

# ABERDEEN CITY REGION DEAL:

Powering Tomorrow's World

<b>Report Name</b>	Scottish Government Additional Investment Update
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<b>Governance</b>	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

### 3: Summary of Key Information

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. Transport Scotland continues to work with objectors to the scheme, including Aberdeenshire Council, to try and resolve concerns where possible. To date these negotiations have resulted in the successful withdrawal of one landowner's objection. Should we be unsuccessful in removing all objections, a public local inquiry may be required. As with all trunk road projects this is the appropriate forum for considering objections received and not withdrawn.

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

The notification by Aberdeenshire Council in May 2021 to move away from a planned demolition of the existing bridge in late 2021 to instead provide further stabilisation works to retain the bridge in the short/medium term and maintain a walking / cycle link has had an effect on the assessment process to identify an access solution to Oatyhill. Completion of the assessment and recommendation of a preferred option is being progressed as a priority.

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. Regular consultation with the group has been maintained throughout the scheme development, with the last meeting held on 07 December 2021. Further consultation will be conducted as part of the statutory process.

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

The 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.

It is worth noting up front that this entire funding will be devoted exclusively to signalling and infrastructure enhancements on this project.

### 3: Summary of Key Information

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. The most recent meeting of the Group took place on 25 April 2022, where Network Rail (NR) and Transport Scotland (TS) updated the key stakeholders on project progress and on progress with the Outline Business Case (OBC).

The option selection process has concluded, with the package of enhancements identified by the project team for taking forward being currently being reviewed by NR's operations team for Scotland. The package comprises signal enhancements, improvements to station approaches and specific capacity alterations to facilitate the mixed operation of faster and slower trains on the same route. Details were shared with the Key Stakeholders on 25 April and can be shared with the Committee on 10 June.

Network Rail and its partner Siemens, who are delivering the project jointly, have been continuing to work closely with Atkins, which is completing the OBC.

The OBC sets out the context of this project, as part of a comprehensive programme of improvements for the Aberdeen to Central Belt railway which, by 2030, will also see gauge enhancements to enable wider and longer freight trains and decarbonisation of the line, most likely via full electrification.

Indicative planning work continues to provide assurance that the enhancements provided by the City Region Deal project are deliverable for the December 2026 timetable change date.

Delivering this project as part of a wider programme enables efficiencies, not only in terms of costs but also by means of minimising, and making full use of, line possessions, when it is necessary to close the line to passenger and freight traffic. Signalling enhancements for this project will be undertaken in a manner that facilitates the efficient decarbonisation of the line by 2030. The budget and outputs of the City Region Deal project continue, however, to be strictly ring-fenced, and the funding will only be used to deliver the core outputs and scope.

We would continue to encourage you to continue to raise any queries through your representative on the Key Stakeholder Group. The next meeting will be held on 28 July 2022.

We remain willing to attend future Joint Committee Meetings to provide members with the opportunity to ask any questions they may have.