

Initial Appraisal		Intervention 126: Rail Infrastructure and Service Enhancements on the Far North Line						
Estimated total Public Sector Funding Requirement:		Capital Costs/grant				£20m - £100m		
Summary Impact on Key Strategic Outcomes	Improve Journey Times and Connections Reduce Emissions Improve Quality, Accessibility and Affordability	---	--	-	0	+	++	+++
(Judgement based on available information against a 7pt. scale.)								
Intervention Description:								
Improvements on the existing railway line between Inverness and Wick/Thurso to improve line speeds, reduce journey times and increase service frequencies. This would involve new rolling stock, better quality track, dynamic loops and improved signalling.								
Summary: Rationale for Not Progressing								
The costs of this intervention are excessive in comparison to the likely benefits. Although this intervention would contribute to the objectives of improving accessibility to public transport, it would not provide good value for money.								
Selected improvements could be taken forward as part of Intervention D8 (Enhancing Rail System Capacity through Targeted Improvements).								

Table C126.1.1 STPR Objectives

STPR Objectives	
<p><u>STPR Objective 1:</u></p> <p>To enhance public transport accessibility and reduce public transport journey times to and from Inverness.</p> <p><u>STPR Objective 2:</u></p> <p>To reduce the fatal and severe accident rates to the national average or lower.</p>	<p>1: Positive - This intervention would reduce rail journey times between Inverness and Wick / Thurso and provide a better quality and more frequent service.</p> <p>2: Neutral – Rail improvements within this intervention may result in a degree modal shift from private car to rail. However the scale of the transfer would not result in any meaningful reduction in severity rates on this corridor.</p>

Table C126.1.2 Key Strategic Outcomes

Key Strategic Outcomes (KSO's)		
Objective:	Assessment Summary:	Supporting Information:
Improve Journey Times and Connections:	Moderate Benefit	This intervention would lead to a reduction in rail journey times across the corridor.
Reduce Emissions:	Minor Benefit	Line improvements would result in a slight reduction in emissions due to the potential modal shift from road to rail.
Improve Quality, Accessibility and Affordability:	Moderate Benefit	This intervention would improve quality and frequency of service. Residents north of Inverness would have access to a faster service and a competitive alternative to road use.

Table C126.1.3 Implementability Appraisal

Implementability Appraisal	
Technical:	There are no major technical issues related to this intervention.
Operational:	During the improvement works there would be operational issues relating to the existing sections of rail network in the corridor, as there are no rail diversion routes between Inverness and Thurso. It is unlikely that any factors will adversely affect the operation of this intervention during its projected life.
Public:	Reduction in the rail journey times between Inverness and Wick/Thurso is likely to be acceptable to the public in the area. Friends of the Far North Line, the Highland Rail Partnership, and Hitrans are all supportive of this intervention.

Table C126.1.4 Comparative Appraisal

Comparative Appraisal	
Intervention Hierarchy:	This intervention consists of Level 1, 2 and 3 interventions.
Interaction:	This intervention would potentially interact with and complement intervention 126 (Rail Infrastructure and Service Enhancements on the Far North Line) and provide an improved public transport service along this route.
Mutually Exclusive:	Rail improvements between Inverness and Wick/Thurso are considered mutually exclusive to other improvements on this section identified in the Far North Line Improvements, Helmsdale to Wick Rail Improvements, and the Dornoch Rail Bridge interventions.

Table C126.1.5 Environmental Appraisal

Environmental Appraisal	
Assessment Summary	The promotion of modal shift to rail would potentially improve air quality and mitigate against adverse climatic factors. The intervention has the potential to affect biodiversity, the water quality of several rivers, soils / geology and cultural heritage sites depending on the location of the additional loops and lengthening double track.