

Report to Partnership Meeting 5 February 2021

RESEARCH AND STRATEGY DELIVERY

Inverness Masterplan

Purpose of the report

To provide members with information on developments towards the creation of an integrated transport interchange at Inverness.

Background

In 2014 HITRANS began investigating alterations to the layout at Inverness station to improve capacity and functionality, anticipating frequency improvement on both Aberdeen and Perth lines. In 2015 architects were engaged to produce plans based on our initial thoughts which were presented to a stakeholder group and BID Inverness.

In July 2016 the issues were acknowledged in Network Rail's Scotland Route Study which investigated likely capacity problems to 2043, referring to:

- *Improvements in the platform arrangements and track layout at Inverness station may also be required to create the capacity for more frequent train services to and from the Dingwall direction.*

And key constraints on Inverness-Perth include:

- *Capability and capacity of Inverness Station.*

HITRANS undertook research into the owners of land that could be required for the interchange. The notice from the Royal Mail that the sorting office would be moved to the Longman was a turning point.

In May 2018 Alex Hynes ScotRail and Network Rail MD attended the HITRANS Board meeting in Dunoon at which a presentation was made on the potential of the site.

The HITRANS vision is on lo/no carbon transport, and aims to include electric/non-diesel trains, electric and hydrogen buses, electric taxis with induction charging, pedestrian and cycling including e-bike facilities, fuelling for hydrogen vehicles, freight interchange, last mile electric cart delivery, rail maintenance facilities etc. Personal car parking will be limited. Retail and commercial development will be required to ensure adequate funding streams.

Further discussions took place with Transport Scotland and Network Rail officials as HITRANS became aware of underspent funds in the Network Rail Control Period 5

(2014-19) settlement. While that avenue was exhausted, the land acquisition was funded by Transport Scotland through the CP6 funding to Network Rail.

Land acquisition

In 2020 Network rail purchased the following properties:
Royal Mail sorting office and Car Park
TX Maxx/Sports Direct
TK Maxx Car Park
Highland Rail House (the north side of Station Square)

This investment by Transport Scotland will enable long held aspirations to improve facilities to be realised.

Masterplanning Steering Group

In January 2021 the Steering Group for the Inverness masterplan met for the first time, comprising Network Rail, Abellio ScotRail, Transport Scotland, HITRANS and Highland Council to agree terms of reference and the vision.

The vision is to include:

- A transformational Masterplan for Inverness station that puts the needs of passengers and freight at its heart, looking at a 30-year time horizon
- Improved operational functionality
- Integrated transport offering
- Consideration of placemaking –opportunities to include the local community to encourage ‘ownership’
- Identification economic, and commercial opportunities where appropriate.

Partner activity and aspirations are noted as:

HITRANS produced designs for the re-development of the station, with a focus on improving passenger access and egress, and improved integration with other transport modes including making the most of the proximity of the bus station.

The Highland Council plans to transform the city centre, enhancing its public realm and its reputation as a destination, a desirable place to live and as a regional centre for business, educational, retail and commercial activities.

Abellio ScotRail has a franchise commitment to carry out feasibility work to redevelop Inverness station. They worked with stakeholders to agree key priorities for the station and agreed a scope that would upgrade the station and improve connectivity with the centre of Inverness and other modes of transport.

Area of activity

The rail lands outlined in red below form the study area plus Highland Council owned properties towards Rose Street and the bus station.



Engagement

A Working Group, Reference Group and Stakeholder Group will report to the Steering Group, with involvement from railway, bus and other transport companies, business groups, tourism representatives etc.

Risk Register

RTS Delivery

Impact – Integration, mode shift

Policy

Impact –Efficiency of transport operations including freight, mode shift, decarbonisation through electrification and alternative fuels, future proofing.

Financial

Impact – Nil

Equality

Impact – Level access to network, platform interface

Recommendation

1. Members and Advisors are recommended to note the report.

Report by: Frank Roach
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