

**The Highland Council**  
**Planning, Development and Infrastructure Committee**

**17 February 2016**

Agenda Item	<b>9</b>
Report No	<b>PDI 07/16</b>

**Stromeferry Bypass Route Option Appraisal - Update**

**Report by Director of Development and Infrastructure**

**Summary**

The original STAG reports were prepared for the Stromeferry Bypass project following extensive public and statutory consultations. These have been submitted to Transport Scotland for consideration of a possible Scottish Government funding contribution. The STAG reports submitted to Transport Scotland included corridor improvement to the local road network which went beyond solving the problem of the immediate area prone to landslides and rock falls. Transport Scotland have indicated that if any Scottish Government assistance were to be considered for the scheme it would only include those parts which satisfy the more targeted Transport Planning Objectives to overcome the rockfall area. The STAG is therefore being re-drafted to address only those areas which achieve these revised Transport Planning Objectives. Greater emphasis is also being placed on the social and economic context for the scheme and its impacts on a fragile rural area.

In order to satisfy Transport Scotland's request, the northern route (Bridge) option will no longer consider a bypass of Lochcarron as part of the proposal and the southern route will terminate at Attadale, thus reducing costs. The comparison of costs and benefits therefore is between the competing options which solve the rock fall problem. The revised STAG will be submitted, following this committee approval, at the end of February. The Leader of the Council has sought a meeting with Derek Mackay, Minister for Transport and Islands to discuss the possibility of Government funding contribution following the targeted STAG submission to Transport Scotland.

**1. Background**

- 1.1 The Stromeferry Bypass, built to replace a small car ferry across the Strome narrows, has proved to be susceptible to rock falls and landslides since its construction in the late 1960s. More recently the route has suffered 10 significant rock falls between 1990 and 2012, two of these closures lasted months rather than days.
- 1.2 Following the major rock fall in December 2011 the Council has worked to monitor, maintain and improve the existing rock fall netting and measures to reduce and manage the risk associated with the route. In addition the Council has undertaken an Options appraisal to identify a long term solution. The Options appraisal was taken to Committee in November 2014. Unfortunately the cost estimates for any of the options which would provide a solution were considered to be beyond the Councils ability to implement.

## **2. Recent Progress**

2.1 The 2014 STAG appraisal prepared by the Council was submitted to Transport Scotland for consideration of a possible Scottish Government funding contribution. The STAG reports submitted to Transport Scotland included corridor improvement to the local road network which went beyond solving the problem of the immediate area prone to landslides and rock falls. Transport Scotland has indicated that if any Scottish Government assistance were to be considered for the scheme it would only include those parts which satisfy the more targeted Transport Planning Objectives to overcome the rockfall area. The STAG is therefore being re-drafted to address only those areas which achieve these revised Transport Planning Objectives.

2.2 The original STAG appraisal contained 11 transport planning objectives. Transport Scotland identified that the scheme objectives needed to be streamlined and condensed to target only the solution to the problem. The Scheme Objectives have therefore been revised to the following:

### **Strategic Objective**

- Provide a long-term solution to address rock fall impacts on the A890 study area at Stromeferry.

### **Transport Planning Objectives**

- reduce the impact on journey times and journey time reliability by reducing the frequency and duration of road and rail closures caused by rock fall events;
- reduce the negative economic impact to the A890 study area by reducing the frequency and duration of road and rail closures caused by rock fall events; and
- solution reduces, or does not increase, the risk to, and liability of, the railway and maintains suitable access over the life of the scheme.

2.3 This, more targeted approach of the transport planning objectives, impacts on the extent of all of the options being considered, for example, the Glen Udalain route, Option S4 in the 2014 Options Appraisal, extended between the A890 south of Braeintra and the Strathcarron Junction, a distance of some 19 km. The targeted scheme, which would create a bypass of the problem rock slope, would terminate at Attadale, a distance of 14km. This would therefore reduce the overall cost of the Option.

In addition the Northern Bridge, option N9 in the 2014 Option Appraisal extended between Achmore and the Starthcarron Junction a distance of some 14 km. The targeted scheme, which would create a bypass of the problem rock slope, would extend from Achmore over the Strome narrows via a new bridge and tie into the existing road network to the north of Loch Carron around Stromemore a distance of around 6km.

- 2.4 The re-drafted STAG report also sets out a clear social and economic context for the scheme. This includes analysis of the exiting traffic patterns, physical environment, existing transport provision, analysis of the hazards, and the economic impacts of closure. These factors are drawn together from the previous report to provide a clear business case for the scheme.
- 2.5 The costs for the revised options are still in preparation and will be included in the re-worked appraisal to be submitted to the Transport Scotland at the end of February 2016.

### **3. Implications**

#### **3.1 Resource**

The existing capital programme identifies £10m of funding for the project. A report shall be brought to a future committee on an overall funding package for consideration.

#### **3.2 Legal**

It is likely that objections will be received to any preferred route selected, and that the scheme would be subject to a Public Local Inquiry as part of the approvals process. The Council will be required to justify the selection of the preferred option during the Public Local inquiry.

#### **3.3 Equality, Climate Change/Carbon Clever, Risk, Gaelic and Rural**

These are considered as part of the STAG process, and will influence the preferred option and subsequent design development.

### **Recommendation**

It is recommended that members:

- approve the submission of the targeted STAG to Transport Scotland; and
- note that a meeting with Derek Mackay, Minister for Transport and Islands, is being sought to discuss potential Scottish Government funding assistance for the Stromeferry Bypass.

Designation: Director of Development and Infrastructure

Date: 1 February 2016

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Background Papers: PDI 32/15, HC 5/15, PDI 45/14, TEC39-13, HC-18-13