

Report to Partnership Meeting 10 April 2015

REASERCH AND DEVELOPMENT

Inverness Station Development- Platform 4 Change

Purpose of Report

This report provides Members with an update on Inverness Station developments. HITRANS is devising a Masterplan to ensure that the station can rise to the challenge of being a regional interchange with more trains and more passengers while continuing to play its role as the beating heart of the Old Town.

Background

Inverness station currently handles 1.28m passengers a year, representing a 57% growth since 2005. It has other users on rail passes, meeters and greeters, people using the retail facilities on the concourse and those who use the station to cross from one side of the city to the other. Since 2005 there have been a number of developments, including:

- Invernet services
- more trains on Inverness-Aberdeen and the Highland Main Line
- increased retail activity at Eastgate
- Inverness Streetscape works

The introduction of ticket gates has exacerbated the problem of free movement around the station, with up to 5m40 for a Wick train's passengers to egress, and sometimes over 10m for East Coast arrivals to get through.

The station has three access points: Station Square, Falcon Square and Platform 6.5. Flanked by the original buildings Station Square represents is the former public facing entrance, containing the War Memorial to the Cameron Highlanders, and also one to the Highland Railway Company's employees. It currently has car parking and a taxi concession. Falcon Square is becoming increasingly important to the city for access to retail, to buses and for cultural events, yet the access to the station is unwelcoming, thanks to signs that imply 'Keep Out', a gauntlet to be run across a road past inappropriate car parking, and fencing left over from a penal institution upgrade. Platform 6.5 is simply unpleasant, framed by aggressive ironwork, ill-placed bollards, poor surfacing and the refuse facility, and leading to a car park where pedestrians may fear to tread. The station itself is characterised by a draughty concourse, a shortage of TVMs, inadequate seating, heating and eating places, curved platforms of differing lengths (but a fine barber's).

Stakeholder Meeting

HITRANS organised a meeting on 24 February 2015 at the Royal Highland Hotel to present the early findings of pre-feasibility assessment work carried out by HITRANS, IDP Architects and Douglas Binns. Twenty-seven delegates attended, representing the commercial operational and statutory interests in the station and its environs. Options for increasing station capacity were explored, in the light of:

- Abellio's proposed multi-million pound spend on the concourse, façade and retail including ToGo kiosk and Bike & Go
- Abellio 4 and 5 car High Speed Trains from 2018 to Aberdeen and Central Belt
- Virgin Trains East Coast 9 car Super Express Train from 2018
- Serco's new sleeper franchise with extended platforming requirements
- Serco's main office on Union Street
- Inverness-Elgin resignalling by 2016
- Highland Council's Streetscape project
- Eastgate Shopping Centre expansion plans
- Royal Highland Hotel expansion plans

Options

A number of options were explored, including the following elements:

- platform 0 for the sleeper
- pedestrianised Station Square
- platforms on the Rose Street curve
- new ticket office/staff offices
- new concourse area
- revised gatelines
- improved linkage to Falcon Square
- improved linkage to Farraline Park
- new interchange on the west side of the station
- new road access to the signalling centre

Funding Opportunities

A number of funding opportunities exist. These are detailed below.

Abellio ScotRail

Abellio's ScotRail Franchise Agreement (SFA) with Transport Scotland confirms spend on Inverness Station on the concourse, façade and retail opportunities with a requirement to develop the business case in Year 1 of the franchise (p104 SFA). The value of the project is redacted in the publicly-available franchise agreement.

The document also confirms the deployment of High Speed Trains from 2018 and the development of Bike&Go (p135 SFA) and ToGo (p102 SFA).

Inverness Townscape Heritage

The Inverness Townscape Heritage project supports the Council's programme of support for the Highland economy, more specifically helping make the Highlands an attractive

environment for business, and supports the development of the Highlands' urban centres.

Early in 2014 the Highland Council received a £1.67m Stage 1 pass from the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) Townscape Heritage programme. The HLF awarded the Council a development grant of £109k to be used alongside a £35k Council contribution to develop the Stage 2 application. A Stage 2 pass is required before the HLF finance is formally committed to the project.

The Townscape Heritage Team and its external technical advisers are actively developing the following work packages as part of the Stage 2 application including:

- preparation detailed proposals for public realm improvements to Station Square including budget costs; and
- development a place-making proposal for the Academy Street area to improve the urban public realm of Academy Street and its surroundings, including links between Inverness rail and bus stations.

City Deal

Inverness has been invited to bid for City Deal funding from the UK Government. The Scottish Government and the Scottish Futures Trust are assisting Highland Council to further develop their strategic case. First Minister Nicola Sturgeon said "A successful bid could see the Inverness area benefit from major infrastructure projects, innovation and new jobs. The City Deal could be used to develop a programme of work which will greatly add to the value of the local economy over the years to come."

The City Deal could be worth £300million to the area in new funding, borrowing powers and spin-off investment. Highland Council is working on a Growth Accelerator Model (GAM) project for Inverness along the same lines as one recently announced between the Scottish Government and City of Edinburgh Council. HITRANS has already presented on the case for Inverness station to the working group, and would hope that some funding will be available for the project.

Scottish Stations Fund Control Period 5 (2014-2019)

The purpose of the fund is to improve the public's access to railway services. To support this objective, Scottish Ministers would expect that this will fund, or will support the funding of:

- improvements to station buildings and facilities;
- improvements to passenger facilities at stations supporting long-distance services;
- up to £6 million towards improving the Caledonian Sleeper station facilities as specified as part of the franchise objectives;
- the development of new and improved car and cycle parking facilities;
- new stations; and
- accessibility works.

There is £32.6m available for this purpose.

Scottish Network Improvement Fund Control Period 5 (2014-2019)

The purpose of this fund is to deliver, or support the delivery of, interventions on the Scottish network which support the development of the capacity and capability of general infrastructure and network communications systems in line with the strategic priorities of Scottish Ministers, including improved journey times, improved connectivity and

resilience. The fund should exploit opportunities available through current or planned works. There is £62m available for this purpose.

Commercial Developments

Eastgate Shopping Centre has been granted planning permission by the Highland Council for an extension, which will include a new cinema and restaurants. Work may start in 2015. The centre has received “significant interest” from potential operators for the newly created units.

The Royal Highland Hotel has had discussions with Network Rail about opportunities to extend.

Next Steps

HITRANS will be:

- engaging Transport Focus (formerly Passenger Focus) to carry out a passenger survey of Inverness Station users.
- organising counts of station users, which will also include the quantum of casual visitors, meters and greeters, sandwich purchasers etc as well rail users.
- Will be working with our partners in the Highland Council, the rail industry and commercial and statutory stakeholders to develop a Masterplan for the site.

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.

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