Purpose of Report

1. This report advises Committee regarding the publication of a consultation document by the Department of Transport, Local Government and the Regions (DTLR) and recommends an appropriate response.

Main Report

2. As a land-locked Council area, the publication of a consultation document on project appraisal for sea ports would not normally attract much interest for North Lanarkshire. However, the opening later this year of a new direct European vehicle ferry service between Rosyth and Zeebrugge combined with the current problems and uncertainty associated with the European rail services from Eurocentral means the proposals have more significance for local businesses and the economy.

3. Responsibility for port development is split between Westminster and the Scottish Parliament - hence the reason for DTLR putting out this consultation. However, the document acknowledges the role of the draft Scottish Transport Appraisal Guidance (STAG) which was previously reported to Committee and which would be the basis of the assessment of any proposals in Scotland.

4. Much of the consultative document relates to the impact in the immediate vicinity of the port area in question and it is not intended to comment on this. The interest of areas such as North Lanarkshire lies in the availability of suitable road and rail connections to the port. Section One of the document suggests that priority in developing proposals should go to existing sites which already have good connections. Section Two indicates that in describing the scheme, particular attention should be paid to the quality and nature of road and rail connections to main customers and to the need for any improvements to these connections.

5. Sections Three, Four and Five deal with the detailed appraisal of the project and as indicated above, this is based on the STAG requirements. From the point of view of this and other similar authorities, it is essential that the appraisal considers:

   (a) the nature and quality of the road and rail infrastructures over the entire catchment area for the port.
   (b) the need for any improvement to this infrastructure is costed and that critically ......
   (c) the programming and implementation of any necessary enhancements by the relevant responsible organisations (Scottish Executive, Railtrack, rail operators, etc).

6. There is reference in Section Four to the need for consultation with local authorities. This should extend to all authorities likely to have an economic interest in the port and not just to the local authority in whose area the port is situated.
7. Finally, it is important to recognise that ports are not just important for the movement of freight and vehicles but also people. It is therefore essential that the assessment of the nature and quality of links to the port includes bus and rail passenger connections and that these systems should be accessible by all sections of the community, including those who are disabled.

Recommendations

8. Committee are asked to welcome the opportunity of being consulted on this document and to agree that the comments in paragraphs 4-7 above should form the basis of the response to this consultation.

Grahame Lawson

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Background Papers

The consultation may be found on the DTLR website at www.shipping.dtlr.gov.uk/