

Agenda Item	10
Report No	EDI/72/19

HIGHLAND COUNCIL

Committee: Environment, Development and Infrastructure

Date: 7 November 2019

Report Title: A9/A96 Inshes to Smithton Road Scheme (East Link)

Report By: Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure and Environment

1. Purpose/Executive Summary

1.1 This report updates Members on Transport Scotland's A9/A96 Inshes to Smithton road scheme (better known locally as East Link). This scheme is vital to the growth of the eastern part of the City of Inverness and is already endorsed in the Council's approved spatial strategy and as a key Inverness and Highland City Region Deal project. The scheme has reached its finalised Draft Orders stage, all of which fully align with the Council's Development Plan. This report provides an update and next steps on the scheme including maintenance arrangements and the relationship to the Council's Inshes Corridor improvements.

2. Recommendations

2.1 Members are asked to:

- i. note progress and next steps for Transport Scotland's East Link road scheme;
- ii. note East Link's proposed future maintenance arrangements, as detailed in paragraphs 6.3 and 6.4; and
- iii. agree to support the scheme as currently proposed and to raise no objection to it.

3. Implications

- 3.1 Resource: There are no short term, direct resource implications for the Council but the scheme will become part of the future local roads network and require Council maintenance.
- 3.2 Legal / Risk: There are no direct implications as Transport Scotland is the scheme's promoter however the Draft Orders process may result in a public local inquiry which may involve input from Council officers.
- 3.3 Community (Equality, Poverty and Rural): The scheme allows the growth of the City of Inverness which is one of the most sustainable locations for development in Highland

because of its accessibility for all to facilities and services.

- 3.4 Climate Change / Carbon Clever: The scheme has been subject to environmental assessment procedures and incorporates good practice flood attenuation and active travel provision.
- 3.5 Gaelic: Discussions for Gaelic road signage are ongoing with Transport Scotland.

4. Proposed Scheme

- 4.1 The [East Link Scheme](#) is part of the Scottish Government's commitment in the £315 Million Inverness and Highland City-Region Deal. Transport Scotland is funding the design and construction of 3.2km of new single carriageway road between the A96 close to its junction at Barn Church Road and the B9006 Culloden Road at Inshes. Following input from the Council officers and the City of Inverness Area Committee the scheme also includes: 7.3km of paths suitable for pedestrians and cyclists; an additional bridge over the A9 at Inshes; a road connection to the rear of the Inverness Retail and Business Park; and, an additional running lane on the A9 south between the Raigmore and Inshes junctions. Similarly, after input from the Council and others, the scheme also incorporates good practice drainage features (SUDS ponds, swales and wetlands), and landscape and environmental mitigation (grassland, shrub, hedge and woodland planting). The road's alignment has also been amended closely to align with that promoted through the Council's now approved development brief for this City expansion area. In this way, access to and the layout of the future development areas either side of the road can be optimised.
- 4.2 The East Link is one of three transport projects which together will allow the growth of the eastern part of the City of Inverness. The other two are the A96 dualling scheme, also being progressed by Transport Scotland, and the Council's scheme of improvements for the Inshes corridor. All three are interdependent and have been designed to complement each other.

5. Current Status – Draft Orders

- 5.1 Transport Scotland published Draft Orders and an Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR) for the proposed scheme on 13 September 2019. The Draft Orders include The A9 and A96 Trunk Roads (Inshes to Smithton) Side Roads Order 201[], and The A9 and A96 Trunk Roads (Inshes to Smithton) Compulsory Purchase Order 201[]. The statutory consultation period closes on Friday 25 October 2019 and with it the opportunity for formal objection to the scheme.
- 5.2 This is the final consultation stage in the scheme's progress which has involved ongoing and effective input from Council officers and the City of Inverness Area Committee (via its meetings of February, June and November 2017). The detail for each of the stages described here can be viewed [online](#) on the Transport Scotland project webpage. This input from the City of Inverness Area Committee prompted the design changes outlined in paragraph 4.1 above. Accordingly, this report recommends a no objection endorsement of the Draft Orders.

6. Future Maintenance Implications

- 6.1 Whilst the scheme's design and construction is being led by Transport Scotland it must, soon after its completion, be adopted by the Council as part of the local road network and be maintained as such. The extent of the scheme to be adopted will include all of its associated drainage and environmental mitigation features. This will have future resource implications for the Council.
- 6.2 The transfer of the land and features to the Council will confer Roads Authority powers but not any heritable right to the property transferred. Accordingly, the Council will have the option to make future amendments to the scheme such as making provision for additional pedestrian crossings as development progresses either side of the road and movement patterns change.
- 6.3 Informal discussions with Transport Scotland at officer level have established the principle that the scheme will be transferred to the Council for adoption as a local road with a separate fully funded landscaping contract to maintain the schemes landscaping and planting features for a period of 5 years from the date of transfer. As with any other new road scheme responsibility for winter maintenance and asset maintenance consisting of carriageway, earthworks, bridges, safety fencing, lighting, signage and drainage will transfer to Highland Council at adoption.
- 6.4 Following the expiry of the 5-year period, it will be for the Council and its relevant committee to consider alternative funding mechanisms to address this maintenance issue. One option will include asking the developers and/or householders of adjoining housing developments to fund the factored maintenance of roadside greenspace where it provides an attractive amenity area for those houses and reduces the greenspace the developer would otherwise have to provide.

Designation: Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure and Environment

Date: 25 October 2019

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Background Papers:

- The A9/A96 Inshes to Smithton Scheme (East Link) details -available via: <https://www.transport.gov.scot/projects/a9a96-inshes-to-smithton/project-details/>
- Previous City of Inverness Area committee reports and minutes: 23 February, 19 June and 30 November 2017 available via: https://www.highland.gov.uk/meetings/committee/30/inverness_city_committee