
4b Bridge of Dee

- Purpose of Report

This report updates Board members on the latest progress for the Bridge of Dee Study and asks their consideration of a process to complete the pre-appraisal stage.

- Background

The Nestrans Board approved the principle of the findings within the draft Access to Aberdeen from the South Study in February 2008 and remitted the final study to Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire Councils for consideration.

The Access to Aberdeen from the South Study identified the need for additional capacity over the River Dee in the longer term. A study began in 2010/11 to investigate transport improvements in the area using the methodologies set out in Scottish Transport Appraisal Guidance (STAG) and Design Manual for Roads and Bridges (DMRB).

- Work to Date

Jacobs Engineering UK Ltd was commissioned and a programme developed to complete the pre-appraisal process defined within STAG and partially complete the DMRB Stage 1. Full engagement with stakeholders has been and will continue to be undertaken throughout the process and all information relating to the study is published on Aberdeen City Council's website. To date the following packages have been completed:

- Inception - identified existing data, reviewed relevant policies and strategies and agreed minimum and reference case traffic modelling scenarios and gathered predicted traffic volumes and journey time information within these scenarios.
- Stakeholder workshop 1: Analysis of existing and future problems and opportunities and setting of project specific SMART (specific, measurable, attainable, relevant and timed) objectives for the study. This workshop was held on 29 Nov 2010.
- Stakeholder workshop 2: Option generation – options were suggested that may address the problems and achieve the objectives of the study. This workshop was held on 26 Jan 2011.
- Stakeholder workshop 3: Option Sifting and Development – considered previously generated options and sifted them to see if any could be discounted in response to the identified problems and opportunities and the project specific objectives. This included initial consideration of high level engineering data such as alignments, junctions, earthworks, structures and drainage design, together with high level cost estimates and transport and environmental impacts associated with each of the options. This workshop was held on 3 Mar 2011.

Funding was allocated within the 2011/12 Revenue budget to continue this study. A draft report is nearing completion that details the work undertaken to date. The option sifting process is currently being finalised to determine which of the proposed concept options are likely to address the problems and achieve the objectives of the study and are therefore worth taking forward for further assessment through the STAG appraisal process and any concepts that can be discounted from further evaluation at this stage.

The option sifting matrix takes into account feedback from the third stakeholder workshop held in March 2011 and subsequent consultations with Historic Scotland and Scottish National Heritage. Although strategic traffic modelling provided an indication as to the operational effectiveness of the various concept options, it was decided that further more detailed microscopic traffic modelling should be undertaken on some to verify whether they are likely to achieve the desired operational effectiveness.

- Next Steps

The detailed modelling is expected to be concluded by the end of the March with the draft STAG pre-appraisal report completed by the end of April. At its last meeting the Nestrans Board approved a sum of £175,000 within the 2012/13 Revenue Budget to continue with the Bridge of Dee Study and commence the formal STAG and DMRB Stage 1 assessment.

Stakeholder involvement is a key element of the STAG process to ensure that all interests are considered in an open manner, to maximise confidence in the process and to, as far as is possible, reach consensus on outcomes. Whilst, the pre-appraisal report is not a primary decision stage in the process, it is recommended that feedback is provided through the publication of the pre-appraisal report and an opportunity given for the public to comment.

In order to minimise delay in concluding the pre-appraisal process and starting the formal full assessment process, it is suggested that the following process is considered:

1. It is suggested that the draft report is placed on the Nestrans website on completion and immediately referred to Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire Councils for their consideration at the end of May.
2. It is recommended that the pre-appraisal report be published on Aberdeen City Council's website alongside all other information relating to the study that is already available there and an opportunity given to the public to comment and an offer extended to meet with adjacent Community Councils.
3. A future report be instructed to the Nestrans Board to consider any comments from the public and local authorities and to finalise the pre-appraisal report and allow the formal assessment process to commence.

- Recommendation

It is recommended that the Board:

1. note the progress with the Bridge of Dee Study
2. Agree to the process and timetable outlined above, which has been designed to minimise delay over the summer period and maximise progress with the Study using the allocated budget in 2012/13.

JA/30 March 2012