

## WEST AREA COMMITTEE

DATE: 14 JULY 2015

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### GILSLAND STATION – GRIP PROGRESS

**Report of the Chief Executive, Steven Mason**

**Policy Board Member, Economic Growth: Councillor Allan Hepple**

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#### **Purpose of report**

To provide West Area Committee with:

- An introduction to the project to re-open a station at Gilsland;
- An opportunity to comment on the proposed scope of works for the next stage of the project to be presented to Network Rail including the service frequency options and station design specification.

#### **Recommendations**

It is recommended that West Area Committee:

- Supports the council's commitment to proceed with the study to investigate the feasibility of a station at Gilsland;
- Notes the proposed scope of works to be presented to Network Rail for the next stage of the study.

#### **Link to Corporate Plan**

This report is relevant to the following priorities included in the NCC Corporate Plan 2013-2017:

- **Economic Growth** – our aim is to promote a more prosperous county through sustainable economic growth that provides residents with ready access to high wage and skilled jobs and opportunities to create thriving businesses
- **Places and Environment** – our aim is to maintain and further improve the quality of towns, villages and countryside, and make it easier for residents to access services and high quality affordable homes and to travel using different modes of transport

## **Key issues**

Gilsland station is situated on the Tyne Valley Line just within Northumberland but closed to passenger services in the 1960s.

A feasibility study into a reopened station at Gilsland has shown that the station represents medium value for money based on Department for Transport (DfT) criteria.

A reopened station at Gilsland aligns with the Strategic Economic Plan objectives of both the North East and Cumbria.

The next stage of the process would cost in the region of £30,000 and would provide clarity as to the feasibility of a station at Gilsland.

## **Background**

Gilsland station is situated on the Tyne Valley Line just within Northumberland but very close to the border with Cumbria. It was closed in the 1960s but the station buildings still remain. It is situated between Haltwhistle (Northumberland) and Brampton (Cumbria) stations.

A feasibility study into a reopened station at Gilsland was completed in August 2013 (<http://www.gilsland-station.org.uk/feasibilitystudyrep.htm>) and attempted to estimate both the benefits and costs of the reopening. The study has shown that the station represents medium value for money based on Department for Transport (DfT) criteria, with a Benefit Cost Ratio (BCR) of 1.78. This is based on an assumed cost of £2.5 million.

The demand for the station has been estimated at approximately 25,000 trips per year including around 15,000 tourist trips. Of these tourism trips, around 2/3 will be newly generated trips attracted by the improved access to the area.

## **Policy Context**

The new **Northumberland Economic Strategy** recognises the importance of transport to the county with its vision for '*A prosperous Northumberland founded on quality local jobs and connected communities*'. The strategy proposes significant investment with a focus on a range of priorities including:

- Supporting tourism and culture businesses who are a major part of the Northumberland offer capitalising on our Northumbrian identity;
- Connecting our economy and that of the region through major investment in transport.

The **North East Strategic Economic Plan (SEP)** recognises that the coast and rural areas of the North East region underpin a strong local tourism offer and that this is a key opportunity for growth. Transport investment is seen as a key priority to improve the area's strategic connectivity as well as facilitating visitors to come to the area. A station at Gilsland would align with this objective.

The **Cumbria SEP** acknowledges transport, planning and skills as barriers to growth across the region and identifies an opportunity to develop a high value tourism offer. A key priority is identified as addressing the barriers to visitor growth through:

- Investment in destinations and attractions so Cumbria can compete at an international stage, including investment in Hadrian's Wall;
- Delivering sustainable transport infrastructure and interventions, making it easier for visitors to arrive and move between destinations.

A station at Gilsland would lie within a short walk of the border with Cumbria and is in the shadow of Poltross Burn Milecastle on Hadrian's Wall and would therefore align with the objectives of Cumbria's Strategic Economic Plan.

### **Network Rail GRIP Study**

Network Rail has advised that the next stage of the process would be to move forward with the GRIP (**G**uide to **R**ail **I**vestment **P**rocess) study, the approach by which Network Rail manage their projects from inception to construction.

The proposed brief for the study to be presented to Network Rail is to identify the feasibility and costs associated with providing the safe stopping of passenger trains at a newly opened station at Gilsland. Two service frequency options are to be considered:

- An hourly service (commensurate with that provide for Haltwhistle Station); and
- A two hourly service (commensurate with that provide for Brampton Station).

The design specification for the station should include for:

- 2 platforms;
- Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) compliant access;
- CCTV and shelters;
- Help points;
- Seating;
- Customer Information System (CIS) Screens;
- Station Lighting;
- Car parking.

### **Funding Requirements**

To take the study to GRIP 3 (Option Selection) stage would cost in the region of £30,000 and would provide clarity as to the feasibility of a station at Gilsland. It is therefore necessary to identify a funding package to enable the study to be commissioned.

Subject to approving an amendment to the programme, the council is committed to funding the GRIP3 study from the 2015/16 Local Transport Plan.

Additional funding for current and future stages of the project has been requested from:

- Visit England who is managing a £400,000 budget looking at improving public transport access to Hardian's Wall; and
- The Campaign to Open Gilsland Station (COGS) has been successful in obtaining a grant from Awards for All Lottery Fund towards a Feasibility Study.

### **Implications**

<b>Policy</b>	None at this stage.
<b>Finance and value for money</b>	Funds will be drawn from the 2015/16 Local Transport Plan allocation.
<b>Legal</b>	Legal will be consulted on receipt of a Development Services Agreement from Network Rail prior to the commencement of any commission.
<b>Procurement</b>	Procurement will be consulted on the most appropriate method for commissioning the study.
<b>Human Resources</b>	None at this stage.
<b>Property</b>	None at this stage.
<b>Equalities</b> (Impact Assessment attached) Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> N/A <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	N/A
<b>Risk Assessment</b>	None at this stage.
<b>Crime &amp; Disorder</b>	Note at this stage.
<b>Customer Consideration</b>	None at this stage.
<b>Carbon reduction</b>	None at this stage.
<b>Wards</b>	Haydon and Hadrian.

**Consultation**

N/A

**Background papers**

N/A

**Report sign off**

Finance Officer – Alan Mason	AM
Monitoring Officer/Legal – Liam Henry	LH
Human Resources – Alison Elsdon	AE
Procurement – Teresa Palmer	TP
I.T. – Neil Arnold	NA
Executive Director – Geoff Paul	GP
Portfolio Holder(s) – Allan Hepple	AH

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