

THE HIGHLAND COUNCIL

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12 MARCH 2015

Agenda Item	16
Report No	HC/4/15

Inverness West Link – Scheme Update

Report by Director of Finance and Director of Development & Infrastructure

Summary

This report summarises the progress made on the Inverness West Link since the report to Full Council on the 5 September 2013.

Planning approval has been obtained, the compulsory purchase order (CPO) has been lodged and a Public Inquiry is to be held in May 2015 if the two remaining objections are not withdrawn.

Traffic and Footpath Orders for Phase 1 have been promoted and 6 objections were received, these will be heard at a Hearing, likely to follow on from the CPO Inquiry.

Revised costings showing no material change, other than an increase at the rate of construction inflation are reported, and this will be considered as part of the Capital Programme report at this Committee.

The programme for construction is to commence with enabling works in Autumn 2015, with scheme completion in 2020.

The Members are asked to:

- note progress made on the West Link Project; and
- agree to the costs set out in this report; and
- agree to the continued progress of the West Link Road Scheme.

1. Background

- 1.1 The Highland Council, at its meeting on 1 March 2012, agreed the preferred route for the Inverness West Link (Report Ref HC-74-11).
- 1.2 A Report was taken to The Highland Council on the 5 September 2013, (Report Ref HC/31/13). Approval was obtained in respect of the layout drawings of the scheme, and authorised the making of a Planning Application, and a Scheduled Monument Consent for the West Link. Members also resolved to make a Compulsory Purchase Order as detailed in that report.
- 1.3 This report seeks to update members on progress that has occurred since September 2013, and also update the scheme costs and construction programme.

2. Planning Application

2.1 Following Committee approval the planning application for the West Link was lodged on 9 October 2013. The planning application was considered at the South Planning Application Committee on the 8 April 2014 (Report Ref PLS/020/14), and granted planning permission subject to conditions. The planning decision notice was issued on 14 April 2014.

3 Compulsory Purchase Orders (CPO)

3.1 Following publication of the CPO on the 15 November 2013, in accordance with the statutory process, 4 objections to the Orders were received.

3.2 The progress of the CPO identified one of the notified land owner's holdings was slightly at variance from the published CPO and an amendment was published on the 10 September 2014. The land owner was already an objector to the CPO and they maintained their objection to the CPO and the subsequent amendment.

3.3 Discussions with objectors were undertaken and one objection was withdrawn at this stage leaving three unresolved objections.

3.4 As objections remained, the CPO was referred to Transport Scotland. Transport Scotland wrote to the objectors and the Highland Council to confirm that they had appointed the Scottish Government's Directorate for Planning and Environmental Appeals (DPEA) to undertake the formal process. The DPEA has confirmed that a Public Inquiry process will be undertaken for the CPO.

3.5 The Reporter, Mr Dent, held a pre-examination meeting on 10 February 2015 at the Drumossie Hotel. At this stage only two objections to the CPO remained. Both objectors confirmed that subject to satisfactory discussions with The Highland Council regarding detail of the scheme then they would withdraw their objections. An Inquiry date commencing on the 20 May 2015 has been set but this will not be required if both objections are removed.

3.6 The Reporter has asked that he be kept advised on the discussions with the two remaining objectors.

4 Traffic Orders

4.1 To undertake the construction of the West Link modifications to the existing road layout will be required together with localised changes to footpaths and to enable these to be implemented, orders require to be promoted.

4.2 A report was submitted to the City of Inverness Area Committee on the 2nd September 2014 (Report Ref CIA/36/14), approval from committee was obtained to publish the necessary orders to allow construction of Stage 1.

4.3 Road Orders were published on the 12 September 2014 and there were no objections to the Road Stopping Up and Private Means of Access Orders. Six representations were made to the Footpath Orders and following a re-publication of these orders as 'Made' Orders on 5 December 2014 the 6 objections remained in place. Two of the objectors are the same as for the CPO.

4.4 The Reporter for the West Link CPO Inquiry has confirmed that these orders and representations will be considered at a Hearing likely to follow on from the Compulsory Purchase Order Inquiry identified above. The Hearing is likely to last one day.

5. Scheduled Monument Consent

5.1 An application for Scheduled Monument Consent for the works to be carried out at the Caledonian Canal was submitted to Historic Scotland and consent was granted on the 18 March 2014.

6. Construction Programme

6.1 If the CPO is approved early in 2015, as anticipated, adverts for interested contractors, in accordance with EU procurement rules, will be published. As the critical aspect of construction of Stage 1 of the West Link is the River Ness crossing, and environmental constraints dictate in river works between July and September, there will be insufficient time from confirmation of the orders to allow in river works to commence within the window of opportunity of 2015.

6.2 It is proposed to use 2015 to undertake enabling works, such as tree felling and statutory undertakers diversions (such as water mains) to progress the works and de-risk the main construction contract.

6.3 The main construction contract for Stage 1 would then commence in 2016 with completion in 2017. If the decision is that enhanced canal park facilities are to be progressed, then these works would be included in the Stage 1 contract to reduce risk and facilitate the integration of the canal parks enhancements and the road works.

6.4 Stage 2 requires the relocation of the golf holes, and a start on the golf course construction is programmed for 2016. The new course will not become playable until 2019, which will then allow the construction of Stage 2 to commence.

6.5 Completion of the Inverness West Link is anticipated in late 2020.

7. Fit with the Council Programme

7.1 The Highland Council 'Working Together for the Highlands' document – A programme for the Highland Council, under 'better infrastructure' specifically identifies the Council's commitment to the West Link stating 'Working with partners, the Council will support the delivery of the Inverness West Link Road and the associated amenity and leisure improvements'.

8. Implications

8.1 Finance

Following the progression of the detailed design to date and the preparation of a bill of quantities for all work activities, full costings have now been established from first

principles.

- 8.2 The figure reported to committee in September 2013 was £34.398 (July 2013), it should be noted that this updated figure of £36.6m (December 2014) is an increase of 4.5% per annum over the 17 months and represents construction inflation over this period. There have been no other material changes to the scheme.
- 8.3 The construction programme identified above recognises that capital funds will be required over the financial years 2014/15 to 2020/21. If the capital figure at December 2014 prices is profiled out to coincide with the construction, then due to the extended time frame for the construction, it is recognised that construction inflation to these profiled budgets will be required. Applying an construction inflation forecast over this period identifies a capital allocation of £43.352m and it is this figure and cost profile that is included in the Capital Programme for members' consideration.
- 8.4 Developer contributions of £3.75m are anticipated to be received following development of land for housing that is currently constrained.
- 8.5 Legal
In relation to legal issues, the CPO and Traffic Orders are being progressed in accordance with normal processes.
- 8.6 Equalities
In regard to equalities the design takes account of access requirements for people with disabilities.
- 8.7 Carbon Clever
The Inverness West Link will reduce traffic congestion, improve journey times and support active travel through cycling and walking thereby reducing the carbon footprint for traffic in and around the City of Inverness.
- 8.8 Risk
The risk implications are managed through the Inverness West Link Project Board, chaired by the Director of Development and Infrastructure. The key risks for the project at this stage are that road tender costs are in excess of pre-tender estimates, that the CPO is not confirmed and that the project is subject to legal challenge.
- 8.9 Gaelic
The road sign designs have been undertaken with Gaelic equivalent destinations included.
- 8.10 Rural
Whilst primarily a semi urban scheme the project has implications on the rural environment. An environmental statement has been prepared and the mitigation measures contained within this report will be included within the design and contract requirements to ensure compliance.

Recommendation

The Members are asked to:

- note progress made on the West Link Project; and
- agree to the costs set out in this report; and
- agree to the continued progress of the West Link Road Scheme.

Designation: Director of Development and Infrastructure

Date: 03/03/15

Author: Colin Howell