

Cowal Fixed Link Funding Request

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 The Cowal Fixed Link Working Group have submitted a request for funding. They have requested £3000 each from the Council, Highlands and Islands Enterprise and Transport Scotland.
- 1.2 The proposal includes the following:
- 1.2.1 The Cowal Fixed Link Working Group becomes a formal constituted organisation based on the Borders Railway Campaign model. Anticipated cost £2,000.
 - 1.2.2 This new organisation to appoint Fraser of Allander Institute as advisers with the remit to prepare a tender document for the wider economic feasibility proposal. Anticipated cost £5,000.
 - 1.2.3 The Fixed Link Group, with assistance from Fraser of Allander Institute, to post the tender on the Scottish Government procurement portal inviting bids. Fixed Link Group, with assistance from Fraser of Allander Institute, to evaluate bids and to recommend an appropriate supplier to the key stakeholders.
- 1.3 The working group also propose that the Fraser of Allander Institute would then help support them in understanding and interpreting findings of assessment – including leading on any engagement with successful contractors – to ensure that stakeholders’ views and objectives were accurately captured.
- 1.4 The committee are asked to consider the request from the Cowal Fixed Link Working Group

Cowal Fixed Link Funding Request

2.0 INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 The report sets out a request for funding that has been received from the Cowal Fixed Link Working Group.

3.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 The committee are asked to consider the request from the Cowal Fixed Link Working Group

4.0 DETAIL

- 4.1 The Cowal Fixed Link Working Group is an ad-hoc group which has been considering, since late 2013, options for a fixed link to connect Cowal to the Central Belt, with some of those options also involving Rosneath.
- 4.2 Various possible crossings are shown on the group's website here <http://www.cowalfixedlink.scot/index.asp?pageid=659287>. They include several options between Dunoon and Gourock and alternatives to that route which include crossing Holy Loch, Loch Long and Gare Loch. Other potential crossings include one from Otter Ferry across Loch Fyne and another between Colintravie and Rhubodach. There are also different options for each crossing including tunnels, bridges, road and rail. The options are ambitious and would require significant on shore infrastructure, in addition to the bridge or tunnel, in many cases. In some cases it is hard to see how they could be implemented without a major impact on local communities and individual property owners.
- 4.3 In September 2016 the Environment Development and Infrastructure Committee considered the Argyll and Bute Transport Connectivity and Economy Research Report which was commissioned by Highlands and Islands Enterprise. The study considered fixed links and concluded that "the two 'standalone' options (Cowal-Inverclyde and Colintravie-Rhubodach) are likely to offer relatively minor economic benefits in comparison to the benefits offered by the two larger options (Loch Fyne/Cowal crossing and combined Clyde/Cowal/Loch Fyne east-west route), and it is the later of these that would offer the greatest prospect of a transformative economic impact for Argyll and Bute". A copy of the full report

can be found here <http://www.hie.co.uk/regional-information/economic-reports-and-research/archive/argyll-and-bute-transport-connectivity-and-economy-research.html#sthash.y9r0oxMU.dpuf>

- 4.4 The Council was invited to attend a meeting hosted by Humza Yousaf MSP and Michael Russell MSP regarding the fixed link proposals. The Executive Director of Development and Infrastructure attended the meeting which was held in the Scottish Parliament on Tuesday 13 June 2017. The meeting was held to review progress on the suggested road / rail link from Cowal / South Argyll to the Central Belt that has been proposed by the Cowal Fixed Link Working Group and to consider the next steps. A note of the meeting prepared by David McKenzie chair of the working group are included in appendix 1. No formal minute of the meeting was prepared. The note includes details of a funding request that was being proposed by the working group at that time.
- 4.5 At that meeting the Executive Director made it clear that any funding requested from the Council would require committee approval. It was also made clear by Transport Scotland that if the project were to progress it would need to feature in the National Transport Review which is currently underway. It would then need to be included in the Strategic Transport Project Review and compete against other projects nationwide.
- 4.6 The Cowal Fixed Link Working Group have now submitted an amended request for funding as set out at appendix 1. They have requested £3000 each from the Council, Highlands and Islands Enterprise and Transport Scotland. Appendix 2 includes a proposal from the group for the management of the funds. Officers understand that HIE have agreed the funding requested but it is not yet clear whether Transport Scotland have agreed.
- 4.7 The proposal includes the following:
 - 4.7.1 The Cowal Fixed Link Working Group becomes a formal constituted organisation based on the Borders Railway Campaign model. Working group anticipates the cost at £2,000.
 - 4.7.2 This new organisation to appoint Fraser of Allander Institute as advisers with the remit to prepare a tender document for the wider economic feasibility proposal. Working group anticipates the cost at £5,000.
 - 4.7.3 The Fixed Link Group, with assistance from Fraser of Allander Institute, to post the tender on the Scottish Government procurement portal inviting bids. Fixed Link Group, with assistance from Fraser of Allander Institute, to evaluate bids and to recommend an appropriate supplier to the key stakeholders.
- 4.8 The working group also propose that the Fraser of Allander Institute would then help support them in understanding and interpreting findings of assessment – including leading on any engagement with successful contractors – to ensure that stakeholders’ views and objectives were accurately captured.

- 4.9 No anticipated cost has been included for the feasibility work itself. It is difficult to estimate the likely cost as this would depend on the scope that is developed in conjunction with the Fraser of Allander Institute. Based on the experience of commissioning this type of work it would be reasonable to assume costs in excess of £50k. If the committee were to agree to contribute £3k for the work outlined above there may be an expectation that a further contribution will be made by the Council to the feasibility work itself.
- 4.10 The investigation of fixed links is included within the Single Investment Plan (SIP), which was approved by this committee in March 2017. However, due to the cost, a project of this scale could only be progressed on a national basis. This is recognised in the SIP which highlighted the inclusion of fixed links for the purpose of lobbying for inclusion in the National Transport Strategy.

5.0 CONCLUSION

- 5.1 The Cowal Fixed Link Working Group have requested funding to establish a constituted group and develop a feasibility study which members are asked to consider.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 Policy – the potential to investigate fixed links is highlighted within the Single Investment Plan
- 6.2 Financial – the current request can be accommodated within existing budgets
- 6.3 Legal - none
- 6.4 HR - none
- 6.5 Equalities - none
- 6.6 Risk - none
- 6.7 Customer Service - none

Pippa Milne Executive Director of Development and Infrastructure

Policy Lead Aileen Morton

29 November 2017

For further information contact: Pippa Milne 01546 604076

APPENDICES

Appendix 1 Fixed Link Proposal

Appendix 2 Cowal Fixed Link Constitution Process