

# 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

<b>1:</b>	<b>Purpose of the Report</b>
<p>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.</p>	

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

<b>3:</b>	<b>Summary of Key Information</b>
<p><b>A90/A937 Laurencekirk Junction Improvement Scheme</b></p> <p>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>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>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</p>	

**3: Summary of Key Information**

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 this has resulted in the successful withdrawal of one landowner's objection, and we continue to make positive progress in this regard. 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 with regular consultation undertaken with Aberdeenshire Council as part of this process

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 with the group has been maintained throughout the scheme development stages, with further engagement with the Group planned as part of the ongoing scheme development.

**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.

As previously reported, this entire funding will be devoted exclusively to signalling and infrastructure enhancements on this project.

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 October 2022, when Network Rail (NR) updated the key stakeholders, alongside a joint virtual session of the Nestrans and Tactran boards, on project progress and on progress with the Outline Business Case (OBC).

The option selection process has concluded, following a revisit by NR's timetable team of the package of enhancements identified by the project team for taking forward. The slightly

### 3: Summary of Key Information

expanded 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. Up to date details were shared with the Key Stakeholders, and with the Nestrans and Tactran boards, on 25 October.

Network Rail and its partner Siemens, who are delivering the project jointly, have been continuing to work closely with Atkins, in the completion of an OBC. This is being submitted to Transport Scotland decision-makers for approval and funding to take the project through its next stage.

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. 2023 will see the completion of the design stage of the project and will also see route clearance work for gauge enhancement and electrification.

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 and opportunities are currently being considered to modernise the signalling along the length of the route in parallel with this project and the decarbonisation project, producing further efficiencies. 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 in late January 2023.

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