

THE INVERNESS WEST LINK ROAD
PUBLIC CONSULTATION NO. 2
PUBLIC QUESTIONS with RESPONSES

1. Question:- In Option 7 why is it also necessary to have another canal crossing of the canal through Torvean Golf Club. The costings for option 7 look to be excessive in relation to other options. Why is a tandem canal crossing included in this option? Is the bridge cost inflated mainly to accommodate tall ships.

Response:-

One of the main issues associated with the project are the predicted traffic movements that will result from the introduction of a West Link. The project concept is for a distributor road linking the Southern Distributor to the A82. The main traffic flows that will use the link are local movements with a very limited number of movements heading for the A82 towards Fort Augustus and beyond. Primarily the local traffic movements are to General Booth Road and Glenurquhart Road and back into the City.

With a substantial proportion of traffic having used the link and heading eastwards along Glenurquhart Road for Option 7 this traffic would be delayed by the opening of the Tomnahurich Canal Bridge. The introduction of the tandem canal bridge arrangement allowed Option 7 to be compared on an equal footing with the other options that provide uninterrupted traffic flows with the introduction of an alternative crossing of the canal at that location. This is equivalent to providing a fixed link over the canal.

2. Question:- In Option 7 is there any reason why the combined river / canal crossing to the quarry cannot have a lower span with a cantilever opening over the canal which would only be required when very tall masted boats pass through, which is not a very frequent event.

Response:-

The proposal for the combined river canal crossing to the quarry with a lower span with a cantilever opening over the canal is physically practical however the proposal was assessed following Consultation No 1 with the High Level Bridge arrangement progressed for the following reasons:-

- a. A significant cutting would be required in the Torvean SSSI and given that Scottish Natural Heritage have been giving advice as one of the Key Stakeholder Group, we were aware that this organisation would have greater concerns on the impact on the SSSI of this proposal rather than the lesser impact of the High Level Option that includes a short length of embankment in the SSSI and maintains the integrity of the 'esker ridge'.
- b. A bridge opening structure at the canal would have to be maintained and operated by British Waterways. Again given that British Waterways have been giving advice as one of the Key Stakeholder Group, we were aware that this organisation would have concerns regarding having to operate a new structure remote from the Tomnahurich Canal Bridge. Additional operating costs would accrue as additional operatives would be required unlike the other options that include an additional swing bridge at Tomnahurich that could be operated from a central control unit by one operative.
- c. Traffic delays would be experienced due the canal bridge opening with a low or medium height canal bridge, that would not occur with the high level bridge.

THE INVERNESS WEST LINK ROAD
PUBLIC CONSULTATION NO. 2
PUBLIC QUESTIONS with RESPONSES

- d. There are technical difficulties and risk associated with the construction of a swing or bascule bridge at this location. Some of the concerns apply also to the high level bridge however the construction of major bridge abutments on the south towpath give rise to construction risk from a failure of the 'made ground' at that location when the piling works is undertaken for the bridge support. This construction is likely to require the canal to be dewatered at this location.
 - e. The main traffic flows that will use the link are local movements with a very limited number of movements heading to and from the A82 towards Fort Augustus and beyond. Primarily the local traffic movements are to General Booth Road and Glenurquhart Road and back into the City. With a substantial proportion of traffic having used the link and heading eastwards along Glenurquhart Road this traffic would still be delayed by the opening of the Tomnahurich Canal Bridge. Therefore to maintain a "fixed link" the introduction of the tandem canal bridge arrangement would allow the "fixed link" but would introduce a 3rd bridge in very close proximity across the canal restricting canal traffic even more.
 - f. A lower span opening bridge at this location does not represent best value and is the poorest solution / alternative to high level fixed link bridge.
 - g. A low span of 5m clearance does not comply with design standards in terms of gradients.
3. Question:- If the cost of Option 7 can't be justified on grounds of cost benefit, then what can be afforded should be used for better traffic management / signage / road improvements of the King Brude / Telford Street / Longman Road route to alleviate traffic congestion in peak visitor months. Have there been any consultation exercises on the cost of this.

Response:-

There has not been any assessment of the costs of the suggestion given that the Council directed that Options to deliver a West Link were the focus of attention. Were none of the 8 options progressed the suggestions would have been revisited. However it would be difficult to increase capacity of the network across the river without new bridge infrastructure.

4. Question:- Given that the Highland Council is planning on a major capital expenditure in this project, and given that the population of Inverness only represents about one third of the population of the Highland Council area, do you not think that the Council should at least give the appearance of caring what the wider population of the Council area thinks about the proposal.

Could you perhaps take the exhibition / presentation to other major population centres around the region to explain what benefits will accrue to the more far flung areas from the large capital expenditure being planned for Inverness.

Perhaps at the same time explain the Council could explain how they plan to provide / facilitate the much needed upgrades to the A82 / A9 / A96 and other major link roads within the area to

THE INVERNESS WEST LINK ROAD
PUBLIC CONSULTATION NO. 2
PUBLIC QUESTIONS with RESPONSES

allow all of the population of the Highlands to get to Inverness to take advantage of this wonderful new link road.

Response:-

Four meetings of the Council's Working Group, set up to consider the outcome of the Options Appraisal have been held, and the Councillors on the Working Group comprised of members from the Inverness area but also from further afield. The Working Group did not request that the exhibition / presentation should be taken further afield.

The A82 / A9 / A96 roads are all trunk roads managed by Transport Scotland and the Council continue to liaise with Transport Scotland to review their proposals with respect to the road network in and around Inverness and in outlying areas.

Completion of the South Distributor provides a strategic ring road linking the radial approaches to Inverness which acts as a hub for the Highlands & Islands.

5. Question:-

Suggested that the most direct and natural route should be taken from Dores Roundabout through beside Ness-side farm steading and bridge or tunnel into Torvean Quarry. All the sands and gravel sits in the quarry for tunnel construction so why has the option of a tunnel been neglected once again when it seems such a natural choice.

Response

This option has been considered in earlier assessments for a West Link and was not taken forward as a preferred option.

For the current project, that the Council expects to have to deliver from the Council's Capital Programme, Option 7 was considered. However a tunnel element of that through the Torvean SSSI would involve creating a cutting to allow a 'cut and cover' tunnel to be constructed on account of the sands and gravels being unsuitable materials to tunnel through. The attendant damage to the SSSI would be the same as that for an open cutting for the road. A tunnel through porous gravels with its high water table is considered as a high risk as well as being extreme cost.

In addition, a cut and cover tunnel across the River Ness is physically extremely difficulty if not impossible.

6. Question:-

Have I misunderstood the meaning of the word Bypass. My understanding is that a bypass is a road enabling motorists to avoid a city not to go partly around it then drive back into the city and create additional choke points in the traffic system. Options 3, 4 & 5 do exactly that. Options 1, 2, 6 and 8 do this to a lesser extent however Option 7 is the only option to completely bypass the city and improve traffic flow by providing a direct route to the A82.

THE INVERNESS WEST LINK ROAD
PUBLIC CONSULTATION NO. 2
PUBLIC QUESTIONS with RESPONSES

Response:-

The project has been taken forward as a distributor road, not a bypass, on account of the significant flows predicted to use the Link being local traffic. The strategic traffic flows predicted to use the link as a bypass between the A9/A96 and the A82 are extremely low.

7. Question:-

Why would consideration even be given to placing swing bridges, already a major cause of congestion and contention, so close to the existing Tomnahurich Canal bridge.

Response:-

The proposed tandem canal bridge arrangement at Tomnahurich has been developed specifically to alleviate the traffic delays at this location with one bridge always being open to road traffic. This is equivalent to providing a fixed link over the canal. One of the bridges will always be open to traffic.

8. Question:-

Why does the Highland Council believe that it is acceptable to propose the use of land from the Bught Estate, which was gifted to the people of Inverness for the use as recreational land? Just because this information does not appear on the Common Good Register does not mean that it is not Common Good Land and therefore the proposed options could be contested on legal grounds.

Response:-

The Council has taken legal advice on the issue of the 'Common Good' land. The land in question is not held in the Common Good Land Account. However the land at the Bught is held in the Council's ECS Account, the Roads Account will have to pay a market value based on the CPO Code to the Council's ECS Account.

9. Question:-

As Council Officials appear to have already made up their minds as to the exclusion of Option 7, what point is there in even consulting the people of Inverness. It is a waste of our time and money to be consulted over something that has already been decided behind closed doors and it is an insult to be asked your preference and be told well your opinion does not matter anyway because you don't have the last word on the selection.

It is disappointing that after more than 30 years of trying to create a bypass around Inverness this project has not been fully completed and that the opinions of the people of Inverness, the interests of whom the Highland Council is supposed to serve, appear to be irrelevant to those

THE INVERNESS WEST LINK ROAD
PUBLIC CONSULTATION NO. 2
PUBLIC QUESTIONS with RESPONSES

who are tasked with making a decision which will have a significant and long lasting effect on this City.

Response:-

The Council has carried out proper procedures on the Option Appraisal of all 8 options. The Working Group were open minded prior to their making a recommendation on 27 January. The Working Group held four meetings in all and at their final meeting on 17th February prepared a recommendation to the Highland Council that Option 6 should be the preferred route.

A report was presented to the Working Group at their meeting of 27th January which advised on the comments received from the public and the list of preferences.

The project is not a Bypass but a Distributor road. The Highland Council at it's meeting on 1st March 2012 confirmed Option 6 as the preferred route.

10. Question:-

The Option 6 scheme would require some advance warning to motorists of which swing bridge will be shut and the likely delay. Has agreement been reached with British Waterways.

Response:-

The operation of the tandem canal bridges will require the introduction of approach variable message signs advising of which bridge is open to road traffic. The operation of the tandem canal bridges will ensure that there are no delays to road traffic.

British Waterways are content with the proposal to introduce and operate a second swing bridge at Tomnahurich. It is envisaged that the tandem canal bridges will be operated from a central control unit by one operative.

11. Question:-

Why does the high level bridge for Option 7 need to be so high. The yachts that require this amount of clearance are quite able to use the Pentland Firth.

Response:-

British Waterways have been involved in the project since inception as part of the Stakeholder Group formed to oversee the development of the project and when British Waterways submitted information to the Inverness Local Plan Public Local Inquiry in 2004 they advised as follows:-

The Caledonian Canal is important to the Highland economy, accounting for 14% of tourist spend in the Great Glen and supporting a range of leisure businesses. There are over 4,300 boat movements at Tomnahurich per year (147/8), and 2,100 bridge openings. Any new fixed bridge should maintain the current 35 m clearance above design water

THE INVERNESS WEST LINK ROAD
PUBLIC CONSULTATION NO. 2
PUBLIC QUESTIONS with RESPONSES

level that allowed the Tall Ships Race to pass through the canal in 1991. BWS has invited the Race to return in 2007, to coincide with the Highland Year of Culture.

In terms of the maximum number of openings in a day this would be ten in August 2016.

To avoid the need for an opening bridge, the bridge clearance above water level has to be 35m.

12. Question:-

How about a bridge going from Dores to the Lochend area.

Response:-

With the current project being designed as a distributor road with the majority of the traffic movements being local to Inverness it would fail to provide the benefits in traffic terms that the other options provide in varying degrees.

This option was considered in previous assessments for the project and was not developed on account of the route being too remote from the City Centre to be of benefit as a Distributor.

13. Question:-

Where is the option to just leave the area alone - do we really need this project.

Response:-

At the public displays and evening meetings we highlighted the traffic benefits to the centre of Inverness that would result from the scheme being delivered. In addition our traffic modelling is advising that for Dores Road and Island Bank Road significant increases in traffic in the years ahead will be realised if the link is not constructed. In addition the City Centre will suffer from major congestion with limited capacity across the River Ness.

In assessment terms the Options Appraisal and the Strategic Environmental Assessment both reported on a 'Do Nothing' approach.

14. Question:-

What about a tunnel and the cost of what it would be.

Response:-

When the Options Appraisal was undertaken the constructional difficulties associated with Option 8, the Aqueduct Option, were noted given that the excavation would have to be undertaken in porous sands and gravels that exhibit a high water table level. The proposal would encounter the same difficulties and while we have not costed this option we would suggest that it would be even more expensive than Option 8 which has a significant cost for construction and would also be high risk construction.

THE INVERNESS WEST LINK ROAD
PUBLIC CONSULTATION NO. 2
PUBLIC QUESTIONS with RESPONSES

15. Question:-

I would like to know if the existing Tomnahurich swing bridge has been surveyed to see how long it could remain operational and what remedial work it will need. Are replacement /repair costs all factored into the costing or who will be responsible for these costs.

Response:-

Tomnahurich swing bridge carries the A82 Trunk Road and accordingly the condition of the bridge is monitored on a frequent basis. Replacement /repair costs for the existing bridge have not been factored into the costings for any of the Options.

16. Question:-

Have you considered an underground tunnel sloping from Dores roundabout under the river and canal and emerging before the Option 7 roundabout on the A82.

Response:-

When the Options Appraisal was undertaken the constructional difficulties associated with Option 8, the Aqueduct Option, were noted given that the excavation would have to be undertaken in sands and gravels that exhibit a high water table level. The proposal would encounter the same difficulties and while we have not costed the option we would suggest that it would be even more expensive than Option 8 which has a significant cost for construction and would also be high risk construction.

A profile was developed for a bored tunnel 1.8km in length to achieve acceptable gradients and the cost of this will be well in excess of Option 8, the aqueduct option.

17. Question:-

What alternatives are there to Whin Park, the rugby ground and American football ground if these are to be turned into roads.

Response:-

Whin Park is unaffected by Option 6 the preferred option. Relocation of the American football training area and four holes of Torvean Golf Club will be required. Discussions are being held with Inverness Rugby Club to ensure that they are no worse off.

New proposals to relocate Torvean Golf Club in its entirety to the north of the A82 have been developed that would allow the area of the course to the south of the road to be developed as Green Space / Public Park. The proposals are considered as giving significant net benefit to the area if they were to be delivered and are part of the negotiations with the recreational bodies.

THE INVERNESS WEST LINK ROAD
PUBLIC CONSULTATION NO. 2
PUBLIC QUESTIONS with RESPONSES

At the Highland Council Meeting of 1st March 2012 a commitment was given to improve and expand the recreational facilities in this area.

18. Question:-

Have you actually priced for a tunnel.
Have you actually priced for anything.

Response:-

All Options were assessed for constructional and operating costs as part of the Options Appraisal process. A tunnel option from Dores Roundabout to the A82 was not costed but was known to have high construction risk and costs in excess of Option 8, the aqueduct option.

19. Question:-

How many people will vote on these proposals. I would like to know whether they all attended the two presentations in December 2011 to hear the views and worries of the residents.

Response:-

The Council's Working Group, formed to review the Options Appraisal of the 8 Options, comprised of 15 Councillors. Most of the Working Group attended an evening meeting with illness and holiday commitments preventing three from attending.

The Working Group subsequently reported to the Highland Council on 1st March 2012 which comprises of 80 members.

20. Question:-

Why not upgrade the road between Holm Roundabout and Aldourie and cross the canal at Bona. It would only be a small swing or lifting bridge, with very little time or inconvenience to commuters.

Response:-

The concept of this proposal does not meet with the objectives for this project which include reducing traffic flows in the centre of Inverness. The scheme is based on the delivery of a distributor road and the proposal could only be considered as a bypass.

The existing road from Holm Roundabout to Aldourie would require significant investment to improve it and traffic delays would be experienced with a canal opening bridge.

THE INVERNESS WEST LINK ROAD
PUBLIC CONSULTATION NO. 2
PUBLIC QUESTIONS with RESPONSES

21. Question:-

What is to happen to the golf course.

Response:-

All the options included costed proposals for the relocation of four holes of Torvean Golf Club.

New proposals to relocate Torvean Golf Club in its entirety to the north of the A82 have been developed that would allow the area of the course to the south of the road to be developed as Green Space / Public Park. The proposals are considered as giving significant net benefit to the area if they were to be delivered.

At the Highland Council Meeting of 1st March 2012 a commitment was given to improve and expand the recreational facilities in this area.

22. Question:-

The case for not developing a crossing is supported by the following sections of the Local Plan as quoted in the EA;

"BP2 The Council will permit development unless this would be likely to have a significantly adverse effect on, or be significantly adversely affected by, the features for which the area has been designated. Where it is concluded that any such adverse effects are likely to arise, development will only be permitted where it is considered that these would be outweighed by social or economic benefits. BP3 The Council will presume against development particularly where there would be significant damage to heritage, amenity or public health. BP4 The Council will not approve development unless there is an over-riding social, economic, public health or safety reason, or for benefits of primary importance to the environment."

I am willing to make my response public and would welcome a response to my question on the evidence for need of the proposed crossing.

Response:-

The supporting text for the Background Policies in the Inverness Local Plan states: "Subject to the policies elsewhere in the Plan, the following General Policies will apply as shown on the Proposals Map." In the case of the Inverness West Link Policy 29 of the Local Plan clearly supports the principle and safeguarding of land for a river and canal crossing, and as such this policy carried more weight in the decision making process than the background policies.

With regard to the background policy features, proposals are considered against the impact on these features and not just the presence of these features. In terms of the Background features the following are present and the consideration of impact is set out below:

- Background Policy 3:
 - 150m buffer of major road – this is not applicable in the case of road development;

THE INVERNESS WEST LINK ROAD
PUBLIC CONSULTATION NO. 2
PUBLIC QUESTIONS with RESPONSES

- Site of Special Scientific Interest – this is only applicable to the options which will directly effect this feature (in this case option 7);
 - Prime Agricultural Land – Scottish Planning Policy dictates that Prime Agricultural Land should not be developed unless it is a key part of a settlement strategy. In the case of the West Link this is part of the Strategy for Inverness which is set out in the Highland-wide Local Development Plan.
 - Within 400m of an Active Quarry – The quarry is no longer actively worked.
- Background Policy 4:
 - Schedule Ancient Monument (Torvean Motte and Caledonian Canal) – The Environmental Assessment and the Strategic Environmental Assessment gave due consideration to these features. Some options for the West Link will effect at least one of these features.

A credible Transport Appraisal would provide the rationale for emerging options.

23. Question:-

In all of the plans the Inverness Blitz (and Highland Rugby) will have a roundabout or the road will thought in the middle of the field are you going to provide another place where that these teams can practice and play games if so where.

Each team has expensive kit stored in the buildings, are you going to provide a secure place where this kit can be stored.

Response:-

All the options included costed proposals for the relocation of the American football training area.

The Council holds details of the American football clubs requirements, if their training area is to be relocated, and while a specific location for this has not yet been identified the Council have sufficient land available to undertake this relocation that would meet the clubs requirements.

24. Question:-

I was wondering what the likely timescale is for Highland Council to decide on a preferred option of the route and the nature of the crossing.

Response:-

The Councillor Working Group held four meetings in all and at their final meeting on 17th February prepared a recommendation to the Highland Council that Option 6 should be the preferred route.

THE INVERNESS WEST LINK ROAD
PUBLIC CONSULTATION NO. 2
PUBLIC QUESTIONS with RESPONSES

The Highland Council at its meeting on 1st March 2012 confirmed Option 6 as the preferred route with the added requirement that the recreational space should be improved and expanded in this area.

25. Question:-

I'm also concerned (for Option 1) about the roundabout on Canal Park (North side of river crossing) - what purpose does that roundabout serve. Wouldn't a lay-by better serve as a dropping off point for access to the footpath to Whin Park.

Response:-

The roundabout was introduced on account of the preliminary design being unable to accommodate a horizontal curve at that location. The design includes the constraints of the alignments for the river crossing and the road embankment that follows the canal embankment as closely as possible. With this option the design layout will be reassessed at Stage 3 taking account of constraints.

26. Question:-

I strongly object to Options 1-8 of the proposed West Link routes. I do not believe there is demonstrated evidence of need for a West Link crossing - the EA refers to a Local Transport Strategy written in 2000 (now 12 years old) and to a 6 year old Local Plan. Nowhere in the EA or associated documents does the case and the evidence to substantiate the requirement of a link crossing appear- indeed in the EA it is stated that (pg 145) "no traffic data is available for the Inverness West Link". I therefore question the reasoning behind the proposals and ask for further clarification of the congestion that has predicated the need for the crossing (given there is no traffic data)

Response

The EA does refer to both the Local Transport Strategy from 2000 as this is the current adopted transport strategy for the Highland Council, however, the EA also refers to the Final Draft Local Transport Strategy which will once adopted replace the current one. Both documents provide policy commitments to a link from the A82 crossing the River Ness and the Caledonian Canal and specifically Final Draft Strategy for 2010/11-2013/14 states on page 19 that a 'spider network' has been developed as part of the wider Inverness City Vision and listed as one of the key features of this is the promotion of the west link across the river and canal. It is also correct that the Inverness Local Plan (2006) is referenced in the EA as this is the statutory adopted local plan for the area, within this document clear policy support is provided in paragraph 1.27 which states that: "The A9/A96/A82 trunk road intersections on the eastern margins of Inverness are powerful business attractors although investments to ease congestion and overloading of the key junctions will be required during or shortly after the plan period. Completion of the Inverness A9-A82 Trunk Road Link is also a vital investment to facilitate interurban freight journeys and improve the liveability of central Inverness and key neighbourhoods". In addition to this The Highland Wide Local Development Plan (Proposed Plan September 2010) which will replace the

THE INVERNESS WEST LINK ROAD
PUBLIC CONSULTATION NO. 2
PUBLIC QUESTIONS with RESPONSES

2006 local plan once adopted provides clear policy support for the west link through Policy 8 which states that all development in the Charleston and Ness-side areas will be expected to contribute towards the delivery the environmentally sensitive river and canal crossing which is graphically shown in Figure 4 which shows the spatial strategy for Inverness.

When the Noise and Air Quality assessments were carried out the traffic survey data was, at that stage in the process, not available in the correct format. The desk top Noise and Air Quality assessments were carried out by specialists and the assessments show that the impacts are likely to be limited to construction impacts. It is not expected that any of the options would result in significant permanent noise impacts. For air quality, the baseline information shows that air quality in Inverness is very good and it would be very unlikely that the introduction of any of the options would result in any of the receptors in the area exceeding the Governments air quality objectives. Therefore, even without traffic data it is clear that there are not expected to be any significant air and noise impacts, beyond the construction period.

Subsequently traffic predictions were produced from the Inverness Transport Model and this confirms there will not be any significant air and noise impacts.