

REPORT TO: East Lothian Council

MEETING DATE: 16 December 2014

BY: Depute Chief Executive (Partnerships and Community Services)

SUBJECT: Edinburgh to Berwick-upon-Tweed Rail Service Update

1 PURPOSE

- 1.1 To update Council on the Edinburgh to Berwick Rail Service and progress made towards the re-opening of stations at East Linton and Reston.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 To seek Council support and agreement to fund the development costs necessary to fully design a new station at East Linton for further consideration in line with Network Rail Governance for Railway Investment Projects (GRIP) process.

3 BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The Scottish Stations fund (SSF) was made available to local authorities and Regional Transport Partners in April 2014 for the purpose of providing new stations and improving rail station infrastructure throughout Scotland.
- 3.2 A joint bid, by East Lothian Council, Scottish Borders Council and SEStrans in April 2014 was considered by the Route Investment Review Group (RIRG) who concluded “East Linton station and Reston station proposals are not endorsed by RIRG. More cognisance to be taken of the implications for capacity and the infrastructure works which will be required in order to provide services to these additional stations”.

- 3.3 The group agreed that the main issue with this proposal was not the addition of two new stations, but the difficulty in providing services to these stations and the potential detrimental impact this could have on existing services. It was also agreed that SESTRANS had not provided sufficient information and that greater detail would be required before the proposals could be considered. However, it was noted that as the proposal was a priced option in the ScotRail Franchise Bid, it would not be appropriate to consider further until the successful bidder was announced and the Bid proposals made clear.
- 3.4 On 20 November 2014, the former Transport Minister Keith Brown MSP announced that Abellio – new franchise operator – will introduce a two-hourly service between Edinburgh and Berwick with timing for stops at East Linton and Reston and said, “This is a huge step forward towards the development of these stations and shows a real commitment from the Scottish Government and ScotRail.”
- 3.5 Further dialogue between Network Rail, SEStran, East Lothian Council, Scottish Borders Council and Transport Scotland has taken place and focused on the development of the stations in accordance with Network Rail’s ‘GRIP’ development stages and the funding of this process.
- 3.6 At the local rail forum on Friday 28 November the matter received considerable debate. Paul Wheelhouse MSP reassured the meeting that the new Minister remains fully committed to the development and will continue to honour the previous ministerial announcement. However, the granting of monies from the Fund for the two stations is dependent on further work from the two councils and SEStran. This involves the two councils funding a detailed design of the two stations, the cost of which is unexpected and considerable (£300–400k). Given the level of investment involved in the design process, the councils have sought reassurance and commitment from the Scottish Government that funding will be available, and are also seeking clarity around the timing of any confirmation of funding particularly if the timescales which have been set out are to be achieved.

4 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 These proposals are expected to contribute towards *Providing a Safer Environment* - a key priority for East Lothian Council.

5 EQUALITIES IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 5.1 This report is not applicable to the well being of equalities groups and an Equalities Impact Assessment is not required.

6 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 Financial – Budget provision will be required to be made to fund the development costs of up to £400,000
- 6.2 Personnel - None
- 6.3 Other – None

7 BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 7.1 None

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