

Report to Partnership Meeting 26 April 2013

RESEARCH AND STRATEGY DELIVERY

Oban 6

Purpose of Report

To provide Members with information on improvements to the Oban rail frequency following the announcement by the Minister for Transport and Veterans at the Community Rail Conference on 19 February 2013.

Background

The Room for Growth study of 2006 highlighted the poor frequency of trains to Oban. HRP/HITRANS engaged consultants Faber to review timetable options for the West Highland lines in 2006.

In 2007 HITRANS commissioned Habtrans to investigate timetable options for enhanced Oban line services. 4 5 and 6 per day were explored. The Oban service of three trains per day is currently the worst frequency of any route in Scotland. Halcrow carried out an economic appraisal of the five trains per day option, identifying a Benefit: Cost ratio of 5.0 optimistic, 3.9 pessimistic.

HITRANS commissioned Delta Rail to carry out a Sectional Running Time study on the West Highland Lines, establishing theoretical journey times for Class 156, Class 170, re-engined Class 170 on existing and enhanced infrastructure, where loop entry/exit is increased to 25mph and 40 mph from the current 15 mph. Journey time reductions of up to 11.5 mins on the Oban route were identified.

Announcing in December 2012 the extension of the current ScotRail franchise by 5 months to March 2015, Transport Minister Keith Brown said that there would be additional Oban services introduced. This led HITRANS to provide some funding in December 2012 for further timetable validation work to be carried out by ScotRail's consultant.

Oban 6

At the Community Rail conference in Edinburgh on 19 February 2013 the Minister announced the go-ahead for Oban 6 (6 trains per day to and from Oban). This will see the doubling of services on the Oban line from May 2014 (5 all year round, 6 spring-autumn). This formed key part of the negotiations between ScotRail and Transport Scotland on the franchise continuation agreement which see First operating services to March.

Oban 6 was a fully-researched, costed project sitting on the shelf waiting for an opportunity to be delivered. The project fits well with the Government's purpose of delivering sustainable economic growth. This highlights the value of having schemes in place that can be delivered when funding opportunities arise.

A further option – termed Oban 6.2 – is being explored. Discussions with Argyll and Bute Council have noted the possibility of conveying school pupils from Dalmally through to Connel and on to Oban High School in the morning. To provide an after school return terminating at Dalmally ScotRail will have to recruit an additional driver. HITRANS have identified funds within the 2013/14 Business Plan to ensure the successful start-up of the new services. This will include part funding of improved station facilities designed to attract these new customers, with smart card technology being included within the package.

Recommendation

1. Members are asked to note the report.
2. Members are asked to approve the allocation of £15,000 within the Network Rail Control Period 5 budget line to support the delivery of Oban 6.2.

Risk	Impact	Comment
RTS delivery	√	This project fits well with a number of RTS Horizontal themes.
Policy	√	This project has integration and environmental benefits.
Financial	√	This project is fully funded
Equality	-	No impact on equalities issues.

Report by: Frank Roach
Designation: Partnership Manager
Date: 16th April 2013