

259. A605 KINGS DYKE LEVEL CROSSING CLOSURE

The Transport Programme Manager stated that the A605 was identified as an economically important corridor between the Fens and Peterborough. At present there were around 120 train movements per day across the level crossing. At peak periods the waiting time in both directions was significant, as was the impact of queueing traffic on local residents. The North Bank provided an alternative route from Whittlesey to Peterborough, but ran through the Nene Washes flood plain and was often closed to traffic during the winter months. Approval was sought for a further £16.4m funding contribution in addition to the £13.6m allocated originally to meet additional costs relating to technical issues and an increase in the cost of land acquisition issues. County Council officers had assured the processes regarding land purchase by agreement rather than by compulsory purchase. This was also supported by legal advice. A probability and impact assessment had been conducted and had produced an 80% confidence level that the project would be delivered within a £30m budget so there was still an element of risk, predominantly in relation to the variable elements of the scheme. It was proposed that a member of the Combined Authority Transport Team should sit on the project board throughout the construction period to ensure a robust degree of challenge. Any over or underspend against the revised project budget would be apportioned on a 40/60 basis between Cambridgeshire County Council and the Combined Authority.

Councillor Herbert commented that he definitely saw the need for the project, but it was only 14 months since the initial figures had been provided and he would like to understand why some of the costs in the table at paragraph 2.12 had doubled. The

The Transport Programme Manager stated that the preliminary design had made certain assumptions and some of these had been revised in the detailed design. This included additional strengthening required on land adjacent to a disused clay pit, safety improvements and future-proofing of roundabouts and the retention of access to enable an existing business to continue to operate. In relation to the land acquisition there had been an element of optimism in relation to the initial valuation, but legal advice confirmed that the land should be identified as being of commercial rather than agricultural value. The revised cost would still represent around 13% of the total costs and for a project of this type land costs of between 10-15% were generally expected. The increase in relation to management and supervision costs were due to the complexity of the delivering the scheme within the timescale required whilst the increase in risk costs reflected his assessment of the level of risk involved given the complexity of the scheme.

Councillor Holdich commented that there was challenge from some quarters that the Combined Authority was not doing enough for Peterborough. The clear advantages of this scheme might prove to be as important over time to Peterborough and Fenland as the dualling of the A47 economic corridor.

Councillor Count commented that there was both a technical and a human dimension to the project. On the technical side the scheme had doubled in price. This increase had been challenged both by Combined Authority and County Council officers and independent external advice had been commissioned to provide an assurance that the revised price was reasonable. The business case and reported revised benefit cost ratio (BCR) demonstrated that the scheme continued to represent good value for money. On the human side, the figures demonstrated the real damage being done to peoples' lives and the local economy. The Combined Authority would not commit to improved infrastructure at any cost, but in this case the assurance process in relation to increased costs had been robust, there was a strong BCR case and the project remained vital.

The Deputy Police and Crime Commissioner commented that this was a good scheme, but that Stanground Access was also a traffic bottleneck and that this needed to be addressed too. The Mayor stated that £2.4m had been put forward to address the issues at that junction and the Transport Programme Manager undertook to confirm the expected works date.

The Mayor stated that the Kings Dyke level crossing project was an example of the why the Combined Authority had been set up. Local people wanted the works carried out and the Combined Authority was working with Cambridgeshire County Council to deliver it. The Mayor also paid tribute to Councillors Martin Curtis and David Connor for their passionate support for the project.

It was resolved unanimously to:

- a) note the independently reviewed Business case supporting the progression of the scheme as value for money;
- b) agree to provide funding contribution of up to £16.4m over the original £13.6m allocation to enable the scheme to progress to construction;

- c) agree the appointment of 40 / 60 as a split of any under / over spend against the above budget between Cambridgeshire County Council and the Combined Authority as set out in the report.