

# North Lanarkshire Council Report

## Enterprise & Growth Committee

approval  noting

Ref PH/DG

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## Update on potential high speed rail in North Lanarkshire

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### Executive Summary

The purpose of this report is to provide an update to Committee on the Council's work to understand the impact of a potential high speed rail connection in North Lanarkshire that is being considered by Transport Scotland.

A future report with findings and recommendations will be put to the Committee as the work is complete.

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### Recommendations

It is recommended that the Committee:

- (1) Note the content of the report, including the scope, and programme for the work.
- (2) Note the status of the rail project generally and the support required to promote and secure such investment should its impact be considered positive.

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### Supporting Documents

**Council business plan to 2020** *What we aspire to deliver - Improve local conditions and infrastructure to assist existing and new businesses to grow and create employment*

*The action we need to take - Pursue new opportunities to ensure NL is an attractive place for business, investment, and growth*

## 1 Background

### Potential connection

- 1.1 Following work by the UK and Scottish governments in 2016 to identify options for improvements on the east and west coast rail corridors, to deliver three hour journeys between Scotland and London, the First Minister announced in November 2017 that Transport Scotland would be commissioning studies and further analysis to understand the cost, benefits, environmental impacts and

technical considerations for the work required in Scotland. Transport Scotland appointed consultants in 2018 to consider the engineering feasibility of potential routes and to develop a shortlist of feasible options. This study has considered a number of route options connecting Glasgow and Edinburgh to London which meet broader transport objectives of increasing network capacity and shortening long distance times.

- 1.2 One of the routes crosses the Eurocentral and Mossend Railhead sites with the potential for a station at Eurocentral with a connection to the commuter line running north-south from Coatbridge to Motherwell. This route is anecdotally considered to offer additional connectivity and economic benefits to a wide area of Central Scotland.

### **Developing a case for rail investment**

- 1.3 The engineering feasibility study is nearing completion and its findings will inform an appraisal of wider economic (and other) benefits and impacts. This appraisal will seek to understand if an economic case exists to support the significant investment required for what would constitute a national rail project.
- 1.4 Transport Scotland intend to develop this appraisal during the first half of 2019 ahead of presenting the case to Ministers in mid-2019 (although this may be subject to slippage). This will mark the start of a process of making and pressing the case for investment to both the Scottish and UK Governments. It is understood that, subject to a case being successfully made and funding being secured, the project would take 10+ years to deliver.

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## **2 Report**

- 2.1 Such an infrastructure project has the potential to have significant impacts on residents, communities, towns and businesses across North Lanarkshire, the Glasgow City Region and the Central Belt more widely. Transport Scotland's appraisal will consider the benefits of the wider rail project, which is expected to secure support from across the region and Scotland. However this appraisal will not provide the understanding of the impacts at a local level and of how North Lanarkshire might best respond to ensure any benefits are realised and negative impacts mitigated.
- 2.2 It is recognised that as the Council develops its plans for its forthcoming major investment programmes, these should respond to "new rail" or "no new rail" scenarios.
- 2.3 It is further recognised that if the rail connections are considered to offer substantial benefits to North Lanarkshire, its residents and businesses, the Council and key businesses will need to take an active and ongoing role in promoting the opportunity and making the case for North Lanarkshire.

### **Our work**

- 2.4 As approved at Enterprise & Housing Committee in February 2018, the Council has appointed a multi-disciplinary external consultancy team bringing expertise in economics (including transport economics); planning and land use; transport planning and investment; commercial property and markets; and employment and labour markets.

2.5 This team will be responsible for undertaking an Economic Impact Assessment of a potential parkway station at Eurocentral with this work being used to help support the Council to:

- Understand the opportunity and the impact for North Lanarkshire, its residents and businesses of this rail development;
- Inform the developing vision for North Lanarkshire and how rail can contribute to this;
- Understand how we (the Council and our partners) can and should respond to create the conditions to secure, and maximise, the benefits; and in the event that the impacts are considered positive, build a robust and compelling case for a cross-border station at Eurocentral to present to the Scottish and UK governments and transport authorities.

2.6 The work will also inform the development of the Council's Economic Regeneration Delivery Plan ("ERDP"), Growth and other programmes and will involve significant engagement with businesses and employers in North Lanarkshire.

**Programme**

2.7 The work will take place during late December to April 2019, timed to progress alongside and inform Transport Scotland's appraisal. The timing being:

Data Collection and Baseline Review	Dec 2018-Jan 2019
Stakeholder Identification and Engagement including developing the communications strategy	Jan – Feb 2019
Economic Impact Assessment	Feb – Mar 2019
Reporting the Findings and Presenting The Case	Mar – April 2019

2.8 A report will be brought to a future meeting of the Committee on the findings and any recommended actions.

**Beyond this work**

2.9 This initial work will conclude during April 2019 and, should the work demonstrate a positive impact for North Lanarkshire, would underpin the need for the Council to fully promote this development option and the positive local and regional socio-economic benefits arising from such investment.

2.10 This process would not be short or necessarily follow a clear and straightforward path. It would require ongoing and sustained engagement and political support from the Council and its partners to demonstrate and make the business case for this investment to relevant Government and transport bodies. This will necessitate close working with private and public sector partners within North Lanarkshire and across the region, the Central Belt and Scotland, with a coherent and consistent case being made.

2.11 A Communications Strategy will be developed as part of the EIA works commissioned by the Council in order to help steer how such engagement is managed.



### **3 Equality and Diversity**

#### **3.1 Fairer Scotland**

In identifying and understanding impacts and opportunities, this work will support the Council in understanding how to fulfil its duties.

#### **3.2 Equality Impact Assessment**

In identifying and understanding impacts, this work will enable later assessments to be undertaken.

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### **4 Implications**

#### **4.1 Financial Impact**

4.1.1 The commitment at this time is to a concise and limited commission, at circa £82,000 funded by the Council, with limited financial impact.

4.1.2 The work will identify broader financial and economic impacts of the rail connections on North Lanarkshire.

#### **4.2 HR/Policy/Legislative Impact**

There is no foreseen policy or legislative impact in this proposal for the Council at this stage.

#### **4.3 Environmental Impact**

Environmental impacts including benefits of modal shift of passengers from road to rail and the dis-benefits of construction and operation will be considered in due course by the Transport Scotland appraisal.

#### **4.4 Risk Impact**

The commissioned work is considered to present little or no risk to the Council at this time owing to its duration and value. The study will however help inform any future related risk assessment.

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### **5 Measures of success**

5.1 The initial measure of success is merely for the completion of this initial work and reporting of findings during April 2019. Subject to the findings and Transport Scotland's appraisal, success would ultimately be measured by development of new rail connections.

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