

ANNEX A – Aberdeen to Central Belt – Reference Group - Update

From: **Redacted**
Transport Scotland
01 May 2018

Minister for Transport and the Islands

ABERDEEN TO CENTRAL BELT - REFERENCE GROUP

Purpose

1. To provide an update on the activities of the Aberdeen to Central Belt Reference Group.

Priority – ROUTINE

Background

2. In addition to the Scottish Government's contribution to the Aberdeen City Region Deal, the Scottish Government is also providing £254 million to allow a more significant step change to the economy of the North East. Of that £254 million, £200 million will be used to improve capacity, performance and journey times between Aberdeen and the Central Belt, through identified rail initiatives which support the Scottish Government's aspirations for the corridor.

3. Usan to Montrose capacity constraints are clearly visible therefore a number of calls to address this area are received. The original announcement made in January 2016 did not specify Usan but stated:

An initial £200 million additional funding to help improve journey times and increase capacity on key rail links between Aberdeen and the Central Belt.

4. The work being undertaken to progress initiatives is being directed, under the Chairmanship of (**Name Redacted**), by the Aberdeen to Central Belt Reference Group, which has a membership drawn from across the rail industry as well as local government and interested parties. The Group is currently progressing the development of, and selection from a range of potential options, amongst which is double tracking between Usan to Montrose, through two work streams (Rail Freight and Journey time & Capacity).

Update

5. The Group who agreed their Terms of Reference on 22 November 2017, last met on 27 February 2018. Transport Scotland is pleased that an effective working group with wide rail industry and stakeholder engagement has been established.

6. Guided by this group, key system analysis has already been provided by Network Rail to identify a number of critical constraints in the system and opportunities to address these. Further work packages are now underway using both NR and contractor resources to expedite progress.

7. The initial analysis has already identified signalling capacity constraints immediately south of Aberdeen as an early priority. Work is underway now with the target (deliverability to be confirmed) to install capacity enhancing additional signals in the next twelve months.

8. Consultants, ARUP have been appointed to undertake a comprehensive assessment which is expected to identify the optimum package that will secure the best possible return from the £200 million investment. The Group are taking forward an analysis of track data, track

geometry and line speeds, before moving forward with a multi-disciplinary review of the entire route. This work will identify a long list of options for further consideration going forward.

9. Building on initial stakeholder engagement which was used to inform Revolution in Rail, the Group will facilitate further engagement initially with Network Rail and ScotRail and subsequently with the Regional Transport Partnerships.

10. Re-engineered High Speed Trains for ScotRail intercity services will be introduced for Aberdeen to Central Belt ScotRail services, with the first trains arriving this Summer. This will offer a significant improvement in passenger comfort and seat capacity and also allow some acceleration of journey times from December this year.

11. (Name Redacted) of Direct Rail Services has replaced **(Name Redacted)** as the representative for freight. The Group continues to engage on all aspects concerning freight to ensure that this aligns with improved freight capacity, in particular the Scottish Government 7% growth target.

12. Network Rail have advised the following planned works and estimated time frame:

1. During CP5 we will deliver (through the SNIF and Freight Ring-Fenced-Funds) new Intermediate Block signals between Newtonhill and Craiginches, to deliver four passenger and one freight path per hour between Aberdeen and Stonehaven. This will also have the effect of evening out the headways that currently constrain capacity and supports the Revolution in Rail timetable.
2. In early CP6 (i.e. next year, subject to confirmed funding) we will commission a new trailing crossover at Craiginches to allow southbound freight trains to depart direct without having to run round at Aberdeen station. This increases capacity and also reduces journey times for freight.
3. Newtonhill signal box will be modernised and recontrolled to Aberdeen.
4. expectation is that the signalling will be available for the May 2019 timetable change and the crossover, subject to funding, will be fully available in December 2019.

13. Revolution in Rail (RiR), which is anticipated to be fully implemented by December 2019, will provide additional services and journey time reductions on the Aberdeen to Central Belt rail corridor. RiR maximises the benefit of the fully refurbished High Speed Trains soon to be deployed on the route, providing faster, more frequent journeys, importantly with more seats. Longer distance Intercity services become very limited stop city to city, linking with local frequent stop services which connect communities with their nearest city.

14. While the detail is still being worked through, and remains dependant on a number of factors including delivery of rolling stock and completion of projects, we expect benefits to include;

- Aberdeen to Edinburgh & Glasgow: 5-10 min average reduction
- Portlethen and Laurencekirk will have 1tph all day service to Aberdeen
- Carnoustie, Broughty Ferry, Monifieth & Gleneagles will have 1tph all day service to 4 cities
- Inverurie will have a half hourly all day service to Aberdeen with 20min frequency in peaks
- Montrose and Inverurie services “join up” to provide hourly Aberdeen crossrail

15. Paragraph, 67 words, redacted.

16. The next meeting of the Reference Group will be informed by the availability of the ARUP report which is expected later in 2018.

17. Updates on the progress of the Group are provided as required by the obligations of the Memorandum of Understanding for the ACRD, the last update was submitted to the Transport

Working Group and CRD Project Manager for further distribution to the Joint Committee as part of the meeting papers for their meeting on the 4 May 2018. Additionally updates are also provided for the Major Projects Fortnightly Update.

18. Aberdeen to Central Belt remains high on the political agenda with continuing interest from local MSP's for the North East and Central Belt. The work of the Group has also been subject to an FOI request.

Nestrans Board Meeting

19. Paragraph, 57 words, redacted

20. Paragraph, 40 words, redacted

Conclusion

21. The Minister is invited to note progress to date.

**(Name Redacted),
(Telephone number Redacted)**