

# ABERDEEN CITY REGION DEAL:

Powering Tomorrow's World

<b>COMMITTEE</b>	Aberdeen City Region Deal (ACRD) Joint Committee
<b>DATE</b>	15 November 2024
<b>EXEMPT</b>	No
<b>CONFIDENTIAL</b>	No
<b>REPORT TITLE</b>	Scottish Government Additional Investment Update
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<b>1:</b>	<b>Purpose of the Report</b>
	<p>i. 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 investment in the rail network to improve services between Aberdeen and the Central Belt.</p>

<b>2:</b>	<b>Recommendations for Action</b>
	<p>It is recommended that the Joint Committee:</p> <p>i. Note the update in the report.</p>

<b>3:</b>	<b>Summary of Key Information</b>
	<p><b>Aberdeen to Central Belt Rail Corridor Investment</b></p> <p>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.</p> <p>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, Nestrans, Tactran, Network Rail and ScotRail. The most recent</p>

### 3: Summary of Key Information

meeting of the Group took place on Tuesday 17<sup>th</sup> September 2024, where an update was provided on project progress.

The option selection process for the project concluded in 2023. The final package selected comprises signal enhancements, improvements to station layouts at Dundee, Aberdeen, Arbroath and Montrose, and specific capacity alterations, including freight loops, to facilitate the mixed operation of faster and slower trains on the same route.

Given the extremely challenging financial climate, and following the UK Autumn Statement, Ministers had to take difficult decisions in setting the budget for 2024-25 which impacted upon our planning for this project. As the Cabinet Secretary Ms McAllan outlined to the Scottish Parliament, when budgets are constrained, it is only right to consider the time over which projects can be completed.

An outline Outline Business Case (OBC) for the wider Aberdeen Route Upgrade which encompasses both the Service Improvements Project and the route Decarbonisation Project was concluded in the Summer of 2024. The OBC took a whole corridor approach, examining journey time improvements, route decarbonisation, gauge improvements and signalling renewals.

The OBC was duly considered by Transport Scotland's Investment Decision Making Board. A decision to progress with procurement of new trains has subsequently been progressed, however options for implementing the next stage of the Aberdeen – Central Belt Service Improvements Project remain under consideration. In the interim, design works are continuing and are fully funded in financial year 2024/25.

#### **Service Improvements Project (formerly know as Journey Time Improvements)**

The contract for the 'Approval In Principle design' with Siemens is ongoing for the selected scope. Works continue on developing the design and an integrated schedule. These shall continue throughout 2024 and are due to conclude in 2025.

Signal sighting, signalling design, track design and inter-disciplinary checks have continued to progress since our previous six-monthly update.

Updated cost estimates have been prepared as part of OBC development. These are being considered by Transport Scotland as part of planning for the next phases of the project.

#### **Decarbonisation Works**

Following conclusion of a route wide Outline Business Case. The case for replacing the ScotRail High Speed Train fleet, which operates on routes between Glasgow and Edinburgh to Aberdeen, was endorsed by Ministers. The commencement of a

### 3: Summary of Key Information

procurement exercise to replace the HST train fleet was announced to parliament on 3<sup>rd</sup> September 2024.

ScotRail will run an open competition for the replacement trains, so it is not possible to say exactly what the new rolling stock will be. However, the requirement will be for a train of an Intercity type to serve long-distance travellers, with the corresponding levels of passenger comfort and passenger amenities.

The extent of electrification required, if any, will be determined by the outcome of the procurement exercise. The cost of infrastructure to support the replacement fleet, is part of our financial planning.

In terms of the route decarbonisation works, we note that Route Clearance works is concluded at 3 bridges and 2 tunnels (Kippenross and Moncrieffe).

The location of the proposed Dundee Feeder Station (To serve railway electrification) is now planned to be east of Dock Street. A contract has been placed with National Grid for a new Feeder Station at Drumlithie.

#### **Dunblane and Barnhill**

Works to support the journey time improvements are complete at Barnhill (east of Perth) and Dunblane.

The Barnhill line speed improvements were completed in late 2023, with capacity benefits planned for the December 2024 timetable. The works will allow an increase in line speed for trains from 20mph to 50mph in this location.

At Dunblane the track enhancements were completed in early 2024. A new crossover provides a capacity increase which will lead to less delay and cancellations and provides an opportunity for additional services. Operational improvements between Glasgow and Aberdeen have been in place since the June 2024 timetable. The new crossover means trains will be able to arrive and then depart from platform 3 towards Edinburgh and Glasgow, without having to leave the station. This will reduce delays and improve train performance while increasing capacity for freight on the line between Dunblane and Perth by almost 40%.

The Final Cost is £6.8m for Barnhill and £11.2m for Dunblane enhancements.

#### **General**

We continue to encourage you to continue to raise any queries through your representative on the Key Stakeholder Group. The next meeting of this group will be held in January 2025.

