

Item:
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Report to Partnership Meeting 26 April 2013

RESEARCH AND STRATEGY DELIVERY

ABERDEEN TO INVERNESS RAIL IMPROVEMENTS/ DALCROSS STATION

Purpose of Report

To provide Members with information on the status of upgrade plans for the Aberdeen-Inverness route including the need to refresh the Planning Permission for the Dalcross Rail halt.

Network Rail Strategic Business Plan

Network Rail's Strategic Business Plan (SBP) 2012 outlined for Control Period 5 2104-2019:

Aberdeen to Inverness Rail Line Improvements Phase 1, delivering the network capability to enable the operation of enhanced commuting services from Aberdeen to Inverurie and from Elgin to Inverness. In addition, working with station promoters to deliver new stations at Kintore (Nestrans) and Dalcross (HITRANS).

This should be confirmed in the Office of Rail Regulation's final determination of the Periodic Review in autumn 2013.

Full hourly, sub 2 hour journey times are not due to be completed until 2030 under Scottish Government's Infrastructure Investment Plan.

Dalcross Station

As station promoters HITRANS has to refresh the planning permission and the business case for the station at Dalcross. It should be noted that the economic case based on pre-2008 development may have changed, and that the planned frequency for trains calling will be every two hours with 3 morning and 3 evening peak calls. The current timetable has three arrivals in the morning peak into Inverness at 0745, 0810, 0833, but only two evening returns at 1715 and 1813. The most likely enhancement is a new 16xx departure.

Stops at Dalcross will add 3 minutes in the timetable. This has to be clawed back through infrastructure upgrades to ensure no net change. HITRANS will aim to work closely with Highland Council, Transport Scotland and Network Rail with a view to promoting the case for this mitigation to be linked to journey time improvements and passing loop upgrades as identified within the capital works programme for this scheme in the Strategic Transport Projects Review (STPR). A constraint that may need to be considered in the short term within the planning application refresh is the Dalcross (Petty) Level Crossing. This may have to be closed to permit operation of the new station and we will seek firm clarification from Network Rail of whether this closure will need to be a condition of the Station opening.

HITRANS Actions and Next Steps

HITRANS has a significant role to play in delivering this project. Key actions include:

1. Early dialogue with Network Rail, Transport Scotland and ScotRail to understand industry plans
2. Refresh of the planning application
3. Refresh of the business case
4. Discussions with potential funders

Recommendation

1. Members are asked to note the report and approve the actions above.
2. Members are asked to approve the allocation of £15,000 within the Network Rail Control Period 5 budget line to support the work to develop the Dalcross Station project.

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: 16 April 2013