REPORT NO 720/04

ANGUS COUNCIL

INFRASTRUCTURE SERVICES COMMITTEE

8 JUNE 2004

A92 DUNDEE ROAD, ARBROATH
RAILWAY OVERBRIDGE

REPORT BY THE DIRECTOR OF ROADS

ABSTRACT
This report informs the Committee of the offer by Network Rail to install an overheight vehicle bridge protection system on the A92 Dundee Road, Arbroath.

1 RECOMMENDATION

1.1 It is recommended that the Committee agree to homologate the decision of the Director of Roads to proceed with the provision of an overheight vehicle detection system on the A92 at Dundee Road, Arbroath.

2 INTRODUCTION

2.1 Towards the end of 2003 Network Rail approached the Director of Roads with a view to installing an overheight vehicle detection/warning system on the A92 Dundee Road, Arbroath in order to reduce the number of bridge strikes at this location.

3 DETAILS

3.1 When a railway overbridge is struck by a high sided vehicle, the railway line has to be closed and no trains can pass over the bridge until it is inspected by a Structural Engineer from Network Rail. The structural engineer usually has to travel to the site from Edinburgh. This causes considerable delay to the rail network with consequent financial implications.

3.2 For a number of years Network Rail have had concerns about the number of vehicle strikes at the railway overbridge on the A92 Dundee Road, Arbroath. Over the years there have been a number of improvements carried out to the traffic signing at this location. Larger signs have been erected, the signing has been made mandatory to enable the police to prosecute offenders and extra advance signing has been erected. The bridge is currently signed to a level in excess of that required for such a structure with advance warning of both the restricted headroom and the diversion route.

3.3 Despite the signing measures undertaken, Network Rail have expressed their continuing concerns about the bridge being struck by high vehicles. Network Rail advised that their records show that there are more incidents causing damage to the bridge than are reported to the police. Each of these incidents can represent a grave risk to both road and rail traffic.
3.4 Lateral impact forces can displace girder bridges enough to cause tracks to be misaligned sufficiently under certain circumstances to cause derailments. There is also a significant risk to road users where loads are displaced from a vehicle coming into contact with a bridge. Indeed in 1995 a container did fall from a lorry onto the carriageway at Inverkeilor in a similar situation. Fortunately in this case it did not strike any other vehicles.

3.5 To address the problem it was proposed that an Overheight Vehicle Detection (OVD) system be installed at the bridge in Arbroath. Network Rail were willing to meet the full costs of installation with the Council maintaining the sign in the future. The Council commissioned a similar signing system at A92 Inverkeilor in 1999 at a cost of almost £100,000 with little financial input from Network Rail’s predecessor Railtrack.

3.6 The OVD system involves the use of infra red beams which when broken by a large vehicle switch on an illuminated sign and flashing amber lights. The illuminated sign would display the message “OVERHEIGHT VEHICLE – DIVERT” and this in conjunction with the existing diversion signing should ensure that all high vehicles will divert away from the bridge. The system has built in safeguards to ensure that the signing is not switched on by passing birds or a dirty vehicle exhaust etc.

3.7 Until now the cost of improved signing at the bridge has been borne by the Roads Authority, and the responsibility for the provision of signing in accordance with the Traffic Signs Regulations and General Directions lies with the local roads authority under the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984. As stated above however the signage at the bridge is already in excess of that required for such a structure and the provision of the OVD system is not a statutory requirement under the Act. While provision of an OVD system will undoubtedly improve public safety for both road and rail users there will also be indirect benefits to both Network Rail and the insurance companies and their clients through a reduction in the number of overheight vehicle strikes.

3.8 Network Rail required that the same equipment that is installed at A92 Inverkeilor (supplied by Coeval Products Ltd) be installed and paid for during the Financial Year 2003/04. This equipment has proved to be reliable and cost effective to maintain. The Council’s traffic signal maintenance contractor is already contracted to inspect and service the signs at Inverkeilor, and these new signs at Dundee Road Arbroath can be added to the maintenance contract with no additional requirement for spares and specialist training.

3.9 In view of the anticipated improvements to road and rail safety; the minimal financial implications for Angus Council; and the limited timescale for the availability of funding from Network Rail, the Director of Roads agreed to accept Network Rail’s offer. The Committee is now asked to homologate this decision.
4 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

4.1 Capital

4.1.1 There are no capital implications as Network Rail are meeting the whole cost of installation.

4.2 Revenue

4.2.1 Staff time to supervise the installation of the system has been contained within the overall Roads Department Revenue Budget.

4.2.2 Additional maintenance costs will amount to £223 per annum under the existing Traffic Equipment Maintenance Contract with Siemens Traffic Controls Ltd and will require to be contained in the Roads Department Revenue Budget.

5 CONSULTATION

5.1 The Chief Executive, the Director of Law and Administration, the Director of Finance and the Chief Constable have been consulted in the preparation of this report.

6 HUMAN RIGHTS IMPLICATIONS

6.1 There are no human rights implications arising from the proposals in this report.

7 CONCLUSION

7.1 Network Rail have requested that the Council install an Overheight Vehicle Detection system on the A92 Dundee Road, Arbroath. Network Rail agreed to pay for the installation costs provided the Council maintain the equipment in the future.

R W McNeil
DIRECTOR OF ROADS

NOTE

No background papers as defined by Section 50D of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 (other than any containing confidential or exempt information) were relied on to any material extent in preparing the above Report.

IAB/JSG
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