

The Highland Council

Ross and Cromarty Committee – 25 October 2016

Evanton Railway Station

Report by Director of Development and Infrastructure

Agenda Item	6
Report No	RC/034/16

Summary

The purpose of this report is to present the background to railway station re-openings in the Highlands and to clarify the requirements for a promoter of a new railway station.

The Committee is invited to consider the report, provide direction on how they wish the infrastructure investment be taken forward and consider any funding that can be allocated towards an initial pre-STAG Feasibility Study.

1. Background

- 1.1 Information for railway station re-openings in Scotland since 1960 show that some 140 railway stations were opened or re-opened. In the Highlands this includes Alness, Fort William, Duncraig, Muir of Ord, Loch Eil Outward Bound, Dunrobin Castle, Beauly, and Conon Bridge.
- 1.2 In 2006 a Transport Economic Efficiency Analysis (TEE) for a four car platform Conon Bridge station identified a benefit/cost ratio of 2.99.
- 1.3 In 2007 Conon Bridge station was included in the list of proposed projects in the Delivery Plan associated with the draft Regional Transport Strategy (RTS).
- 1.4 In September 2010, following a positive meeting with the Transport Minister, there was agreement in principle for collaborative working between Highland Council, HITRANS and Transport Scotland. In March 2011, the Minister for Transport awarded HITRANS £96k to allow the design work to be completed.
- 1.5 In June 2012 Highland Council approved a fixed contribution of £100k, requested from Transport Scotland, towards the proposed reopening of the Conon Bridge station. A copy of the Committee report is attached at **Appendix A.**
- 1.6 The station was reopened in February 2013, within just three months of work starting.
- 1.7 The report to the Planning Development and Infrastructure Committee on the RTS Main Issues Report (17 August 2016) stated –
“the RTS should more broadly reflect the aspirations of the Council in respect of a whole host of issues, but particularly those with regional significance – examples include:

- The development or redevelopment of railway stations including Inverness, Dalcross and the case for the reopening of Evanton”.

2. Legislation, Funding Sources and Scottish Transport Appraisal Guidance Requirements (STAG)

2.1 Powers were devolved by the Railways Act 2005, Scottish Ministers were given powers to:

- prepare and publish a strategy for carrying out their functions in relation to railways in Scotland;
- provide financial assistance for freight services;
- take increased responsibility for passenger services and infrastructure relating to Scotland;
- make penalty fare regulations for Scotland;
- prepare (and from time to time revise) a code of practice for protecting the interests of disabled railway users in Scotland; and
- exercise the functions of the Secretary of State in relation to a railway administration order involving a Scottish railway company

2.2 In April 2012 the creation of a ‘Scottish Stations Fund’ was announced, which would become operational from 2014. The aim of the fund is to lever in third party investment to provide new stations and associated facilities. The responsibility to demonstrate the need for a new or improved station will continue to lie with the relevant promoter (Local Authority, Regional Transport Partnerships or developers). A copy of the Scottish Stations Fund Process document is attached at **Appendix B**.

2.3 The promoter is required to demonstrate evidence of a need for improved transport connectivity in the area and through appraisal that the proposed station is the most appropriate solution. The promoter should therefore:

- Prepare a transport appraisal in accordance with the Scottish Government’s Scottish Transport Appraisal Guidance (STAG) that is aligned with the local, regional and national development plans and policies of Local Authorities, Regional Transport Partnerships and Transport Scotland respectively.

2.4 If the proposal is aligned with STAG, and provides evidence to support the consideration of a new station on the Scottish network, promoters should also:

- Ensure the proposal takes account of Network Rail’s guidance, Investment in Stations: A Guide for Promoters and Developers.
- Discuss with Transport Scotland the possibility of incorporating stops at the station into existing or additional franchised services.

2.5 The promoter will then be required to submit the proposal to Network Rail in accordance with this process, detailing the investment case and including (not limited to):

- Benefit to Cost Ratio (BCR) and Net Present Value (NPV)
- Wider benefits (not captured by BCR)

- Third party funding
- Further development funding
- Impact on the railway network and current services
- Impact on revenue/franchise subsidy
- Alignment with local, regional and national priorities
- Station access assessment
- Assurance of land availability

3. Way Forward

- 3.1 The Conon Bridge railway station is the most recent example of a successful railway station re-opening through partnership working. The main partners were Highland Council, HITRANS and Transport Scotland.
- 3.2 The requirement for Scottish Stations Fund investment means that a transport appraisal in accordance with STAG is required. It will be necessary to ensure from the inception that Transport Scotland endorses the scope of any transport appraisal.
- 3.2 The Committee is invited to consider the following questions:
- a) Committee is invited to confirm support for the re-opening of Evanton railway station?
 - b) Is there a need/benefit for a consultation with the wider community for the re-opening of Evanton railway station?
 - c) Are there opportunities for collaboration with partners and supporters – who would the Committee identify in these roles?
 - d) What funding can be allocated to a Pre-STAG Feasibility study taken forward in partnership with HITRANS?

4. Implications

- 4.1 **Resource**
There is no budget currently allocated in the HITRANS research programme. A budget of between £15k - £25k would allow match funding with other partners and enable an initial Pre-STAG Feasibility study to be taken forward through HITRANS.
Initial dialogue with HITRANS officers indicates a willingness to jointly fund a Feasibility Study in the next research programme period.
- 4.2 **Legal**
None
- 4.3 **Equalities**
None
- 4.4 **Climate Change/Carbon Clever**
Re-opening of Evanton railway station would provide opportunities for new/more journeys by railway rather than by road.

- 4.5 Risk
The lack of funding for a Pre-STAG Feasibility study is an obstacle to progress. In addition the role of promoter involves substantial obligations in terms of the requirements set out by Transport Scotland/Network Rail. It is worth noting that HITRANS is currently taking forward the opening of the Inverness Airport railway station and has experience of dealing with Transport Scotland and Network Rail.
- 4.6 Gaelic
None
- 4.7 Rural implications
Increased opportunities for access to railway travel will improve connectivity for the rural area in the vicinity of Evanton railway station.

Recommendation

The Committee is invited to:

- note the background information on railway station opening/reopening;
- consider the questions in section 3.2 and provide a clear steer for officers as to how they wish this potential infrastructure investment to be taken forward; and
- subject to the outcome of discussion by Committee, clarify any funding that can be allocated towards an initial Pre-STAG Feasibility Study.

Designation: Director of Development & Infrastructure

Date: 06 October 2016

Author: Richard Gerring Transport Planning Manager

The Highland Council

28 June 2012

Agenda Item	
Report No	

Contribution towards the Proposed Re-opening of Conon Bridge Railway Station

Report by Director of Transport, Environmental and Community Services

Summary

This report invites Members to approve the request from Transport Scotland for the Council to make a fixed contribution of £100k towards the proposed re-opening of the Conon Bridge Railway Station.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Conon Bridge railway station was opened by the Inverness and Ross-shire Railway in June 1862 and closed in June 1960.
- 1.2 The railway station has remained closed since that time, although there has been a concerted campaign to re-open the station.
- 1.3 Commuter rail services between Dingwall and Inverness started in 1998, and this was extended to Tain in 2000, with the Beaully station re-opening in 2002.
- 1.4 In 2006 Delta Rail (Consultants) were appointed to produce Sectional Running Times for the Dingwall to Muir of Ord Section with a stop at Conon Bridge. This information was used for timetabling analysis and performance modelling and in 2007 the opening of the Conon Bridge Railway Station was included in the list of proposed projects in the Delivery Plan for the HITRANS Regional Transport Strategy.
- 1.5 The current franchise with ScotRail allows for the timetable and signalling associated with a new station at Conon Bridge.
- 1.6 Highland Council submitted the scheme for planning permission in 2008 and this was approved by the Scottish Government.
- 1.7 A revised timetable, introduced in December 2008, produced impressive passenger growth, and over the past 5 years passenger numbers have increased by:
 - Beaully 92%
 - Muir of Ord 137%
 - Dingwall 127%
 - Alness 110%
 - Invergordon 152%

- 1.8 The Minister for Transport (Stewart Stevenson) met with Highland Council Members and officials, Conon Community Council, and HITRANS in September 2010 and agreed that the Scottish Government would seek to identify funds to progress the detailed design for Conon Bridge railway station.
- 1.9 In March 2011, the Minister for Transport (Keith Brown) awarded HITRANS £96k to allow the design work to be completed.

2. Current Position

- 2.1 Transport Scotland has written to the Council seeking a fixed funding contribution of £100k towards the cost of a new station at Conon Bridge. A copy of the letter is contained at **Appendix A**.
- 2.2 In addition to the benefits for normal commuting, the re-opening of Conon Bridge will bring significant benefits during the works to resurface the Kessock Bridge, which will take place over two periods (February to June 2013 and February to June 2014).
- 2.3 Network Rail currently estimate the design and build costs to be up to £850k, and are working towards having the station re-opened before the start of the works on the Kessock Bridge in February 2013. Transport Scotland will carry the risk of any increase in costs.
- 2.4 Overall, there are significant benefits to be derived from the re-opening of the Conon Bridge railway station. There has been significant passenger growth on this route and the re-opening of Conon Bridge will provide the opportunity for commuters to make the modal shift from cars to rail.
- 2.5 Transport Scotland has advised that this is a “one-off” opportunity as part of the mitigation for the works on the Kessock Bridge. Central funds would not normally contribute such a large percentage of the funding for a local transport project. The stations fund from 2014 will be expected to lever in funds from third parties towards new stations rather than pay most of the costs of a new station.

3. Implications

- 3.1 To accommodate the sum of £100,000 within the existing capital programme would require a minor re-profiling and therefore delay in the delivery of other projects. It is therefore proposed that the sum is met from the increase in the Council’s general reserve following the underspend in 2011/12.
- 3.2 There are no legal implications arising from this report.
- 3.3 There are no equality implications arising from this report.
- 3.4 The re-opening of the Conon Bridge railway station will allow the public to make the modal shift from cars to rail and will have a positive impact on carbon reduction.

3.5 There are no risk implications arising from this report.

4. Recommendation

4.1 Members are invited to approve that the Council agrees to the request from Transport Scotland to make a fixed contribution of £100k towards the proposed re-opening of the Conon Railway station, subject to the works going ahead, with the funding met from the increase in the Council's general reserve following the underspend in 2011/12.

Designation: Director of Transport, Environmental and Community Services

Date: 19 June 2012

Report Author: Neil Gillies

Rail

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CÒMHDHAIL
ALBA



By email to neil.gillies@highland.gov.uk

Mr Neil Gillies
 Director of Transport Environmental and Community Services
 Glenurquhart Road
 Inverness
 IV3 5NX

Your ref:

Our ref:

Date:
19 June 2012

Dear Neil,

Re-opening of Conon Bridge Railway Station

I am writing to you in connection with the proposed re-opening of Conon Bridge Railway Station.

In view of the potential benefits that the re-opening of the station could bring to Conon Bridge and the surrounding area, the Scottish Ministers made a contribution of £96,000 towards the cost of the design work in March 2011. At that time Keith Brown, Minister for Housing and Transport, stated that he expected local funding sources, in addition to our own, to contribute towards the remaining stages of the project.

However since then we have been considering how best to mitigate the Kessock bridge works planned for February 2013 to June 2014 (with the resurfacing carried out in 2 Phases - February to June 2013 and February to June 2014). The re-opening of the Conon Bridge Railway Station will provide a fitting legacy from the works for the local area through a substantial contribution from Transport Scotland's TRBO bridges budget together with funding from ScotRail. .

You will be aware that Mr Brown launched the £30m Scottish Stations Investment Fund on 3 April 2012 which will facilitate improvements to existing stations, contribute to investment in new stations and using a partnership approach, will aim to lever in funds from third parties such as developers and local authorities. The funding will be made available in the next rail investment period, from 2014, and details of the scheme, including eligibility and the application process, are yet to be announced.

Some project development will progress ahead of 2014, to allow early implementation when the investment period begins. Local Authorities will have an important role and Regional Transport Partnerships (RTPs) will be asked to consider how these proposals fit with local and regional transport use and development plans.

To enable a new station at Conon bridge to be completed by February 2013 and demonstrate how a partnership approach to station investment can work we would like to ask the Highland Council to provide a fixed funding contribution of £100,000 towards the cost of the new station.

Network Rail currently estimate the design and build cost of the station to be up to £850,000 but are working through options to bring costs down. The detailed cost estimates for the project are currently commercial in confidence as there is ongoing negotiation between Network Rail and potential contractors and your contribution is based on the lower end of the cost estimate range. If this is not achieved the risk will be borne by Transport Scotland subject to value for money and affordability.

I look forward to hearing from you shortly as we are working to a very tight timescale with this project.

Yours sincerely,



John Maxwell
Rail Policy Manager



**CONTROL PERIOD 5:
SCOTTISH STATIONS FUND PROCESS**



SCOTTISH STATIONS FUND PROCESS

1. Earlier this year, the Scottish Stations Fund (SSF) was announced by the Transport Minister, Keith Brown. The fund will be operational from 2014 and will aim to lever in third party investment to provide improved and new stations and associated facilities.
2. The Scottish Ministers have specified the stations fund and a number of other ring-fenced funds in the High Level Output Specification¹ (HLOS) which was published in June 2012.
3. The HLOS sets out what the Scottish Ministers require the rail industry to deliver in Scotland for the five year period beginning 1 April 2014 and the public finances which support these output requirements. This is part of the Periodic Review process which will establish the funding available to Network Rail and the outputs they are required to deliver during the next Control Period (April 2014 - March 2019). Network Rail's Strategic Business Plan, due for publication in January 2013, will set out their response to the Scottish Ministers' HLOS. Full details of this process are available from the Office of Rail Regulation².
4. In advance of 2014, Transport Scotland has agreed a process with the rail industry which should be followed by promoters wishing to take forward proposals for new stations and improvements to station infrastructure and facilities.

New Stations

5. The responsibility to demonstrate the need for a new station will continue to lie with the relevant promoter (Local Authorities, Regional Transport Partnerships, developers and others).
6. In the first instance, a promoter should approach the appropriate Regional Transport Partnership³ who can give advice on each proposal's fit with local/regional transport priorities. The promoter will be required to demonstrate evidence of a need for improved transport connectivity in the area and through appraisal that the proposed station is the most appropriate solution. The promoter should therefore:
 - Prepare a transport appraisal in accordance with the Scottish Government's Scottish Transport Appraisal Guidance⁴ (STAG) that is aligned with the local, regional and national development plans and policies of Local Authorities, Regional Transport Partnerships and Transport Scotland respectively.

¹ <http://www.transportscotland.gov.uk/strategy-and-research/publications-and-consultations/high-level-output-specification-statement-of-funds>

² <http://www.rail-reg.gov.uk/pr13/about/key-dates.php>

³ <http://www.transportscotland.gov.uk/strategy-and-research/Regional-Transport-Partnerships>

⁴ <http://www.transportscotland.gov.uk/reports/stag/j9760-00.htm>

7. If the proposal is aligned with STAG, and provides evidence to support the consideration of a new station on the Scottish network, promoters should also:
 - Ensure the proposal takes account of Network Rail's guidance, *Investment in Stations: A Guide for Promoters and Developers*⁵.
 - Discuss with Transport Scotland the possibility of incorporating stops at the station into existing or additional franchised services.
8. The promoter will then be required to submit the proposal to Network Rail in accordance with this process, detailing the investment case and including (not limited to):
 - Benefit to Cost Ratio (BCR) and Net Present Value (NPV)
 - Wider benefits (not captured by BCR)
 - Third party funding
 - Further development funding
 - Impact on the rail network and current services
 - Impact on revenue/franchise subsidy
 - Alignment with local, regional and national priorities
 - Station access assessment
 - Assurance of land availability.
9. Promoters need not wait until the fund is operational in 2014 to begin this process as proposals can be considered in advance under current funding arrangements.

Station Improvements

10. The responsibility to demonstrate the need for station improvements will continue to lie with the relevant promoter (Local Authorities, Regional Transport Partnerships, developers and others). The promoter will be required to prepare a proposal which demonstrates:
 - Anticipated benefits, including impacts on passenger satisfaction survey results and likely changes in patronage levels and cost
 - Third party funding
11. The promoter must discuss with Transport Scotland, Network Rail and the franchisee, the impact of implementing the enhancement on:
 - the operation of rail passenger services
 - customer service
 - the fit with branding
 - the requirements of SQUIRE⁶.

⁵<http://www.networkrail.co.uk/browse%20documents/rus%20documents/route%20utilisation%20strategies/network/working%20group%20-%20-%20stations/investmentinstations.pdf>

⁶ <http://www.transportscotland.gov.uk/rail/rail-franchise/performance>

12. If applicable, the promoter should provide:

- A proportionate STAG appraisal
- An assessment of the impact on the rail network and current services
- Assurance of land availability
- Evidence of alignment with local, regional and national priorities
- A station access assessment.

13. The fund will not facilitate station improvements that ScotRail are required to implement under the franchise agreement. In addition, promoters must be able to demonstrate that alternative funding sources for the proposed improvements have been exhausted.

Published 28 November 2012. For further information, please contact:

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