AIRDRIE-BATHGATE RAILWAY AND LINKED IMPROVEMENTS BILL

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This short briefing has been produced to provide the Airdrie-Bathgate Railway and Linked Improvements Bill Committee with some background information to assist in their consideration of the policy objectives of the Airdrie Bathgate Railway and Linked Improvements Bill.
KEY POINTS

- The reopening of the Airdrie-Bathgate railway was proposed in 2003 as one of the recommendations of the Scottish Executive sponsored multi-modal Central Scotland Transport Corridor Studies
- Network Rail, the owner of the UK’s railway infrastructure, is the Promoter of the Bill
- The Bill would grant Network Rail the power to construct an electrified double track railway between Drumgelloch in North Lanarkshire and Bathgate in West Lothian
- Network Rail would use their existing statutory powers to upgrade the existing Airdrie-Drumgelloch line and upgrade/electrify the current Bathgate-Haymarket line
- New stations would be built at Caldercruix and Armadale
- The existing Bathgate and Drumgelloch railway stations would be relocated to nearby sites, which allow for easier access and improved facilities
- The line would be served by a 15 minute frequency service, linking Helensburgh with Edinburgh and intermediate stations
- The projected maximum line speed is 80mph. Which gives an Edinburgh Waverley-Glasgow Queen Street Low Level journey time of 74 minutes, including intermediate stops
- The projected capital cost of construction is approximately £300m, which will be met in full by the Scottish Executive
- National Cycle Route 75, part of which runs along the route of the proposed railway, is to be relocated
INTRODUCTION

The Airdrie-Bathgate Railway and Linked Improvements Bill [SP Bill 64], a private bill promoted by Network Rail, was introduced to the Scottish Parliament on 30 May 2006.

The Bill would grant Network Rail a number of powers required for the construction of a railway which would fill in the ‘missing link’ between the railway which currently ends at Bathgate with the line that currently ends at Drumgelloch, as well as the power to undertake other works related to the upgrade of the existing Airdrie-Drumgelloch and Bathgate-Edinburgh lines.

WHAT DOES THE BILL PROPOSE?

The proposals in the Bill would allow Network Rail to construct an electrified double track railway between Airdrie and Bathgate, following the route of a previous railway line. Network Rail would also double track and, where necessary electrify, the existing Airdrie-Drumgelloch and Edinburgh-Bathgate railway lines using their existing statutory powers. The Bill would also grant Network Rail other powers required to build the railway, e.g. powers to build new roads or stop up existing roads. The end result would be a continuous electrified double track railway between Glasgow and Edinburgh via Airdrie and Bathgate.

The Bill would allow for the construction of new stations in the villages Caldercruix and Armadale. The existing stations at Drumgelloch and Bathgate would be relocated and a new light maintenance depot built on the site of a rail served car storage yard in Bathgate, which will itself be relocated to Boghall, to the east of Bathgate. The existing Airdrie-Bathgate cycle path, which forms part of the National Cycle Network Route 75, would be relocated.

Figure 1 below provides a schematic diagram of the proposals in the Bill.

Figure 1: Diagram of the proposed Airdrie-Bathgate Railway and Associated Improvements
WHAT DOES NETWORK RAIL THINK THE RAILWAY WILL ACHIEVE?

Network Rail sets out the following policy objectives in the Promoter’s Memorandum, which accompanies the Bill:

- to improve direct access to labour markets in Glasgow, Edinburgh, and West Lothian for people living in the Airdrie to Uphall corridor.
- to stimulate economic growth of the Airdrie to Uphall corridor by improving the connectivity of the area.
- to assist in the delivery of social inclusion to communities in the Airdrie to Uphall corridor by providing enhanced public transport opportunities to those without access to private cars.
- to contribute towards increasing the number of people using public transport in Central Scotland and provide these communities with improved access into the national rail network.
- to offer a public transport alternative to the M8 thus helping to reduce the rise in road congestion and subsequent environmental impacts.
- to construct a rail link that will allow for existing services on the Glasgow North electrics to operate as through services to Edinburgh providing an alternative to the Edinburgh - Glasgow main line service, thus assisting in reducing congestion at peak times.

KEY DOCUMENTS MENTIONED IN THE PROMOTER’S MEMORANDUM

The Promoter’s Memorandum lists a number of key policy and strategy documents alongside various statutory development plans. This section outlines how these documents relate to the Airdrie-Bathgate railway proposals. The documents are listed in the order they appear in the Promoters Memorandum.

**Central Scotland Transport Corridor Studies** (Scottish Executive 2003a) The Scottish Executive appointed a consortium of consultants in December 2000 to undertake multi-modal corridor studies for the A8, A80 and M74 transport corridors. The consultants reported to the Scottish Executive during 2002 and, in January 2003, the Scottish Executive (2003b) published Central Transport Corridor Studies: Decisions. This document set out the Scottish Executive’s proposals for the development of all modes of transport along these key corridors. The Scottish Executive decided to support the recommended reopening of the Airdrie-Bathgate line as a double tracked electrified railway as it:

…will significantly improve public transport opportunities for the large population residing in the suburbs of the major cities…will alleviate overcrowding problems at the east end of the route and will provide a more attractive alternative to the private car for many journeys in the A8 corridor. Journey times by public transport for these journeys will be considerably shorter than at present.

**Scotland’s Transport Future: The Transport White Paper** (Scottish Executive 2004a): The Transport White paper focused on the delivery of transport planning and formed the basis of the Transport (Scotland) Act 2005 (asp12). The White Paper does mention that preparatory work is underway on the Airdrie-Bathgate railway and identifies the key aims of investment in new rail lines as “…supporting the economy and expanding access to opportunities.”

**Scotland’s Transport: Delivering Improvements** (Scottish Executive 2002) The Transport Delivery Report, the closest Scotland currently has to a national transport plan, lists the
development of the Airdrie-Bathgate railway under the heading “Major Projects to Reduce Congestion”.

**A Joint Transport Strategy for Western Scotland to 2025** (WESTRANS 2005): The Joint Transport Strategy establishes the framework for the development of the west of Scotland’s transport infrastructure over a 20 year period. The Strategy identifies the Airdrie-Bathgate railway as a national priority project which links in to its key aims of achieving modal shift from car to public transport and supporting economic growth and social justice.

**Travel Choices for Scotland: The Scottish Integrated Transport White Paper** (Scottish Office 1998): This White Paper does not directly mention the Airdrie-Bathgate railway and the policies outlined in it have been superseded by subsequent legislative developments.

Delivering Tomorrow: Partnerships for Transportation in North Lanarkshire (North Lanarkshire Council 2000): The Promoter’s Memorandum indicates that this is the Local Transport Strategy for the North Lanarkshire Area. However, this was a consultation draft with the full Local Transport Strategy, **Delivering in Partnership: A Transport Strategy for North Lanarkshire** (North Lanarkshire Council 2001) being published the following year. North Lanarkshire Council indicates its full support for the Airdrie-Bathgate railway in the Strategy as it “Links between employment and population centres along the route would be improved.”

West Lothian Local Transport Strategy (West Lothian Council 2000): The local transport strategy for the West Lothian Council area which set out the Council’s transport priorities until 2010. The Strategy indicated the Council’s support for the Airdrie-Bathgate scheme, something which has been carried on into the ongoing review of the Strategy.

**Local Transport Strategy 2004-2007** (City of Edinburgh Council 2004): This document sets out the City of Edinburgh Council’s transport policies and proposals until 2007. The Strategy commits the Council to working with partners to “…maximise benefits for rail users travelling to and from Edinburgh” from the Airdrie-Bathgate railway. More generally the Strategy encourages modal shift from car trips to public transport and more sustainable modes of transport.

**National Planning Framework** (Scottish Executive 2004b): Margaret Curran MSP, then Minister for Communities, defined the role of the National Planning Framework (NPF) in its foreword as “…a planning document that analyses the underlying trends in Scotland’s territorial development, the key drivers of change and the challenges we face.” The NPF mentions the Airdrie-Bathgate railway as one of the Executive’s transport infrastructure commitments, the key priorities of which are “…strong external links, improved internal connectivity, and more sustainable patterns of transport and land use”.

**Glasgow and Clyde Valley Joint Structure Plan** (Glasgow and Clyde Valley Joint Structure Plan Joint Committee 2000, 2003, 2004, 2006): The approved Glasgow and Clyde Valley Structure Plan 2000 does not directly mention the Airdrie-Bathgate railway, although its reopening could assist in the implementation of various policies aimed at improving connectivity in rural and regeneration areas and the promotion of sustainable development.

The GCVJSPC published an alteration to the 2000 Plan during April 2006, which incorporated previous alterations made in 2003 and 2004. This directly identifies the Airdrie-Bathgate line as one of a number of “joint transport priorities”, the purpose of which are “…to improve external linkages and internal mobility within the Plan area”. The altered plan is more specific in identifying improvements to the rail system in the west of Scotland as priorities for improving access to sustainable transport and drivers of economic development.
Edinburgh and Lothians Structure Plan 2015 (City of Edinburgh, East Lothian, West Lothian and Midlothian Councils 2004): The route of the Airdrie-Bathgate line is safeguarded from development in the Edinburgh and Lothians Structure Plan 2004 under the heading “Key transport investment proposals to be safeguarded pending decisions by stakeholders on implementation”. The Plan also identifies proposed house building, possibly up to 2000 homes, at Armadale as strengthening the business case for the development of the railway.

Scottish Planning Policies/National Planning Policy Guidelines: The Scottish Executive publishes a series of policy documents, known as Scottish Planning Policies (SPP), on nationally important land use and other planning matters. These documents were previously known as National Planning Policy Guidelines (NPPGs). The Promoter’s Memorandum mentions a number of these documents and how the Bill furthers the policy commitments or follows the requirements set out in them, these are:

- SPP1: The Planning System
- SPP2: Economic Development
- SPP17: Transport for Planning
- NPPG5: Archaeology and Planning
- NPPG18: Planning and the Historic Environment
- NPPG19: Radio Telecommunications
- SPP7: Planning and Flooding
- NPPG14: Natural Heritage

Local Plans: The Airdrie-Bathgate railway passes through areas covered by a number of local plans. The route of the railway is protected from all development, except the reopening of the line or its current use as a cycle path, in all of these plans. Local plan policies and proposals must be in accordance with the broader policies laid out in the appropriate structure plans, which means that all relevant local plan policies should support the reopening of the railway.

HOW DOES THE BILL RELATE TO THE PLANNING SYSTEM?

There is no need for the promoter of the Bill to seek planning permission for the construction of the railway and the development of the associated works outlined in the Bill. This is because most developments authorised by a private Act are considered to be permitted development under powers contained in the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (Scotland) Order 1992. However, the deemed permission is only ‘outline permission’, which means that the promoter of the Bill must consult the planning authority to ensure that the detailed design of any buildings or structures are acceptable prior to beginning construction.

The Bill would also grant an exemption from the need to obtain listed building consent for changes to listed buildings directly related to the construction of the railway.

In addition to these statutory requirements, the Standing Orders of the Scottish Parliament, Rule 9A.2.3(c), require the promoter of a Private Bill that authorises the construction or alteration of a railway to provide the Parliament with such maps, plans, sections and books of references as the Presiding Officer may determine. The Bill must also be accompanied by an Environmental Statement that sets out the anticipated environmental impact of the proposals. An Environmental Statement would also need to accompany any major planning application to a

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1 The General Permitted Development (Scotland) Order 1992 lists 25 categories of development where planning permission is automatically deemed to have been granted, subject to them meeting certain conditions.
local authority. The Presiding Officer has determined that any such Environmental Statement must contain all the information currently required under Schedule 4 of the Environmental Impact Assessment (Scotland) Regulations 1999, as would be required of an Environmental Statement submitted to a local authority.

In addition to the requirement to submit an Environmental Statement, the Private Bill procedure provides an opportunity for members of the public, organisations and companies to lodge objections to the Bill during a 60 day objection period, which follows the introduction of the Bill to Parliament. This period ends at 17.00 on Monday 31 July 2006. A ‘lodging fee’ of £20.00 must accompany each objection.

NEW RAIL LINKS IN SCOTLAND

Two rail links have opened in Scotland since the creation of the Scottish Parliament.

Edinburgh Crossrail: The Edinburgh Crossrail project involved the re-opening 1.8km of track for passenger services from the East Coast main line at Portobello to Newcraighall, also serving a station at Brunstane. The line opened on 4 June 2002. The Scottish Executive awarded the City of Edinburgh Council £8 million from the first round of the Public Transport Fund in 1999 for the project and a further £501,000 in June 2001 to bridge a funding gap after signalling costs for the project rose following the Ladbroke Grove crash. The total cost of the project was £11 million, the balance of funding came from the Strategic Rail Authority (now wound up), Railtrack (now Network Rail) and the City of Edinburgh Council.

Trains leave Newcraighall for either Bathgate or Dunblane every half hour.

Larkhall-Milngavie: This project encompassed two distinct elements:

- 4.7km of new railway from Larkhall to Hamilton (opened on 9 December 2005), with new stations at Larkhall, Merryton and Chatelherault.
- 1.6 km of new railway from Maryhill to Anniesland (opened on 28 September 2005) with a new station at Kelvindale plus an additional platform at Anniesland

The project cost a total of £35 million, of which the Scottish Executive provided £25 million, Strathclyde Passenger Transport £9.1 million and South Lanarkshire Council £400,000.

In addition to the two lines described above, work to reopen the Stirling-Alloa-Kincardine line is currently underway under powers granted by the Stirling-Alloa-Kincardine Railway and Linked Improvements Act 2004 (2004 asp 10), the first rail related Private Bill passed by the Scottish Parliament.

NEW AND REOPENED RAIL LINES IN THE UK

In addition to the Scottish schemes described above several rail reopening have taken place in England and Wales in recent years. Details of these schemes are attached below:

Robin Hood Line: The Robin Hood Line is a 32 mile route between Nottingham and Worksop serving 11 intermediate stations. The line is a mixture of double and single track and services are provided by diesel multiple units operated by Central Trains. Nottingham Express Transit tram line one runs alongside the route for five miles.
Passenger services were withdrawn from the line in 1964 and a two and a half mile section of the line was in-filled, including the Kirkby tunnel, during the 1970’s which cut the route in two. A four mile section of the line fell into disuse following colliery closures during the 1980’s.

During 1988 a steering group of eight local authorities was established, led by Nottinghamshire County Council, to examine the feasibility of reopening the entire line to passenger services. Following the successful completion of these studies legislative authority was granted to British Rail to reconstruct the section of railway that had been in-filled during the 1970’s. Construction began in 1991 and the line opened in three stages:


The line cost £28m to build, of which roughly two thirds came from the UK Government and European Union and the remainder from local authorities. The fact that the line is single track in places, as opposed to the original double track formation, was due to funding constraints at the time of construction.

The line has been deemed a “major success story in rail travel” by Nottinghamshire County Council (2006) and a “resounding success” by Transport 2000 (2006). The line is used by 3500 passengers daily.

**Vale of Glamorgan Line:** An 18 mile section of the Vale of Glamorgan rail line, running between Barry and Bridgend, reopened to passenger traffic on 12 June 2005. Passenger services last ran along this section of line, which remained open for freight traffic, during 1961. The new passenger service, provided by Arriva Trains Wales, runs between Cardiff and Bridgend. The reopened section includes new stations at Rhoose (serving Cardiff Airport) and Llantwit Major.

The reopening of the line was supported by a £17 million grant from the Welsh Assembly Government. This was a relatively small project that involved the construction of two new stations and some minor track, signalling and safety works to upgrade the freight only line to passenger railway standards.

**PROPOSED NEW RAIL AND LIGHT RAIL LINKS IN SCOTLAND**

There are three heavy rail and two light rail schemes, at various stages of development, which have been brought forward for parliamentary consideration in the last few years. These are:

**Waverley Railway:** The Waverley Railway (Scotland) Bill was passed by the Scottish Parliament on Wednesday 14 June 2006. The Promoters anticipate that, if the Scottish Executive remains confident that the business case remains robust, construction could start some time during 2007. The Bill grants Scottish Borders Council, the promoter of the Bill, the powers to rebuild approximately 35 miles of railway between Newcraighall on the outskirts of Edinburgh and Tweedbank, near Galashiels in the Scottish Borders. The railway would be single track with short sections of double track, known as dynamic loops, to allow trains to pass each other in opposing directions. The anticipated cost of the scheme is £151m at 2005 prices. Further details can be found on the Waverley Railway Project website.

**Glasgow Airport Rail Link (GARL):** This scheme would create a direct rail link between Glasgow Central station and Glasgow airport. The route would be served by four direct express
trains per hour. The project requires the upgrade of the existing railway between Glasgow Central station and Paisley St. James station and the creation of a new 1.9km branch line to Glasgow Airport. It is anticipated that the scheme will cost in the region of £160m at 2004 prices. The Glasgow Airport Rail Link Bill, a Private Bill promoted by Strathclyde Partnership for Transport (SPT), was introduced in the Scottish Parliament on 1 February 2006. SPT hope that, subject to parliamentary approval, that the link could be operational by 2009. Further information can be found on the GARL website.

The Glasgow Airport Rail Link Bill Committee published its Preliminary Stage Report on the general principles of the Bill on 8 June 2006. While raising some concerns about the proposals, principally a lack of direct connections with anywhere other than central Glasgow, the Committee recommended that the Parliament agree that the Bill should proceed to the consideration stage.

Edinburgh Airport Rail Link (EARL): This scheme would involve the construction of a railway station under Edinburgh Airport which would be served by new lines which link with the existing Edinburgh-Glasgow railway and Fife lines. These links would require the construction of two single line rail tunnels under Edinburgh Airport. Rail services from all over Scotland would call at this station. It is anticipated that this scheme will cost in the region of £500m. The Edinburgh Airport Rail Link Bill was introduced to Parliament on 17 March 2006 and the Edinburgh Airport Rail Link Bill Committee commenced its Preliminary Stage consideration of the Bill on 18 April 2006. Further details can be found on the EARL website.

Edinburgh Trams: The two Edinburgh Tram Bills (Line 1 and Line 2) were passed by the Scottish Parliament during March 2006 and are now Acts, which can be found on the OPSI website. Two tram lines, one serving a circular route between Haymarket-Granton-Leith-Princes Street (Line 1) and one Newbridge-St. Andrews Square (Line 2), are proposed for construction in Edinburgh. The combined cost of the schemes stands at £634m. Further information can be found on the tramtime website.

CURRENT TRANSPORT LINKS BETWEEN AIRDRIE AND BATHGATE

At present there are no direct public transport links between Airdrie and Bathgate. The current quickest journey by public transport between the two town centres requires at least one change of bus and takes in the region of 40 minutes. The ‘missing link’ in the rail network means that most public transport journeys between West Lothian and North Lanarkshire, or vice versa, require a trip into either Edinburgh or Glasgow before heading out towards the other city.

The journey between the centres of Airdrie and Bathgate takes approximately 26 minutes by car. More generally, road journeys between North Lanarkshire and West Lothian benefit from a network of ‘A’ roads, including the A89 and A8/M8.

RAIL USAGE IN SCOTLAND

Airdrie is Scotland’s 18th busiest railway station, with 802,000 passengers passing through it during 2002-03. Bathgate is Scotland’s 25th most popular station with 599,000 passengers visiting during 2002-03.

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2 According to public transport journey planning websites Transport Direct and Traveline
3 According to the AA route planner
Table 5: ScotRail Passenger Numbers from 1994-95 to 2004-05

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Scottish Executive 2005

RAIL SUBSIDIES IN SCOTLAND

The Scottish Executive supports the operation of ScotRail services in Scotland through annual payments to the franchise holder, currently First Group. Payment for financial year 2006-07 amounts to £264.8m. Figures for subsidy for each line are not available, although it is generally accepted that the Edinburgh-Falkirk High-Glasgow shuttle is the only service in Scotland that covers its operating costs through fare revenue. The ScotRail franchise includes mechanisms for additional payments to be made where additional services are provided. The promoters predict (Network Rail 2006) that the Airdrie-Bathgate line will require an additional annual operating subsidy in the region of £4.7m at 2010 prices.
SOURCES

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