

Report to Partnership Meeting 23 April 2021

RESEARCH AND STRATEGY DELIVERY

Fastline Faslane

Local Rail Development Fund Project

HITRANS was awarded £50k by Transport Scotland to study the Case for Change at Faslane. The draft report has been completed by Stantec and sent to TS for their comments. Once the report has been finalised the Options Appraisal stage begins- this is also fully funded through LRDF. The executive summary appears below.

Executive Summary

Scope and Context

Stantec was appointed to undertake a transport study of access to HMNB Clyde, also known as Faslane. The study has been carried out in line with Scottish Transport Appraisal Guidance (STAG) and specifically develops the 'Case for Change' stage of this process. Funding from the Scottish Government's Local Rail Development Fund (LRDF) has allowed this study to proceed. Whilst funding has been made available through the LRDF, there are no pre-conceived ideas as to the range of transport solutions that the military base and surrounding areas might benefit from and as such, this Case for Change report has been undertaken as a fresh look at the transport situation, considering all problems, opportunities and potential solutions across all modes on their own merits.

HMNB Clyde, also known as Faslane is one of the largest single site employment locations in Scotland, supporting approximately 7,500 jobs comprising of 3,500 military personnel and 4,000 civilian contract and support staff. The main base site at Faslane is located six miles north of Helensburgh, with a second site at Coulport located further west on the Rosneath Peninsula. 'Behind the wire' (on site), the base provides accommodation for approximately 2,000 military personnel, while further accommodation is provided offsite within Helensburgh.

The base was recently designated as the UK's Submarine Centre of Specialisation. This designation will relocate all UK submarine operations to the base at Faslane over the next 10 years. To facilitate the future operation of the base, a programme of investment was announced whereby £1.3 billion will be invested in upgrading infrastructure. Military personnel stationed there will also increase by 1,500 within the next five years. This investment and increase in employment will make HMNB Clyde the largest single site employer in Scotland.

Current Problems and Opportunities

Presently the base faces two main challenges - the supply of land behind the wire is significantly constrained limiting the opportunities to provide further accommodation (which is already at capacity), and secondly and of most relevance to this study, the base generates high volumes of car travel and also a high car mode share (arriving as either single occupancy car or car-share). This significantly impacts on the local road network bringing congestion and emissions. **Transport problems** can be further summarised as follows:

- Due to the large volume of commuter traffic at concentrated periods of the day, site traffic accounts for substantial proportions of peak and all traffic on the A814 and A82/A817. Crucially, these large flows impact upon journey times and journey time variability in these corridors.
- Associated with the large flows of vehicles are concerns with carbon emissions and effects on local air quality along the travel corridors. It is estimated that commuting to / from the base generates around 3,500 car commute journeys per weekday equating to around 14,000,000 car miles per annum and around 4,500 tonnes of carbon dioxide emissions. These concerns are critical given the Scottish Government's recent commitments in the Climate Change Plan Update.
- In a similar vein, the vehicle flows also lead to noise and safety concerns during busy periods - indeed traffic which flows on the A814 has to route through populated areas of Dumbarton, Helensburgh and Cardross which leads to particularly busy roads at key periods.
- Base traffic on these routes not only affect those who work at HMNB Faslane but also other road users in the area with congestion and journey time impacts felt by all.
- Surveys show that around 80% of people who work at the base travel by private car. This leads to the requirement to provide large amounts of parking spaces. Presently there are 3,266 official parking spaces on the base and these are routinely full to capacity. Due to the expansion programme, the MOD has estimated there will be a requirement to provide a minimum of 895 additional spaces. Aside from questions on the implications of providing this level of additional parking as the country moves towards net zero emission targets, there is also a clear problem of where such additional parking could be situated as the site is constrained.
- These large volumes of people traveling to the base result in queuing at the entrance as each car has to clear two security check points. This leads to queuing which stretches onto the local road network disrupting non-base travel.

The main **supply side** causes of these problems are:

- Beyond the local area, there is no (or no realistic) scheduled public transport which arrives for the AM shift start time at Faslane.

- Given the location of the base and the scale of the operation there, the workforce is drawn from across a wide swathe of the Strathclyde area meaning that the average commute distance is higher than the national average. There are also no realistic park & ride options for employees at the site.
- The quality of local active travel connections to the base is not high enough to encourage more locally based employees to cycle to the base.
- There is generous, although now constrained free parking on site – this contributes to already high levels of car sharing.
- Car use is financially supported for MOD staff through the payment of expenses.

These supply side problems have led the MoD to provide their own network of bespoke bus services via their principal contractor. These services are a cost to the MoD and only partially address the lack of public transport connectivity due to capacity, geographical reach, and travel flexibility.

The current connectivity also has an impact on **labour market** efficiency and equality of opportunity. It will prevent some people from working there who would like to do so. This will have social impacts as people are excluded from these employment options, depriving them of the career and financial opportunities that work at the base provides. From the base's perspective this will lead to difficulties in matching the right people to the right jobs and also difficulties in filling posts, especially during periods where the labour market is buoyant. Improved connectivity would therefore improve labour market efficiency and equality.

Transport Planning Objectives

Drawing upon the evidence gathered, a set of Transport Planning Objectives (TPOs) has been identified. In drafting these, consideration was given to national, regional and local policy, as it was important to ensure consistency with established policies in the area. Identified objectives are therefore as follows:

- TPO 1 – Increase the labour market catchment who can access a 'base working day' using scheduled public transport services
- TPO 2 - Align parking supply and demand on the base
- TPO 3 – Improve the reliability of journey times by all modes to the base
- TPO 4 - Align the supply of, and demand for the ATS buses
- TPO 5 - Reduce commuting times for those who use public transport or ATS bus services to access the base

- TPO 6 - Increase the opportunities for convenient & secure mixed-mode travel to the base
- TPO 7 - improve the quality of active travel connection to the base
- TPO 8 - Reduce interchange time at Helensburgh station
- TPO 9 - Reduce the cost of commuting to the base for all of, or targeted elements of the workforce

Option Generation

In response to these TPOs, an initial long list of options has been generated and sifted. The following options are proposed to be **taken forward** to the Preliminary Options Appraisal:

- High quality cycle route between Helensburgh Central and Faslane
- Helensburgh Central Bespoke Shuttle Bus service
- Expansion of ATS: Geographical expansion of ATS
- Expansion of ATS: Intensification of ATS (frequency)
- Rail - new station providing direct access to the base with associated service options
- Rail - timetable adjustments: improved alignment with Helensburgh train arrivals and AM shift start times
- Rail - timetable adjustments: intensification of services during shift changeover times
- Ferry link from Gourock to the base
- Parking charges at Faslane
- Reduced parking provision on site
- Increased parking provision – off site bus P&R

The following options have been **sifted out** based on their fit with policy.

- Increased parking provision – on site
- Increased parking provision – off site but in walk-in proximity
- Base operational options – these options are MoD matters and are beyond the scope of the STAG study

The remaining options will be assessed both individual options and as part of packages as there are potential synergies through combining options.

Summary

In summary there is a clear Case for Change based primarily on the fact HMNB Clyde is a major generator of car traffic and associated traffic and carbon impacts. In addition, there is very limited scope to increase parking supply at the base. Operations at the base will be expanding significantly in the coming years and this will exacerbate the existing transport problems associated with the base.

A survey of base workers undertaken as part of this study has confirmed an appetite for change with 42% of respondents indicating that they would change mode away from car if suitable alternatives were in place.

In addition, the lack of scheduled public transport connectivity for shift start times constrains the labour market and this has an impact on both labour market efficiency and equality of access to the employment opportunities at the base.

RISK REGISTER

RTS Delivery

Impact – Strategic mode shift

Policy

Impact –Efficiency of transport operations, mode shift, emissions reduction

Financial

Impact – Fully funded to Options Appraisal

Equality

Impact – Access to network

Recommendation

1. Members and Advisors are recommended to note the report.

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