

Agenda Item	8
Report No	RC/023/18

The HIGHLAND COUNCIL

Committee: Ross and Cromarty Committee

Date: 15 August 2018

Report Title: **Evanton Railway Station**

Report By: Director of Development and Infrastructure

1. Purpose/Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report brings an update to Committee following the previous report back in October 2016.
- 1.2 Officers from Hitrans and Highland Council attended a Rail Workshop held in Inverness on 27 April 2018. It provided information about the published Rail Enhancements and Capital Investment Strategy (2018) and also details of the Local Rail Development Fund. Hitrans submitted an application to the Local Rail Development Fund. It is intended to bring a verbal update on the status of the funding application to Committee. In the event that the funding bid is successful the procurement of a specialist consultant will be managed by Hitrans.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 Members are asked to:
 - i. note the update provided in this report;
 - ii. note the STAG process requirements and in particular the flow diagram at **APPENDIX 1**; and
 - iii. approve the support/involvement of THC officers with a future Business Case Study co-ordinated by Hitrans.

3. Background

- 3.1 A report was presented to this Committee [RC/034/16](#) on 25 October 2016 setting out the background to railway station re-openings and identifying the opportunity offered by Hitrans for a feasibility study as part of their research programme.
- 3.2 In early 2017 a survey of views on Evanton Station re-opening was carried out. Almost 800 returns were completed and of these 72% said they would be very likely to use a rail service from Evanton. Very nearly 80% of respondents said they currently use their car so re-opening of the station could also reduce road congestion and achieve environmental benefits.
- 3.3 Transport Scotland hosted a series of workshops across Scotland for stakeholders and interested groups to provide information about the published [Rail Enhancements and Capital Investment Strategy \(2018\)](#) and also details of the [Local Rail Development Fund](#). Officers from Hitrans and Highland Council attended the event held in Inverness on 27 April 2018.

4. Key Messages

- 4.1 A series of presentations were made by staff from Network Rail and Transport Scotland. The following are a few key points noted from the session.
 - Rail Publications:
 - [High Level Output Specification \(2017\)](#);
This strategic document is aimed at improving performance, reducing journey times and increasing capacity and capability of the Scottish rail network. It sets out a programme of investment in Scotland's railway to enable Network Rail to operate, maintain and enhance the rail infrastructure.
 - [Statement of Funds Available for Rail Control Period 6 \[2019-2024\]](#)
The SoFA covers funding available for Network Rail operations, maintenance and renewal activities and the completion of projects which carry over from Control Period 5. It also includes some provision for railway improvement projects, which will be subject to the governance and decision making processes outlined in the Rail Enhancements and Capital Investment Strategy.
 - [Rail Enhancements and Capital Investment Strategy \(2018\)](#)
This document outlines the new 'pipeline' approach to planning and funding rail projects. Successful applications to the Local Rail Development Fund will follow the process outlined in the diagram on page 9 of the Investment strategy (see **APPENDIX 1**)
 - Strategic overview of all pipeline proposals will operate
 - Scottish Transport Appraisal Guidance (STAG) principles will apply. Robust business case for change is required
 - Local Rail Development Fund available to regional transport partnerships, local authorities, and community groups

5. Application to the Local Rail Development Fund

- 5.1 Following the workshop on 24 April 2018 Hitrans submitted an application to Transport Scotland. The following points are extracted from the submission.
- Propose to begin work on the case for the new station, including demand forecasting and integration with service and infrastructure changes that may occur arising from the Far North Line Review Team's work and the publication of Transport Scotland's Investment Strategy;
 - 16 trains pass through Evanton each day;
 - Enhanced access to the regional centre – City of Inverness;
 - Proposal is supported in the Regional Transport Strategy;
 - Value of Study estimated at £25k. Hitrans has match-funding available of £10k.
- 5.2 It is hoped that a verbal update can be provided to the Committee on the funding application status.

6. Implications

6.1 Resource

If successful the proposed Business Case Study would be funded from the Local Rail Development Fund with up to £10k match-funding from Hitrans.
The procurement of a specialist consultant would be managed by Hitrans.

6.2 Legal

None

6.3 Community (Equality, Poverty and Rural)

Positive support for the proposed re-opening has already been evidenced through the earlier community survey. Increased opportunities for access to railway travel will improve connectivity for the rural area in the vicinity of Evanton railway station.

6.4 Climate Change / Carbon Clever

Re-opening of Evanton railway station will provide opportunities for new/more journeys by railway rather than by road.

6.5 Risk

There is a clear statement in published rail documents that there is a need for a robust business case for investment. Any additional rail halt potentially introduces a negative impact on overall journey times; however there are already measures in the pipeline that should bring about improvements that could offer better prospects for the re-opening of Evanton Station.

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None

Designation: Director of Development and Infrastructure

Date: 25 July 2018

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