

4a Access to Laurencekirk Update

o Purpose of Report

To advise Members of the latest progress in taking forward proposals for improved access from the A90 into Laurencekirk.

o Background

At the last meeting of the Nestrans Board on 28 August 2013, it was agreed that Nestrans employ a consultant, on behalf of ourselves, Aberdeenshire Council and Transport Scotland, to develop a robust evidence case for a preferred option for access to Laurencekirk.

o Progress Update

Nestrans has made use of the Scotland Excel Framework for Engineering and Technical Consultancy Services to issue an invitation to tender under the competitive selection 'mini competition' procedure. Tender invitations were issued on 16 October 2013 to the six consultants listed under each of lot 1 – roads and structures, lot 2 – transportation and traffic and lot 3 – environmental engineering that are therefore capable of providing the proposed work. The tender submissions are to be returned by no later than 3pm on Friday 15 November and will then be considered on the basis of a quality and financial assessment in the ratio of 80:20 respectively. It is intended to award the contract by the end of November.

o Discussion

There is significant local interest in improving access to and from the A90 trunk road at Laurencekirk, indeed a petition urging the construction of a grade separated junction where the A937 crosses the A90 to the south east of Laurencekirk was considered by the Scottish Parliament's Petitions Committee from February 2009 until being referred to the Infrastructure and Capital Investment Committee in November 2012. Whilst consultation will be a key element in informing the identification and development of a preferred option as part of the consultancy study that is being commissioned by Nestrans, it was felt that it may be of benefit for representatives of the study partners to meet with representatives of the local community in advance of the study commencing to explain the process that is to be undertaken, the need to build a robust evidence case for any improvement and to encourage their participation.

On this basis the Director of Nestrans, in discussion with Aberdeenshire officers, has been in contact with the key community representatives in Laurencekirk and is arranging a round table discussion in early November. Opportunities to brief the local elected members of Aberdeenshire Council will also be sought along with similar opportunities with local MSPs.

o **Recommendation**

It is recommended that the Board:

1. Notes the process being undertaken to appoint a consultant
2. Notes the action being taken to discuss the need for the consultancy study with the local community and to brief local elected representatives on the process going forward.

JA/17 October 2013