

The background of the slide features a large, faint, light blue outline of the Scottish coat of arms. It includes a crown at the top with four thistles, a shield divided into quarters (a saltire, a lion, a ship, and a unicorn), and a motto scroll at the bottom with the text 'AN FUR A'.

## **Agenda Item 5**

### **Bonnybridge Scottish Transport Appraisal Guidance (STAG) Scoping Study**

Falkirk Council

**Title:** Bonnybridge Scottish Transport Appraisal Guidance (STAG) Scoping Study

**Meeting:** Executive Committee

**Date:** 26 September 2017

**Submitted By:** Director of Development Services

**1. Purpose of Report**

- 1.1 This report considers the level of appraisal work and relevant costs required to investigate transport issues in the Bonnybridge area.

**2. Recommendation(s)**

**2.1 The Executive is asked to:-**

- (i) **Note the contents of the report and the costs of each stage of STAG appraisal work:**

- (a) **STAG pre-appraisal costs - £30,000 - £35,000**
- (b) **STAG 1 costs - £10,000 - £15,000**
- (c) **STAG 2 costs - £40,000 - £50,000**

- (ii) **Determine how it wishes to proceed.**

**3. Background**

- 3.1 A motion by then Councillor Gow was referred to the Executive from the special meeting of Falkirk Council on 19 December 2016.
- 3.2 The motion instructed officers to obtain estimated costs of relevant STAG appraisal work that would be required to investigate transport issues in the Bonnybridge area and possible solutions. The solutions may include a potential new railway station.

**4. Considerations**

- 4.1 Peter Brett Associates (PBA) was commissioned by Falkirk Council in May 2017 to carry out a study into the relevant stages of appraisal work and associated costs in relation to public transport issues in Bonnybridge. A copy of the Executive Summary is contained in Appendix 1.
- 4.2 As part of this study a review of previous studies and work investigating a possible railway station in Bonnybridge was carried out. This would inform the level of further detail that will be required to be included in any future appraisal work.

- 4.3 The previous studies that were reviewed included:
- Bonnybridge Station Park and Ride Facility, Jacobs Babbie, 2006
  - Bonnybridge Station TEE Analysis, MVA Consultancy, 2006
  - Falkirk New Stations Fund Report, MVA Consultancy, 2013

4.4 **Summary of Previous Studies**

The previous studies highlighted the following:

- An outline design had been carried out for a possible rail station in Bonnybridge at the location currently safeguarded in the Local Development Plan.
- Issues with track gradients in the vicinity of the site safeguarded in the Local Development Plan.
- The previous analysis could be used as part of STAG appraisal of a rail station option.
- Operational issues in relation to future rail infrastructure projects and timetable improvements.
- Does not present a comprehensive and evidence based record of transport issues and opportunities in the Bonnybridge area.
- A solution based approach, including a railway station, to transport issues in Bonnybridge would be rejected by Transport Scotland, as this STAG is about identifying any public transport issues in Bonnybridge area.

4.5 **Update to Rail Reference Case**

The rail reference case was highlighted in the Falkirk New Stations Fund report (September 2013) and relates to the current network layout and performance and future proposals for the rail network in the Falkirk area including Bonnybridge.

- 4.6 The rail reference case will have to be updated as part of any appraisal work carried out and will need to consider the following:

- The nearly completed Edinburgh to Glasgow Investment Programme (EGIP) of electrification. This will give greater certainty over the shape of the rail network in the Bonnybridge area.
- The future grade separation, split level, junction improvements at the Greenhill Upper Junction. Any future appraisal work will have to take this into consideration and it may weaken the case for a possible railway station at Bonnybridge.
- Future timetable improvements for the Glasgow Queen Street – Alloa / Dunblane / Stirling and Glasgow Queen Street – Falkirk Grahamston Edinburgh via Cumbernauld may impact on any new station and an agreed position on the impact on the timetabling of services will be required before any detailed station option is developed and modelled.

4.7 **STAG Scoping**

The brief issued to Peter Brett Associates, was to develop and cost the specification for a Bonnybridge sustainable transport options STAG appraisal. As part of the development of the appraisal by PBA discussion took place with Transport Scotland which would help inform the STAG process and subsequent costs of each stage of the appraisal.

4.8 Transport Scotland stressed the importance of carrying out an in-depth Pre-Appraisal making and evidencing the case for change i.e. identifying a gap in provision of sustainable transport in the Bonnybridge area.

4.9 Good evidence must be provided if government funding is to be sought to help deliver any interventions.

4.10

**Outline Costs**

Pre-Appraisal	£30,000 - £35,000	Making the case for change stage
		Develops options and sifting of options for Part 2 Appraisal
Part 1 Appraisal	£10,000 - £15,000	Robust cost/benefits of options
Part 2 Appraisal	£40,000 - £50,000	

4.11 In order to progress a scheme fully Transport Scotland would require a compliant business case to be produced. This consists of four discrete stages:

- Stage 0 – Business Planning - Strategic Outline Plan (SOP)
- Stage 1 – Scoping – Strategic Business Case (SBC)
- Stage 2 – Planning – Outline Business Case (OBC)
- Stage 3 – Procurement – Final Business Case (FBC)

4.12 A STAG study would deliver Stages 0 and 1 above to give a Strategic Business Case (at the approximate costs listed in 4.10 above). If the Strategic Business Case is considered successful by Transport Scotland we could proceed to the outline business case. Only once the Outline Business Case has been completed successfully can we proceed to the Final Business Case.

4.13 Currently we do not have costs available for the preparation of the Outline Business Case and Final Business Case.

4.14 After discussion with Transport Scotland we have been advised that the end of the Pre-Appraisal stage could be considered a gateway decision point as to whether the case for change has been made and, accordingly, whether further appraisal work should be taken forward.

4.15 It should be noted that STAG is the first element of the Strategic Business Case (SBC) and should present a range of options which could deliver the objectives of the appraisal.

4.16 The level of analysis and modelling in the STAG should be proportionate to the strategic nature of the study. Detailed technical analysis should only take place once a preferred option has been selected at the Outline Business Case (OBC) stage.

## **5. Consultation**

- 5.1 As part of the Local Development Plan extensive public consultation exercises were carried out in the local communities in order to produce the plan. As part of the proposals under consultation was Local Development Plan Project INF10 – Station Site Safeguarding at Bonnybridge.
- 5.2 The Local Transport Strategy in 2006 and 2014 included extensive consultation with the public, industry and stakeholders regarding transport policies and projects. As result of the consultation the safeguarded railway site at Bonnybridge was referenced in the published strategies.

## **6. Implications**

### **Financial**

- 6.1 The current estimated costs of carrying out the three stages of STAG are listed in paragraph 4.12 above. If the case for change is not made at the pre-appraisal stage the project, and future spend, on the remaining stages can be re-assessed at that time. Should Members be minded to proceed with the appraisal, the matter will require to be referred to full Council to determine how it may be funded.

### **Resources**

- 6.2 Staff time will be required to project manage the production of the relevant stages of the Appraisal work.

### **Legal**

- 6.3 There are no legal implications arising from the report recommendations.

### **Risk**

- 6.4 There are no risk implications at this stage.

### **Equalities**

- 6.5 An equality and poverty impact assessment is not required.

### **Sustainability/Environmental Impact**

- 6.6 A full Strategic Environmental Assessment was carried out on the Local Development Plan which included the safeguarded site for a possible railway station in Bonnybridge.

## **7. Conclusions**

- 7.1 Based on the information contained in the report above the relevant cost of each stage of the STAG process has been obtained.

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Date 12 September 2017

Appendices Appendix 1 – Executive Summary – Bonnybridge STAG Scoping Study

List of Background Papers –

Bonnybridge Station Park and Ride Facility, Jacobs Babbie, 2006  
Bonnybridge Station TEE Analysis, MVA Consultancy, 2006  
Falkirk New Stations Fund Report, MVA Consultancy, 2013

## Executive Summary

### Overview

Falkirk Council has, over a number of years, been developing the case for a new railway station at Bonnybridge. To date, the aspirations for a station have yet to come to fruition. In January 2017, the then Leader of the Council, Councillor Craig Martin, wrote to the Minister for Transport and Islands, Humza Yousaf MSP, seeking support for a potential new station at Bonnybridge. The Minister responded in March 2017 recommending that the Council undertake a STAG Appraisal of future transport options for Bonnybridge.

Recognising that a STAG appraisal can be a significant undertaking, Council Officers were keen to undertake an initial scoping exercise, which entailed the following:

- a review of the appraisal work undertaken to date and its potential fit / role within any future Bonnybridge STAG appraisal;
- a review of recent rail developments and planned / committed changes in the Bonnybridge area which would have to be considered in any future STAG; and
- a detailed scope and outline costings for a future Bonnybridge STAG appraisal.

### Summary of Previous Studies

The purpose of the review of previous appraisal work was to consider the broad 'fit' of these studies with a potential future STAG appraisal and required updates that would need to be undertaken.

In summary, the work undertaken to date has provided a useful basis for assessing the case for a new railway station at Bonnybridge. In particular:

- There is an outline design for the station which is beyond what would be anticipated in a STAG. Whilst this design would need to be revisited and the costs updated, it nonetheless demonstrates that a station is potentially a viable option in terms of e.g. topography, available land etc. The previous work also identified issues which would need to be considered in any future study, particularly in relation to the track gradient at the proposed location.
- The type of analysis which would be used when considering a station option in a STAG study (e.g. catchments, accessibility, forecast patronage / abstraction etc) has been undertaken, although is in need of significant updating in terms of data sources and modelling. Nonetheless, a broad template does exist.
- The operational issues with progressing a station at Bonnybridge have been considered in moderate detail. These issues would require further exploration given the evolution of rail infrastructure and services in the area but there is at the very least a starting point which can be worked from.

However, whilst the previous studies could feed into a future Bonnybridge STAG, they do not negate the need for such an appraisal. Indeed, they would only contribute to the consideration of one specific option which may or may not progress through the early stages of the appraisal. The studies as they stand do not:

- Develop a comprehensive and evidence-based record of the transport problems & opportunities affecting Bonnybridge at present (demonstrating the case for change is the starting point for any STAG). There is at present no clear case for a government funded transport intervention as a means to address a demonstrable transport problem.
- Consider the full range of potential options which could address any transport problems identified (e.g. bus-based options, active travel etc). The further development of the

above studies would represent a solution-based approach, which would correctly be rejected by Transport Scotland.

- Develop a compelling economic case for a new station at Bonnybridge based on robust and fit for purpose demand forecasting.

## Update to the Rail Reference Case

When the previous research to support a Bonnybridge bid to the *Scottish Stations Fund* was prepared in 2013, there was considerable uncertainty over the future shape of the railway network in the area, particularly in terms of delivery timings for the Edinburgh Glasgow Improvement Programme (EGIP) and the associated rolling electrification programme.

With the EGIP investment now almost completed and the rolling electrification programme from Dunblane & Alloa to Polmont Junction & Greenhill Junction anticipated to be completed by the end of Control Period 5 (CP5, 2014-19), there is now a much greater degree of certainty over the future shape of the network in the Bonnybridge area. This would assist in scoping and developing any future Bonnybridge STAG that had a new railway station as an option within it.

The two remaining uncertainties are:

- Whether funding will be committed to the grade separation of Greenhill Upper Junction within CP6 (2019-24) or CP7 (2024-2029) (if this upgrade was to be committed in CP6, it is likely that at least an indication of this would be available during the duration of a STAG study). The impacts of this improvement on the case for a new railway station at Bonnybridge would also need to be considered, although on-balance it is likely to make the case weaker.
- How the future timetables for the Glasgow Queen Street – Alloa / Dunblane / Stirling and Glasgow Queen Street – Falkirk Grahamston - Edinburgh via Cumbernauld routes would accommodate a Bonnybridge call(s). An agreed position (reference case) would be required on this prior to any detailed station option development / modelling.

## STAG Scope & Costing

The final step in this Scoping Study was to develop and cost a specification for a Bonnybridge Sustainable Transport Options STAG Appraisal. The detailed scope is included in the body of the report. However, for the purposes of a summary, it is worth setting out the key points from our discussion with Transport Scotland as well as the outline costs for a STAG and how it would fit within emerging business case guidance.

## Consultation with Transport Scotland

As part of the development of the scope for a Bonnybridge STAG, PBA sought general advice from Transport Scotland on the STAG process (further specific advice should be sought if a study is commissioned). The following key points emerged:

- Transport Scotland stressed the importance of carrying out an in-depth Pre-Appraisal with a view to making and evidencing the 'case for change' (i.e. what is the gap? What evidence is there to support the existence of this gap? Is the problem now or in the future?). They were clear that the evidence bar in this respect is set relatively high and that, if government funding is sought, there would need to be a compelling case for change (i.e. why is an intervention required and why would this represent better value for money than the present day situation?).
- Building on the discussion with Transport Scotland, PBA would advise that the end of the Pre-Appraisal stage could be considered a gateway / decision point, at which an objective view can be taken on whether the case for change has been made and whether there is potentially credible value for money options which could be taken forward to more



detailed appraisal. We would also recommend engaging with Transport Scotland at the end of this stage in the process.

- The STAG is only the first element of the business case process, broadly equating to the Strategic Business Case (SBC). The STAG should present a range of options which could potentially deliver the required objectives – it should not at this stage define a preferred option.
- Linked to the above, the level of analysis and modelling of the options in the STAG should be proportionate to the strategic nature of the study. For example, in terms of a station option, a level of analysis would be required to determine technical feasibility and patronage impacts, but detailed technical development, timetable modelling etc should not be undertaken until a preferred option has been selected at Outline Business Case stage.
- It was advised that, where a City Deal is in place or planned, the proposed scheme should be included within that deal if it is considered to be of strategic importance.

### Outline Costs of a Bonnybridge STAG Appraisal

PBA committed to outline a broad cost for each element of the appraisal as part of this Scoping Study. In doing this, we have revisited previous similar STAG studies which we have undertaken, so the estimates provided have a reasonable degree of confidence attached to them.

In terms of assumptions:

- A round of consultation (stakeholder and public engagement) is assumed at each stage of the process.
- Central Scotland Transport Model 12 (CSTM12) would be used as an 'off-the-shelf' model at STAG Part 2 stage, so there would not be a need for a bespoke model development, which would add to the overall cost. However, upgrades to CSTM12 are assumed to be required (these should be scoped and agreed before the price for a Part 2 Appraisal is confirmed).
- Detailed timetable modelling would be additional.
- Any Strategic Environmental Assessment / Economic Impact Assessment required would also be additional.

Based on the above, we would estimate the following cost ranges:

- **Pre-Appraisal: £30k-£35k** – as noted this is an essential stage in 'making the case for change' in the Bonnybridge area
- **Part 1 Appraisal: £10k-£15k** – develops the options and provides a sifting of the main options to facilitate the Part 2 Appraisal
- **Part 2 Appraisal: £40k-£50k** – would focus on a robust quantitative estimate of the costs and benefits of the options based on a transparent presentation of all of the behavioural responses to the schemes

### Alignment with Business Case Guidance

Transport Scotland published its *Guidance on the Development of Business Cases in Transport Scotland* in December 2015, which sets out the steps required to progress a scheme towards implementation.

A compliant business cases consists of four discrete stages:

- Stage 0 – Business planning: Strategic Outline Plan (SOP)
- Stage 1 – Scoping, Strategic Business Case (SBC)

- Stage 2 – Planning: Outline Business Case (OBC)
- Stage 3 – Procurement: Final Business Case (FBC)

The completion of a STAG study effectively delivers Stages 0 & 1 of a transport business case – it is in effect equivalent to the Strategic Business Case (SBC).

The STAG / SBC is typically presented to decision makers for consideration and, if successful, can proceed to the Outline Business Case (OBC) stage, at which point a preferred option is selected and further developed. The OBC also sets out the likely solution to the identified transport problems, demonstrates its affordability, and details the supporting procurement strategy, together with management arrangements for the successful roll-out of the scheme.

Having completed the OBC, the Final Business Case (FBC) is undertaken. The FBC is effectively an updated version of the OBC. Its purpose is to revisit the OBC and record the findings for the subsequent procurement. It also sets out the recommendation for an affordable solution which continues to optimise Value for Money (VfM), and includes detailed arrangements for the successful delivery of goods and implementation of services from the recommended supplier.