

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



NEWBURGH TRANSPORT APPRAISAL

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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 Introduction

1.1.1 The Newburgh Train Station proposal has been identified through a robust Newburgh Transport Appraisal STAG appraisal which aims to address the transportation challenges faced by the residents of Newburgh, a rural town in Fife, Scotland. This proposal is part of a broader initiative by the South East of Scotland Transport Partnership (SEStran), the Newburgh Train Station Group (NTSG), and Fife Council to improve sustainable transport links to Perth, Edinburgh, and Fife. This summary outlines the aims, options, expected outcomes of the preferred option and counterfactuals. These are followed by discussions around how the preferred option could look like and related stakeholder feedback.

1.2 Background

1.2.1 Newburgh, with a population of 2,899, faces significant transportation challenges to meet the current and future travel demand to Perth, Fife and beyond. The town has limited public transport options, leading to high car dependency. Stakeholder engagement and public consultation have revealed that the people of Newburgh are unhappy with the current Public Transport provision. According to census data, three quarters of travellers travel by car to destinations which are served by public transport, indicating car being the preferred mode. This situation limits access to employment, education, healthcare, and leisure activities, particularly for the 19% of households without a car. This evidences the need for a PT or sustainable travel solution, in line with key national, regional and local policies.

1.3 Aims

1.3.1 The aims of this scheme, discussed briefly below, are informed by transport problems and issues that are evidenced in the case for change.

- **Increase Availability of Public Transport Options:** Newburgh has one of the poorest access to public transport networks in Fife. The existing bus services limit travel options. The nearest train station is 13 km away in Ladybank, and bus services are infrequent and do not cover early morning or late evening travel needs making it difficult for residents to access jobs, education, healthcare, and leisure facilities.
- **Reduce Journey Times:** Currently Public transport journeys to key destinations such as Perth, Cupar, and Edinburgh are lengthy and often require interchanges, making them less attractive compared to car travel.
- **Reduce Car Dependency:** A significant proportion of Newburgh residents rely on cars for commuting, with 75% of trips to work made by car. This reliance on car travel is partly due to the limited public transport options and lengthy journey times.
- **Tackle Socio-Economic Challenges:** Newburgh has an above-average population of over 65s, part-time workers, and those with health limitations. These groups require better access to healthcare and other essential services. Additionally, 19% of households do not have access to a car, making them reliant on public transport.

- **Improve Air Quality:** The high car dependency contributes to local air pollution and carbon emissions, which are detrimental to the environment and public health.

1.4 STAG Appraisal Outcomes

1.4.1 A STAG based transport appraisal has been undertaken to assess the performance of different transport options to address the identified problems and opportunities. The appraised options cover active travel, bus, train, and car (sharing) modes. The detailed options appraisal concluded that a new train station at Abernathy Road is the most suitable solution to satisfy the Transport Planning Objective (TPOs), STAG Criteria and wider requirements and therefore meet the needs of people and businesses in Newburgh and the surrounding areas. The Detailed Option Appraisal Report was reviewed by Transport Scotland and feedback was received. Responses to TS comments and further clarifications are presented in Appendix A of this document.

1.5 Outcomes from the New Train Station

1.5.1 The proposal for a new train station in Newburgh is driven by the need to provide a sustainable and efficient transport alternative to car travel. The new station will:

- **Improve Accessibility:** Enhance access to key services and markets, including employment, education, healthcare, and leisure opportunities for Newburgh residents.
- **Reduce Journey Times:** Provide faster and more direct public transport options to major destinations, reducing the need for lengthy bus journeys and interchanges. The new train station is expected to generate significant economic benefits, with a Present Value of Benefits (PVB) of £82.9 million. This includes improved access to employment and education opportunities, as well as increased tourism and business travel.
- **Promote Sustainable Travel:** The new station will enhance the integration of the transport network by linking active travel, bus, and car travel, encouraging a shift from car travel to public transport, thereby reducing carbon emissions and improving air quality. The station will contribute to a reduction in carbon emissions and local air pollution by encouraging a shift from car travel to public transport. This aligns with national and regional policies aimed at promoting sustainable travel and reducing the environmental impact of transport.
- **Support Economic Growth:** Improve connectivity for businesses and attract inward investment, contributing to the local economy.
- **Enhance Social Inclusion:** The station will improve access to essential services for all residents, including those who are socially excluded or those without access to a car. It will provide a reliable and efficient transport option for elderly residents, part-time workers, and those with health limitations.

1.6 The Counterfactual

1.6.1 Without an intervention, the identified transport challenges in the context of Newburgh will only be exacerbated in future, making sustainable travel options undesirable. The lack of a train station means that both residents and visitors in Newburgh will face:

- **Continued Transport Challenges:** Without a new station, Newburgh will continue to face limited public transport options, lengthy journey times, and high car dependency.
- **Economic and Social Isolation:** The town's residents will remain isolated from key services and opportunities, limiting their quality of life and economic prospects.
- **Environmental Impact:** High car dependency will continue to contribute to traffic congestion and carbon emissions, counteracting efforts to promote sustainable transport and reduce environmental impact.
- **Missed Opportunities for Growth:** The absence of improved transport links will make Newburgh less attractive for investment, tourism, and new residents, hindering the town's potential for economic growth and development

1.7 What Could the Station Look Like?

- 1.7.1 The detailed STAG appraisal demonstrated that a rail option would be the preferred option to tackle the identified problems. To this end, a new rail station at three different locations within Newburgh was considered. Of the three locations, reopening a former rail station at Abernethy Road offers the greatest benefits, therefore considered as the preferred location.
- 1.7.2 Both temporary (modular station) and permanent station options have been considered at the preferred Abernethy Road location. The current cost estimate for a permanent station would be around £5m. However, there is a low-cost opportunity with a shorter 'modular' type station at the same location, which could realise the same benefits as a permanent station and estimated at range of between £150k-£600k subject to detailed design.
- 1.7.3 A low cost short length basic station halt built in modular form (and therefore not permanent and capable of being removed and used elsewhere, or extended, if necessary) would as the detailed options appraisal indicated deliver an excellent Benefits to Cost Ratio (BCR) (>17), notwithstanding that the BCR is not the only determining factor, but realistically determinant in the current fiscal environment because it is a proposal that significantly lowers the cost to government.
- 1.7.4 A short modular station platform would represent a deviation from standard platform design and would require further feasibility assessment should it be decided to progress with it. Recent short-length station reopening in Scotland do show however that such an option is possible. Discussion with Network Rail and Scotrail should be undertaken as part of the detailed design of a modular station.
- 1.7.5 The new fast track Network Rail appraisal process for projects estimated to be under £5m (Project Acceleration in a Controlled Environment (PACE)) should be utilised to examine the feasibility and costs of this simple proposal quickly and at much less cost than GRIP.

1.8 Stakeholder Engagement and Public Consultation

- 1.8.1 Stakeholder engagement and public consultation are crucial components in the planning and development of transport projects. As discussed in the Detailed Options Appraisal Report, the Newburgh Transport Appraisal involved a comprehensive stakeholder engagement and public consultation process to ensure that the transport needs and

preferences of the local community were adequately considered. The engagement was crucial in identifying the transport challenges faced by Newburgh residents, such as limited public transport options, lengthy journey times, and high fares. The public consultation revealed strong support for the reopening of a train station in Newburgh, with 77% of survey respondents favouring this option. Other options, such as improved bus services and a new express bus service, also received some support, highlighting the community's desire for enhanced public transport connectivity.

SEStran Stakeholder Workshop in Newburgh

- 1.8.2 A workshop event was arranged by SEStran in Newburgh for all key stakeholders in September 2024 to examine the transformative impact a station at Newburgh would have for the local community, businesses and visitors both in Newburgh and the wider north-west Fife Tayside area (detailed in Appendix B of this document). It was cognisant of the three TPOs of the Newburgh STAG transport appraisal and revealed how a new station would significantly improve public transport access for residents, broadening their opportunities. It would also positively impact the local area by attracting more activities and opportunities, offering benefits beyond what the appraisal could fully quantify.
- 1.8.3 Stakeholder feedback discussed that the wider area around Newburgh on the Tayside part of North West Fife also includes neighbouring Abernethy (only 2 miles west from Newburgh and soon to be connected by an active travel cycle path) and stretches along the south bank of the Tay eastwards to Flisk, representing a population size of roughly 5000 (on the 2022 census using 1930 parish locations for this mainly rural hinterland). House building planned in this area, particularly in Abernethy and Newburgh, the main settlement centres, will increase population numbers further. Newburgh has a further 250 planned for and work is now commencing here on the first tranche of 40 homes.
- 1.8.4 Further stakeholder feedback discussed that opportunities for economic development will largely involve the growth of visitor numbers as the incipient tourism sector grows. This growth will encompass the hospitality industry, recreational activities centred on the waterside and river, as well as for walking, trekking and cycling, nature tourism associated with the rich biodiversity evident in the area, as well as tourist visits to explore the historic built heritage and landscape. The Tayside area is rich in natural and historic heritage. It has the largest reed beds in Europe and breeding pairs of Osprey, Marsh Harriers and Bearded Tits, as well as many winter bird visitors. Newburgh is also at the northerly start of the Fife Coastal Path and a natural gateway into the area. This is a reason why the Romans established a camp nearby next to the river, the Picts marked the area with a substantial cross and early medieval ecclesiastics founded an abbey monastery along with substantial orchards the remnants of which can still be seen throughout the town, whilst at the start of the Ochills the hillsides behind with a string of prehistoric enclosures and settlements dating back to the Neolithic period, give panoramic overviews of the immediate area below and way beyond, and provide breathtaking reason enough for its strategic importance.
- 1.8.5 The stakeholder feedback included that a good example of current tourism sector growth is illustrated by the Lindores Distillery and Visitors Centre in Newburgh open since 2018, having 30,000 visitors in 2023, with 50,000 forecasts for 2024. The provision of a station can help facilitate the tourism sector's growth and transform the economy in the wider area, helping to bring in investment needed to support a local economy revolving around

tourism and the various services and amenities it would require for sustained success. The revival of the waterside for example, where once the linoleum factory dominated and the stone piers operated to support cargos up to Perth and the salmon fisheries nearby, offers opportunities for investment to restore these historic and vulnerable piers as river-based tourism and recreational use of the river starts to grow. The High Street of Newburgh, by no means dead at present in terms of its range of shops, together with its post office and GP surgery, would present an increase in opportunities for more retail and hospitality businesses and restore its previously once busy life simply because the capacity is still there as evidenced by the number of empty former business premises. Newburgh underperforms on the potential its current assets could achieve and which tourists would expect. Specific comments regarding a new train station from stakeholders are presented below:

“Obviously, a train stop at Newburgh would definitely deliver and increase access to local tourism, but if there are any other additional heritage focused elements of the project that HES should be aware of, or where we might be able to provide advice or comment on going forward, then please do let me know. (Martin Ross, Development Officer, External Relations and Partnerships Historic Environment Scotland)”.

“People arriving at the station could be educated about local wildlife and how to access it responsibly using interpretative boards - there are many excellent wildlife sites in the area. In the wider community hides and more interpretative boards by the Tay and elsewhere could be of benefit to locals and tourists and increase awareness of the local biodiversity. (Dr A Cage, Chair, Fife & Kinross Local Group, Scottish Wildlife Trust)”.

- 1.8.6 The stakeholders workshop event illustrated the range of interest and support in the kind of transformations described that could be expected by a station opening and revived a sense of purpose amongst stakeholders in bringing together new partnerships to drive the project forward at all stages as well as consolidating the commitment of existing partnerships. It was a way to look around and beyond the station’s reduction to three TPOs and how smartly they scored in order to get some revitalising blood circulation back into an old tired stag.

Scotrail Public Consultation in Fife

- 1.8.7 Scotrail undertook a consultation in Fife and received the responses below, which demonstrates strong public support in favour of a new train station in Newburgh.

I would like to see a local station opened in Newburgh where there is a campaign to have a station reopened. This could improve local public transport links South to Edinburgh and to Perth

I would use the train more frequently. However, I need to travel from Newburgh to Ladybank. From what I can see there is no benefit for north Fife residents as there are only a few stations. Newburgh deserves a halt.

We urgently need the train station/rail halt reopened in Newburgh in Fife and the service to Perth from Edinburgh should stop there on an hourly basis. If Levenmouth will be economically regenerated by the opening of the rail link, then it is logical that to

install a low-cost rail halt in Newburgh will be a cost effective economic primer for the whole of the local area and beyond - particularly since the Fife Coastal Path starts and finishes in Newburgh.

We stay near Newburgh and would like a rail link from Newburgh. I believe citizens in Newburgh are trying to get their station reopened and have been working on this for several years. We would use the railway much more if there was a link from Newburgh.

We live at Newburgh you have nothing for us currently

I live in Newburgh. We need a train station. This means I could get the train to Edinburgh rather than multiple buses and trains.

I am a blind pensioner resident in Newburgh who used to work in Edinburgh. I travelled daily to Edinburgh by train from Cupar or Ladybank and as I am blind had to be driven to the station to catch the train. A station at Newburgh would have been extremely useful to me. There is a campaign in Newburgh to reopen the station.

1.9 Conclusion

- 1.9.1 The proposal for a new train station in Newburgh addresses the critical transportation challenges faced by the town's residents. By improving accessibility, reducing journey times, promoting sustainable travel, supporting economic growth, and enhancing social inclusion, the new station will provide significant benefits to the community. The proposal aligns with national, regional, and local policies aimed at creating a sustainable, inclusive, and efficient transport system. The preferred option, a new train station at Abernathy Road, is considered the most beneficial solution.
- 1.9.2 A permanent standard station at this location would cost around £5m. A modular station at this location would realise the same benefits as the permanent option, albeit at significantly lower cost. Therefore, a shorter modular station offers low-cost opportunity for a new station. However, further feasibility studies should be undertaken to understand the deliverability of a modular station.
- 1.9.3 A short length, modular platform station halt at Newburgh deliverable at low cost would provide a useful pilot example of what such a relatively low bar infrastructure investment could achieve in putting an important area of Fife very much back onto the map of Scotland as well as allowing Newburgh and the people in its immediate adjoining areas to connect more sustainably and easily with the rest of Scotland. This will stimulate a modal shift away from car contributing to Scottish Government's wider policy, and environmental targets including 20% reduction of car use.

Appendix A Newburgh STAG Appraisal Addendum

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Appendix B SEStran Stakeholder Engagement Event

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