress and is attended by an Aberdeen City Region Deal representative.

2.3 The most recent meeting of the Group took place on 30 October 2020, where Network Rail set out its approach to taking the project through the “GRIP 3” or option selection stage of the project. It summarised the work that has been done in validating the signalling and infrastructure interventions and stress-testing the timetables produced during the previous stage. .

2.4 The previous “GRIP 2” or feasibility stage of the project, which typically takes up to two years, was undertaken within a few months and we are looking to take the project through its remaining stages within a similarly accelerated timescale. Atkins was engaged to assist in the GRIP 2 work and Siemens will be playing a key role in delivering GRIP 3 and, potentially, future stages.

2.5 Network Rail indicated at the July 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. 2 hours and 30 minutes Aberdeen-Glasgow, 2 hours 10 minutes Aberdeen-Edinburgh and 1 hour 10 minutes Aberdeen-Dundee with half-hourly frequency at peak times for local services into Aberdeen and Dundee and an hourly stopping service between Aberdeen and Dundee. The initial work by Atkins in validating 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,

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this early work suggests that these enhancements would be likely to cost at least £200 million.

2.6 During GRIP 3, 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 service frequencies and journey times set out above.

2.7 Work is also on-going to prepare a business case that will be subject to Transport Scotland Governance procedures, which require it to demonstrate value for money and to fulfil the requirements of the Rail Enhancement Capital Investment Strategy (RECIS).

2.8 The Aberdeen to Central Belt Project will be a key enabler to our ambitious decarbonisation strategy for routes to Aberdeen and beyond. Gauging and route clearance on the route, in preparation for electrification, will be undertaken by summer 2021

2.9 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. The next meeting will be held in late-January 2021.

2.10 We appreciate that there is much to cover at Joint Committee meetings. We would take this opportunity to reiterate our offer to attend future Joint Committee Meetings to provide members with the opportunity to ask any questions they may have.