

THE HIGHLAND COUNCIL

Minutes of Meeting of the **Inverness Trunk Link Road (West Link) Working Group** held in the Council Chamber, Council Headquarters, Inverness on Thursday, 17 November 2011 at 4.00pm.

Present

Mr I Brown
Mr P Cairns
Mr J Crawford
Mr J Gray

Mr D Henderson
Mr J Laing
Mr R Pederson
Mr T Prag

In Attendance:-

Mr N Gilles, Director of Transport, Environmental and Community Services
Mr S McNaughton, Head of Transport and Infrastructure, Transport, Environmental and Community Services
Mr T Stott, Principal Planner, Planning and Development Service
Mr C Howell, Project Design Unit Manager, Transport, Environmental and Community Services
Mr J Smith, Principal Engineer, Transport, Environmental and Community Services
Miss J MacLennan, Principal Administrator, Chief Executive's Service

Mr J Laing in the Chair

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Mr A S Park, Dr M E M Foxley, Mrs M C Davidson, Mr N Donald, Mr L Fraser, Mr A Henderson and Mr H Wood.

2. Declarations of Interest

There were no Declarations of Interest.

3. Inverness City Trunk Link Road – West Link, Stage II – Options Appraisal - Feedback

Following the meeting of the Working Group held on 10 November 2011, officers had updated the information on the Options Appraisal and the proposed public presentation.

Members were shown the draft presentation which would be used from the public consultation. The presentation included a “fly-through” showing key features and the result of traffic modelling. It was important that the visuals gave the scale of the structures.

Slides, too, had been updated showing the net increase/decrease of traffic on the road network and, in addition to the slides shown at the Working Group's last meeting, a projection of traffic flow for 2031 had also been included. Whilst volumes of traffic would be greater in 2031, traffic would still be reduced in some areas by the formation of a West Link, most noticeable on the Inshes roundabout. In other words, the West Link would distribute traffic more evenly in Inverness. Turning to how best the scoring matrix could be displayed, officers

had looked at various alternatives including colour schemes, bar charts, the “tick/cross” matrix and a combination of a number of these.

As requested by Members, details of the stakeholder groups had been provided. Some of the costs had also been amended and, instead of the Net Present Value, the actual costs for each Option would be displayed together with the Cost Benefit Ratio (CBR) instead. It was pointed out that the creation of the West Link would make it considerably easier and quicker for people living in the south of Inverness to access the majority of Inverness’s leisure facilities, without having to go through the City Centre. Consequently, for most of these Options the CBR was above 3.

Also, in response to questions raised at the Working Group’s last meeting, it was explained that the Torvean Quarry had SSSI status because of its geological features. Additional data on this could be provided to Members, on request. The issue of air quality had also been investigated but initial findings suggested that, based on the available air quality in the area and monitoring results from the city centre, it was unlikely that any receptors would be at risk of exceeding the current air quality objectives, either with or without the scheme. Turning to land ownership, a table was shown to Members detailing the number of parties involved and the land required for each scheme. However, work was on-going to determine how best to present data on the amount of green and recreational spaces which would be lost for each of the options. In this connection, Members were once again reminded that the illustrations were schematic drawings and, although detailed engineering plans had yet to be prepared, sufficient work had been undertaken to be sure that the proposed road network would not impinge onto the Queen’s Park racing track.

In conclusion, Members were assured that the presentation, which would last around 50 minutes, would continue to be developed and refined. The Planning and Development Service would also be involved in the Consultation events and would give an idea of what the Local Plan was expecting in this area of Inverness and what was zoned for residential, business uses etc.

During discussion, Members sought clarification on a number of points and on specific detail regarding the various options. In particular, the exact location of the roundabouts was questioned but Members were assured that this detail would be provided in the engineering drawings. In relation to the animated traffic flows Members suggested that the heaviest projected flows be used to demonstrate clearly the effect of each option and to ensure that the selected option was capable of dealing with the worst case scenario. Furthermore, it was important that the public’s attention was drawn to traffic patterns and that they were not distracted by the general visuals provided and it was suggested that, at consultation events, the PowerPoint and animation presentation could run continually on a loop system for the public to watch in their own time.

In commenting on specific options, Members also sought illustrations of proposed signage that would be used to direct traffic, if a duel bridge system was used at the canal, as it was felt this would help to demonstrate the continuous flow of traffic that such a proposal would offer. Also, if possible, it would be beneficial to provide animation of what the high level bridge would look like to be driven over. In this regard discussion then followed as to what style the high level bridge would be. It was explained that the model used had been chosen simply for illustration but it was also the most economic version.

However, given the scale of the bridge, it was likely that a more “iconic” design would be necessary.

In relation to how best to display the Options Appraisal matrix, Members emphasised the importance of clarity and of the need to avoid ambiguity. Consequently, it was the general consensus that the “tick/cross” system be used on its own but that the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats approach be considered, where possible, to help explain the criteria used. It was important too that the methodology behind how the CBR had been arrived at was explained and to illustrate the objective nature of the figure for each Option.

The timetable involved in the process was also explored and, while it was recalled that the Working Group was scheduled to meet at the end of the Consultation period, prior to the Highland Council making a decision, it was hoped that consideration could be given as to how the Inverness City Committee might have the opportunity to express their views.

Thereafter, the Working Group:-

- (a) **AGREED** that the “fly-through” visuals for the various Options also incorporate traffic flows;
- (b) **AGREED** that the findings of the Options Appraisal Process be demonstrated by the “tick/cross” system; and
- (c) **APPROVED** the content of the presentation as part of the Consultation process.

4. Date of Next Meeting

The Working Group **NOTED** that it’s next meeting take place on 27 January 2012 at 10.30 a.m.

The meeting ended at 4.05 pm.