

ANGUS COUNCIL

ROADS COMMITTEE

8 MARCH 2001

**ASSESSMENT OF ROAD BRIDGES IN THE ANGUS COUNCIL AREA**  
**IN THE OWNERSHIP OF RAILTRACK AND RAIL PROPERTY LTD**  
**2001 UPDATE**

**REPORT BY DIRECTOR OF ROADS**

**ABSTRACT**

This report details the progress on the assessment of 11 Railtrack Ltd bridges and 4 Rail Property Ltd bridges carrying public roads in Angus. It gives details of proposals to complete the outstanding assessments and compares Angus Council with progress being made by other local authorities.

**1 RECOMMENDATIONS**

It is recommended that the Committee agree:-

- (i) to note the current progress on assessment of public road bridges in Angus owned by Railtrack Ltd and Rail Property Ltd;
- (ii) to note the proposed method of progressing the outstanding assessments;
- (iii) to note the progress made by Angus Council in comparison to other local authorities.

**2 INTRODUCTION**

In Report No 101/00 submitted to Committee on 27 January 2000, Members were updated on the situation with regard to the assessments of 41 bridges carrying public roads which are in the ownership of either Railtrack Ltd or Rail Property Ltd.

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

In the report it was noted that assessments on 11 bridges in the ownership of Railtrack were in progress.

It was also noted that 4 bridges in the ownership of Rail Property Ltd were to be assessed.

There are therefore 26 bridges (8 in the ownership of Railtrack and 18 in the ownership of Rail Property Ltd) which have not yet been assessed. The carrying capacity of these bridges is therefore unknown in respect of the increased loading from the larger lorries able to use Angus Council's roads.

This report gives an update on the situation and makes recommendations for dealing with the outstanding bridges. It also details the progress made by other authorities in comparison to Angus Council.

**3 CURRENT POSITION**

**3.1 Railtrack Ltd**

In October 1998 a legal agreement was made between the Council and Railtrack plc for Railtrack to procure the assessment of 4 bridges carrying public roads. Of the estimated cost of £34,250, £22,000 has been paid in accordance with the legal agreement and Railtrack have indicated that they do not now anticipate any further invoices.

The anticipated programme provided by Railtrack at that time indicated completion of the 4 assessments by mid-May 1999.

In July 1999 a further legal agreement was made between the Council and Railtrack plc, for Railtrack to procure the assessment of a further 7 bridges carrying public roads. Of the estimated cost of £41,677, £31,260 has been paid in accordance with the legal agreement and Railtrack have indicated that they do not now anticipate any further invoices.

In January 2000, Railtrack stated that they were endeavouring to complete this second package of assessments by the end of March 2000.

At the end of October 2000 the Council received assessments for 3 of the 4 bridges in the original package.

Despite several attempts (detailed in Appendix 1) to progress and programme this issue Railtrack have been 18 months late in delivering results of the assessments which were originally timetabled to take only 6 months.

The situation is currently:-

Outstanding assessment (1 No.) from original package - 22 months delay.

Second package of assessments (7 No.) - 10 months delay.

The Director of Roads is very concerned about the time taken by Railtrack in proceeding with these assessments and their failure to ensure their consultants meet their timescales, despite numerous reminders and the issue being pursued through the Society of Chief Officers Technical Services (SCOTS) following complaints by other authorities.

However, due to the safety requirements for working on live railways and the need to book advance track possession the Director of Roads is unable to undertake this work using his own staff and the most suitable procurement method remains through Railtrack plc.

### 3.1 Rail Property Ltd

In January 2000 a legal agreement was made between the Council and Rail Property Ltd, for Rail Property Ltd to procure the assessment of 4 bridges carrying public roads at an estimated cost of £15,750.

In September 2000, Rail Property Ltd notified the Council that they had now received tenders for the work and that the assessments would take 15 weeks to complete (February 2001).

## 4 **PROPOSALS**

4.1 The proposals for completing the assessments of the outstanding bridges are as set out below.

### 4.2 Railtrack Ltd

There are 8 No. bridges which remain un-assessed carrying public roads. All of these roads are unclassified and all of the bridges are masonry arch bridges. Masonry arches tend to be capable of carrying much higher loads than their original design capacity.

It is proposed that these bridges be assessed by means of a further agreement with Railtrack only after the completion of the current outstanding packages.

The estimated cost of these bridge assessments is £40,000 including staff costs.

### 4.3 Rail Property Ltd

There are 18 No. bridges which remain un-assessed carrying public roads, including B, C and unclassified. The bridges range from masonry arches to more complex skewed bridges with steel beams and brick jack arches.

The Council has the options of pursuing the assessments by:-

- (a) As before, entering into an agreement for Rail Property Ltd to undertake the assessments.
- (b) Entering into an agreement for Angus Council staff to undertake the assessments. The agreement currently used by Rail Property Ltd includes a severe indemnity clause which has given legal concerns in respect of entering into such an agreement.
- (c) Carry out some/all of the assessments without a formal agreement. The results of such an assessment may not be acceptable to Rail Property Ltd.
- (d) A combination of both (a) and (c).

It is recommended that option (d) is pursued with the more complex bridges being assessed under an agreement by Rail Property Ltd and the more straightforward structures being assessed by the Council's staff. It is considered that this method of approach would:-

- (i) Result in fewer disputes with Rail Property Ltd in respect of acceptance of assessments undertaken by the Council's staff.
- (ii) Reduce the costs whilst involving Council staff directly.

The estimated cost of this option is £45,500.

## 5 OVERALL POSITION

5.1 The Society of Chief Officers for Transportation in Scotland (SCOTS) Working Group on Bridges has reviewed the position with regard to Railtrack and Rail Property Ltd bridge assessments across Scotland on an annual basis.

5.2 Railtrack have also provided a summary of the position with regard to assessments for England, Wales and Scotland

5.3 These reports indicate:-

- (i) that authorities in Scotland are behind those in England and Wales in assessing Railtrack bridges. It is noted that funding for these assessments is 'ring fenced' in England and Wales;
- (ii) that Angus Council is towards the top of the middle third of Scottish Councils in respect of completing their Railtrack assessments;
- (iii) that of the 28 Scottish Councils affected, 10 authorities anticipate completing the assessment of all of their privately owned bridges by March 2001. At the other end of the scale three authorities do not anticipate starting their private bridge assessments this year.

### 5.4 Angus Council

In order to evaluate the structural carrying capacity of the remaining privately owned bridges in the Angus area further bridge assessments are required. These will allow definite decisions to be made as follows:

- No weight restriction required (ie 44T carrying capacity).
- Need for weight restriction (ie less than 44T).

- Need for structural strengthening.
- Need for other measures (closure etc).

Once the assessments have been completed and appropriate actions carried out the bridge assessment programme will be completed for Angus.

The statutory requirement for inspecting these bridges which is required at stated intervals, (6 years for a principal inspection, 2 years for a general inspection) remains a duty on the bridge owners. Angus Council staff do carry out overview inspections and report defects to the owners as appropriate.

The remainder of the Council's bridges are similarly inspected.

Whilst the assessment programme for the Council's own bridges is complete, these assessments are reviewed in light of the findings of inspections.

## 6 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

### (i) Capital

<b><u>Expenditure Summary Statement</u></b>					
	<b>No of Bridges</b>		<b>Expenditure Profile (£'000)</b>		
	<b>Railtrack</b>	<b>Rail Property Ltd</b>	<b>Financial Commitment</b>	<b>Paid to Date</b>	<b>Balance</b>
Previous Years	4		22	22	0
Previous Year	7		31.3	31.3	0
Current Year		4	15.8	0	15.8
Future Years	8		40	0	40
Future Years		18	45.5	0	45.5
	<u>19</u>	<u>22</u>	<u>154.6</u>	<u>53.3</u>	<u>101.3</u>

£53,300 has been paid in previous years (1998/99 and 1999/2000).

£15,750 is due to be paid in this financial year and Rail Property Ltd has been asked to forward their invoice. If this invoice is not forthcoming the current year's budget will be required to be carried forward to 2001/02.

Of the remaining £85,500, the Council's financial plan has allocated £50,000 as being available in each of the next two financial years.

Given the previous progress by Railtrack it is anticipated that 50% of the work will be invoiced next financial year (ie £20,000) with the remainder paid the year after. Similarly for Rail Property Ltd, the costs of the combined agreements for Rail Property's consultants and Council staff to carry out the inspections is estimated at £25,000 next year with the remainder being paid in 2002/03. The remaining £5,000 in 2001/02 being engineering administration fees associated with the works.

There is therefore currently adequate provision in the Council's financial plan for completing the assessment works within the next two years.

## 7 HUMAN RIGHTS

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

## 8 CONSULTATION

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

9 **CONCLUSION**

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

If this report approved Council will be able to expedite the programme to assess all the privately owned bridges in its area and will then be in a position to prioritise any strengthening work required.

The Committee is also asked to note Angus Council's position in these matters compared to other local authorities.

Dr Bob McLellan  
DIRECTOR OF ROADS

NOTE

The following background papers, as defined by Section 50D of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 (and not containing confidential or exempt information) were relied on to a material extent in preparing the above Report:-

Report No. 101/00 – Assessment of Road Bridges in the Ownership of Railtrack and Rail Property Ltd – Update – Angus Council Roads Committee – 27 January 2000.

IAN/JSG  
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REPORTS/assess.road.bridges