

Report to Partnership Meeting 25 November 2016

RESEARCH AND STRATEGY DELIVERY

Points North

Purpose of the Report

This report provides members with an update on and proposed interventions to restore North of Inverness Rail Performance.

Summary

1. Rail Delivery Group has published *Investing in the Future*.
2. ScotRail has published its Performance Improvement Plan
3. HITRANS is running the Points North 2 Seminar in Inverness on Fri 16 December.

Rail Delivery Group

The RDG has published *Investing in the Future* which reprises the findings of the Network Rail Scotland Route Study (SRS) published in July 2016, noting that 'providing a reliable timetable and infrastructure for passenger and freight services is of prime importance on this route which provides lifeline services to the local communities.'

The SRS tested the capability of the network to handle 6 Wick services and Invergordon hourly in 2043 and identified the following interventions:

- Georgemas Chord
- resignalling Inverness-Dingwall
- provision of an additional passing place between Inverness and Dingwall
- provision of an additional passing place between Invergordon and Dingwall

These projects are potentially to be funded in CP6 and 7 (2019-24, 2024-29) through the Scottish Ministers' High Level Output/ Statement of Funds Available (HLOS/SOFA) process.

Performance Improvement Plan

On 20 October 2016 the ScotRail Alliance published the ScotRail Performance Improvement Plan. It includes a review of timetable performance in the Far North, and 158 upgrades to doors, radiators, operating controls and systems.

Local discussions

HITRANS is now involved in regular meetings with Network Rail and ScotRail working through the Points North 20 Interventions and informed by Aliona's Far North Performance Study, with a key target to restore reliability to the timetable in May 2017.

Points North

HITRANS convened Points North in March 2015 in response to passenger concerns about poor reliability and performance on the railway North of Inverness. An audience comprising MPs, MSPs, councillors and community councils and other key rail stakeholders discussed proposals for improving the reliability of passenger and freight rail services between Inverness and the Far North and to Kyle at a seminar held at Dingwall.

HITRANS organised the event in response to concerns expressed by rail users about the reliability of the services between Inverness and Wick/Thurso and also to Kyle.

A number of suggestions were noted for action to improve reliability and restore journey times following presentations by HITRANS, ScotRail and Network Rail and a question and answer session.

HITRANS Chair Cllr James Stockan (Orkney) explained that the seminar had been called to help explain the reasons for recent poor performance and the introduction of a new winter timetable in December, 2014. He said: "It is vital that the railway to Wick and Kyle is able to reliably serve the needs of communities up and down the line enabling travel for work education and leisure, and of course enabling freight traffic to shift from our roads. We need to restore the confidence of the travelling public in rail services in the North. HITRANS is keen to play its role in this process."

At the seminar, ScotRail stressed the new timetable followed a comprehensive review and was specifically designed to improve the Far North Line performance and resilience, and to address the overall reliability of journey times for its customers.

HITRANS is repeating the seminar on Fri 16 December 2016 focussing on Network Rail's Scotland Route Study, the Performance Improvement Programme, 158 maintenance /scenic trains, level crossings, RETB signalling upgrade and timetable development.

RISK REGISTER

RTS Delivery

Impact – Positive.

Comment –Improves confidence in Public Transport, aims to improve journey times, connectivity and modal shift.

Policy

Impact – Positive.

Comment - Strategic fit with ScotRail's Performance Improvement Plan.

Financial

Impact – Positive

Budget line and value – This item has limited financial costs which will be accommodated within the Meeting Costs budget line.

Comment – HITRANS continues to fund meeting costs for the project through the CP5 Rail budget line

Equality

Impact – Positive

Comment – None

RECOMMENDATIONS

Members are asked to note the report.

Recommendation

1. Members are asked to note the report.

Report by: Frank Roach
Designation: Partnership Manager
Date: 16th November 2016