REPORT NO 85/04

ANGUS COUNCIL

INFRASTRUCTURE SERVICES COMMITTEE

22 JANUARY 2004

ASSESSMENT OF ROAD BRIDGES IN THE ANGUS COUNCIL AREA IN THE OWNERSHIP OF NETWORK RAIL (FORMERLY RAILTRACK) AND RAIL PROPERTY LTD.

2003/4 UPDATE

REPORT BY THE DIRECTOR OF ROADS

ABSTRACT
There are currently 14 road bridges in the ownership of either Network Rail or Rail Property Ltd. carrying public roads in Angus which have not yet been assessed to determine their capacity to carry the new maximum 40/44 tonne vehicle loadings. This report notes the current position regarding assessments of these bridges and the current legal position with regard to Rail Property Ltd. owned bridges in Scotland.

1 RECOMMENDATIONS

1.1 It is recommended that the Committee agree:-

(i) to note the proposed programme for the completion of outstanding Network Rail bridge assessments;

(ii) to note the current legal position in Angus and elsewhere in Scotland regarding the assessment of Rail Property Ltd owned bridges.

2 INTRODUCTION

2.1 In Report No. 333/01 submitted to the Roads Committee on 8 March 2001, Members were updated on progress with regard to the assessments which were then underway of 11 Railtrack bridges and 4 Rail Property Ltd bridges which carry public roads within the Angus area.

2.2 The assessments were required as a result of the introduction of 40/44T gross vehicle weights which have been permitted on UK roads since 1 January 1999.

2.3 Railtrack

2.3.1 In Report No. 333/01 it was noted that assessments on the remaining 8 bridges in the ownership of Railtrack would be commissioned from Railtrack once they had completed the first package of 11 assessments.
2.4 Rail Property Ltd

2.4.1 At that time there remained 18 bridges in the ownership of Rail Property Ltd which had yet to be assessed. The Committee approved the option to carry out the assessment of some of these bridges using Council staff (without a formal agreement with Rail Property Ltd.) and to enter into an agreement with Rail Property Ltd. for them to undertake the other assessments.

3 CURRENT POSITION

3.1 Network Rail

3.1.1 Network Rail (formerly Railtrack plc) owns 19 bridges carrying public roads in the Angus Council area. Of these, 11 have now been assessed (i.e. the package of bridges referred to in report No. 333/01 has now been completed). The results of these assessments showed that two bridges do not have the required strength to carry the new vehicle loadings. One has had barriers installed to protect the weak edges of the bridge (C45 Barns of Craig Bridge) and the other has had a weight restriction of 7.5 tonnes imposed (MA/16 West Haven Bridge, Carnoustie). The bridge owners have been informed of this restriction and have been asked for their proposals and timetable to strengthen this bridge.

3.1.2 Eight bridges remain to be assessed and this work is currently being carried out by Network Rail. It has however not been possible to obtain an assured timescale from Network Rail for the completion of this work.

3.2 Rail Property Ltd

3.2.1 Rail Property Ltd. owns 22 bridges carrying public roads in the Angus Council area. Of these 16 have now been assessed (4 by external consultants and 12 by Roads Department staff). Two failed the assessment and of these one has since been strengthened (A935 Broomley Bridge) and the other has been infilled (B9134 Whitehills Bridge).

3.2.2 Six structurally more complex bridges still require to be assessed and the Director of Roads is in discussions with Rail Property Ltd with a view to reaching a legal agreement with Rail Property Ltd to allow the structural assessments for these bridges to be carried out.

3.2.3 This agreement has proved difficult to obtain due to issues regarding public liability for the safety of these bridges during and after the course of assessment.

3.3 The Society of Chief Officers of Transportation in Scotland (SCOTS)

3.3.1 The legal difficulties outlined in section 3.2 above are not unique to Angus. No other council in Scotland has entered into a legal agreement with Rail Property Ltd on the
terms proposed. The Society of Chief Officers of Transportation in Scotland (SCOTS) is aware of this problem and is seeking a solution at national level.

4 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

4.1 Capital

4.1.1 £35,000 allocated in the current financial plan has been legally committed for 2003/04 for the assessment of Network Rail bridges.

4.1.2 A further £30,000 has been allocated (not yet legally committed) for 2003/04 and £10,000 in 2004/05 for the assessment of the balance of Network Rail and Rail Property Ltd bridges.

4.1.3 These funding arrangements are deemed adequate to cover the costs of the necessary engineering assessments but do not allow for any strengthening work which may become necessary as a result of the assessments.

4.1.4 Any such works would be the subject of a separate report.

5 HUMAN RIGHTS IMPLICATIONS

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

6 CONSULTATION

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

7 CONCLUSION

7.1 The Committee is asked to note the current position with regard to the assessment of privately owned bridges and the proposals for continuing the assessment programme.

7.2 The Committee is also asked to note Angus Council’s position with regard to Rail Property Ltd's bridges is similar to other local authorities in Scotland.

Ronnie McNeil
DIRECTOR OF ROADS

NOTE:
The following 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 this Report:-

Report No. 101/00 : Angus Council Roads Committee 27 January 2000
Report No. 333/01 : Angus Council Roads Committee 8 March 2001

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