

Item:
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Report to Partnership Meeting 4 April 2014

RESEARCH AND STRATEGY DELIVERY

Dalcross Station

Purpose of Report

To provide Members with information on the status of the proposed reopening of Dalcross Station.

Planning

Highland Council PDU are progressing the refresh of planning application for the station plus car parking. On Network Rail advice the original intention to seek planning permission for both platforms has been changed to the single platform. The second platform will be listed as an aspiration for 2019-2024 as it will require the approval of funding through Scottish Ministers' HLOS for Phase 2 improvements to the Aberdeen – Inverness route in Control Period 6 including the double track section at Dalcross. The car park is likely to be within the control of Inverness Airport Business Park, and will begin with a modest number of formal spaces, with an option to develop as demand increases. The station reopening will be conditional on the closure of the level crossing.

Technical Feasibility

HITRANS has appointed Douglas Binns Ltd to refresh the Scott Wilson engineering design work for the station carried out in 2006-2009, ensuring compliance comply with 2014 standards and to take account of the level crossing closure. The estimated costs for the construction of the station will be used to support the Business Case Analysis and timetabling work being carried out by Systra.

Business Case

Systra (formerly MVA) have been appointed through the Highland Council Framework Agreement to analyse the business case. The consultant is studying the land use planning and development policies and trends for the area in order to produce a business case for the station, based on both Phase 1 and Phase 2 below. The consultant has been asked to develop a limited frequency non-disruptive timetable for Phase 1, and a broader Phase 2 timetable once infrastructure enhancements have taken place to negate the journey time extension for the station call, and to increase capacity to the Aberdeen-Inverness hourly and Elgin-Inverness locals (half hourly peak and infill off-peak). Forres realignment, removing the curve and putting the two platform station on the through line, could be carried out in CP5 which will reduce end to end journey time by 3 minutes at least, and more for trains crossing at Forres.

The station will potentially serve several markets:

- Travel to employment at Inverness Airport Business Park (IABP) inc airport

- Travel to work/education/leisure by the new residents of Tornagrain
- Business travel between IABP and Aberdeen / Dyce
- Park and Ride off the A96 into Inverness and potentially Aberdeen
- Interchange for pax using Inverness Airport

Given the proposed station will not be serving an existing local population, and initially is likely to have a limited service frequency, use of traditional demand modelling methodologies to estimate demand and related economic benefits will be problematic. The focus is on the potential development scenarios for Inverness Airport, IABP and Tornagrain, and the role of the station not just in terms of facilitating travel, but also encouraging businesses to locate and expand at IABP. It is expected that the overall business case will not therefore be determined principally by predicted passenger numbers (at least for Phase 1), but the wider role of station in promoting economic development and job creation at IABP, and Dalcross / Tornagrain more generally. Moray Estates/Inverness Airport Business Park are providing information on the Business Park and Tornagrain, HIAL is advising on information on airport activity, while HIE is assisting with inward investment plans and economic strategy.

Other points to note

- Transport Scotland are funding the Inverness Aberdeen upgrade value £191m 2014-19 for which Network Rail have prepared a GRIP 3 report.
- Transport Scotland are developing route options for A96 Dualling.
- All bidders for the ScotRail franchise (Abellio Arriva First MTR National Express) are aware of the project.

Possible Timescale

2014 Planning permission granted

2015 Fund raising

2016 New services Elgin-Inverness through the new franchise, construction and opening of single platform with some services stopping, level crossing closed

2017 Forres realignment saving ≥3 mins, resulting in journey time neutrality with Dalcross calls

2019-2024 Control Period 6, double tracking, Dalcross Platform 2

Recommendation

1. Members are asked to note the report..

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: 24 March 2014

Annex:

Dalcross Reopening Background

Network Rail's Strategic Business Plan 2012 outlined the following intention for Control Period 5 2014-2019:

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 was 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.

As station promoters HITRANS will need to refresh the planning permission and the business case for the station at Dalcross. 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, with an earlier train at 15:29. The most likely enhancement is a new 16x departure and some off-peak infilling to break up some of the more critical two hours gaps in service.

It is proposed to develop the station in phases, with Phase 1 being the construction of a single platform station on the north side of the line with associated car parking. This will be on a similar basis to the original planning permission that was approved in 2007/08.

Stops at Dalcross will add 3 minutes in the timetable. To avoid significant disbenefits to other passengers this extra time will ideally be clawed back through infrastructure upgrades to ensure no net change. The stopping pattern may be limited until further infrastructure works are carried out on the route.

Network Rail have confirmed in its CP5 Enhancements Delivery Plan (Dec13) that Dalcross (Petty) Level Crossing has to be closed to permit operation of the new station. This needs to be delivered while the level crossing still has operational life, before significant abortive expenditure on renewals is carried out. The document states one of its key assumptions: *agreement will be reached with relevant stakeholders for the closure of Dalcross Level Crossing prior to the construction of the new Dalcross station.*

This can be found on page 144 at www.networkrail.co.uk/publications/delivery-plans/control-period-5/draft-cp5-delivery-plan

Dalcross is an Automatic Half Barrier Crossing (AH).. The crossing is actuated by the train striking a treadle in the track, with sufficient time at a regulated speed being allowed for the barriers to come down and lights to come on before the train passes. The system relies on trains all travelling at the same speed. The crossing has been life extended already, and requires replacement in 18 months at a cost of £2m-£5m. The crossing is incompatible with the cost effective operation of the new proposed Dalcross station, because trains will be stopping after striking the treadle and thus greatly extending the crossing closed time, which leads to misuse and thus safety risks.

Phase 2 will see a need for a long passing loop to increasing capacity on the Nairn-Inverness section, enabling a half hourly train service, at which time the second platform and associated footbridge will need to be provided.